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Oral history interview with Glenda Arentzen,
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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with Glenda Arentzen on November 12 and 13, February 15, and April 27, 2012. The interview took place in New York City, and was conducted by Jeannine Falino 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.

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

Interview

JEANNINE FALINO: This is Jeannine Falino. I'm working for the Archives of American Art at the Smithsonian Institution. I'm at the Museum of Arts and Design in New York City, and I am interviewing the studio goldsmith, Glenda Arentzen, here in the city.

So Glenda, how are you today? [They laugh.]

GLEND AARENTZEN: I'm fine.

MS. FALINO: At least now that the storm has passed.

MS. ARENTZEN: Now that Sandy has released her grip and — yes, I'm okay.

MS. FALINO: Good. I'm glad we finally made this appointment. Took us a few times to schedule it because of the hurricane.

MS. ARENTZEN: [Laughs.] I'm glad we didn't have to walk to it. [They laugh.]

MS. FALINO: So we're going to talk today mostly about the trajectory of your career, and then we will also address a number of other issues relating to your galleries and your colleagues and your opinions about the scene that's passed before you during your youth as a young artist and the things that influenced you. But let's start at the beginning. So you were born in New Jersey.

MS. ARENTZEN: Yes. And my mother's family had gone back several generations from Brooklyn.

MS. FALINO: In Brooklyn. And what was your mother's name?

MS. ARENTZEN: Helen deMoya.

MS. FALINO: Can you spell that?

MS. ARENTZEN: Small D, E-M-O-Y-A.

MS. FALINO: Okay, and your father?

MS. ARENTZEN: By the way, my grandfather, the deMoya, was born in New York City, in Manhattan, and grew up in a frame house on West 53rd Street.

MS. FALINO: [Laughs.]

MS. ARENTZEN: And their families didn't have a cow, but others did.

MS. FALINO: West 53rd, not far from the old American Craft Museum, you mean?

MS. ARENTZEN: That is correct.

MS. FALINO: Times have changed. [They laugh.] A dairy cow, no less. I love that.

MS. ARENTZEN: [Laughs.] Their family was the only one without it — without one.

MS. FALINO: Without the cow. Oh, I see. So it was still pretty rural even then. Remarkable.

MS. ARENTZEN: Oh, it was definitely. My parents and their friends in the '20s would drive into New York City to hear jazz or go to the theater or do some such thing, and they could — or shop, and they could do — they could

park anywhere. When my mother was a little girl, they would, you know, go into the city.

MS. FALINO: They would drive in or take the — take the public transportation?

MS. ARENTZEN: They would take public transportation, which was an enormously complicated business. You could take the train and then either take a ferry over — yeah, take a ferry over. And my mother remembers, as a very little girl, being on the horse-drawn — I don't know what they called them. They weren't cabs. They were bigger than that. It was like — there are buses now on Fifth Avenue, or there were, but the — you know —

MS. FALINO: Right. But they were horse-drawn.

MS. ARENTZEN: They were horse-drawn, and in the winter they had coal stoves in them.

MS. FALINO: Really.

MS. ARENTZEN: And then they were electrically powered, and then — but they still had the — once I asked my mother if when she was growing up and going over to Brooklyn, were there schooners in the harbor, and she said, of course. [Laughs.]

MS. FALINO: Schooners. You don't see those too often anymore either. So tell us about your dad.

MS. ARENTZEN: He was born in New Jersey. His mother had come from Switzerland. His father was born in New Jersey as well, but that side of the family's Danish, from whence cometh my last name. And that great-grandfather came over to fight in the Civil War. He had lost a lot of his material wealth in Denmark, and whether he came over and joined relatives here or not, I don't know. I don't think he did. I think he just came.

MS. FALINO: He just came.

MS. ARENTZEN: And he left his wife and two children in Denmark and said, let me get settled, and you'll come over. Well, the Civil War intervened, and he found that the only work available, really, was to join the Civil War and take the place of people who would pay to send —

MS. FALINO: Who would pay to send a surrogate.

MS. ARENTZEN: Yes.

MS. FALINO: Wow.

MS. ARENTZEN: And he — when the war was over, my great-grandmother came over with the two children, who eventually went back to Denmark. And she had — there were three that came over, three that went back. And she had two more here, what — the youngest of which was my grandfather, who went to Cooper Union and became an architect with McKim, Mead & White and then went in on his own and made — just in time for the Depression and didn't do very well financially. But he was a very, very skilled — [inaudible] —

MS. FALINO: So your grandfather trained at Cooper Union, and he worked as an architect with McKim, Mead & White?

MS. ARENTZEN: McKim, Mead & White, yes. That was a very different thing in those days. You went right from high school to higher education, particularly if it was technical. And —

MS. FALINO: What was his name?

MS. ARENTZEN: Peter.

MS. FALINO: Peter.

MS. ARENTZEN: Oh, — grandfather was Peter. The great-grandfather was Niels [ph].

MS. FALINO: So the grandfather who trained at the Cooper Union was —

MS. ARENTZEN: Oh, no, that was my grandfather.

MS. FALINO: Your grandfather.

MS. ARENTZEN: Yeah, Peter.

MS. FALINO: That's Peter.

MS. ARENTZEN: In our household, if — both sides of the family, if you say "Peter" at a public gathering —

MS. FALINO: Everybody turns.

MS. ARENTZEN: No, half — all the men stand up. [They laugh.] Yes. And what's interesting about that Danish side of the family, that the — one of the women that went back became, you know, a great-aunt of mine, in a way. And she had a daughter, who left her family, eventually died. So her daughter, who was my father's cousin — now we're down to that generation — that woman was an only child, and she never knew her mother, who was an Arentzen. And then she had a daughter. My aunt kept in touch with all of them, and at different times, some of them came over. So in spite of it being not a warm and cuddly situation, they'd kept in contact, so when I went to Denmark, I was treated as a member of the family. And that remains so. And then the generation that was more my age, although we're not exactly parallel on the family tree, I was very friendly in particular with one of my cousins who — for whom the university wasn't the right place for her, and she became a goldsmith. And I made the contact for her for her apprenticeship. And she is still a goldsmith in Copenhagen, has her own shop.

MS. FALINO: How wonderful.

MS. ARENTZEN: And she has a very good academic background. So she's ideal for dealing with the clients she has and managing her business as well as being creative.

MS. FALINO: How wonderful. So you're goldsmiths of two sides of the Atlantic.

MS. ARENTZEN: Isn't that interesting?

MS. FALINO: Yeah, and what is her name?

MS. ARENTZEN: Kirsten.

MS. FALINO: Kirsten —

MS. ARENTZEN: Pontopiddan, P-O-N-T-O-P-I-D-D-A-N.

MS. FALINO: Okay. How wonderful.

MS. ARENTZEN: Yes. [Laughs.] Just an interesting loop — and stop me if you want to anytime I sort of take a loop — the apprenticeship system, the whole way of becoming a goldsmith, has changed dramatically.

MS. FALINO: Where? Here, or in Denmark?

MS. ARENTZEN: Denmark.

MS. FALINO: The apprenticeship system is no more?

MS. ARENTZEN: It's still there, and it's an option if you want to be trained in the classic traditions of the goldsmiths. However, between the mid-'60s and now, one has seen the growth of art schools, departments in universities that train people as artists, and by the way, they can make metal objects, and they no longer have to have a very specific license to be treated seriously as a goldsmith. You can simply open an atelier. And so many people who go to art school completely bypass the apprenticeship program.

MS. FALINO: And there's no need to make a masterwork anymore if you're an apprentice.

MS. ARENTZEN: Oh, if you are — you're apprentice, absolutely.

MS. FALINO: If you're apprentice, you do, but there are — there's — obviously not so often, then.

MS. ARENTZEN: No, they're in comparable M.F.A. programs, and it's probably harder — [laughs] — than doing — but — because the master project was very often designed by the master. And the man who was one of my colleagues at school in Copenhagen apprenticed with a man who gave him as a project, "Take that work stool and make silver rivets around the top of it." And he said, "Nothing more complicated?" And the master said he didn't think anything more complicated could be achieved. [They laugh.] So it wasn't always a warm and cuddly situation.

MS. FALINO: Experience, yes. Very, very interesting. So now, your grandfather was an architect. And what did your father become?

MS. ARENTZEN: He was a salesman and in marketing. He was not able to go to college in the Depression.

MS. FALINO: And so how many children were in your family?

MS. ARENTZEN: I have brothers.

MS. FALINO: Two brothers?

MS. ARENTZEN: Yes, they're six years younger than I am.

MS. FALINO: Okay, so how was it growing up in the family? Did you have artistic inclinations, or did someone introduce you to the arts?

MS. ARENTZEN: Oh, yes. I was never conscious of an introduction to it, but clearly, my parents were comfortable with the theater and jazz in New York. As far as making things goes, this was an era when it was taken as given that you would make things. You would certainly repair things. My mother's family had great difficulties in the Depression.

MS. FALINO: Financial difficulties?

MS. ARENTZEN: Yes, I think it actually started before then. My grandfather was a cocoa broker in New York City, and he went on his own and had his office downtown. There were some reverses having to do with that. And so from having somebody to come twice a year, a seamstress to come into the house to help make and repair and adjust things, my grandmother pulled up her socks and designed and made clothing.

MS. FALINO: Oh, really.

MS. ARENTZEN: I still have some of it, and it's just beautiful.

MS. FALINO: Oh, how fantastic.

MS. ARENTZEN: And my mother can — could sew, but she became an extraordinary knitter, not for sale but for family use. My mother could make — and I still have some of these — silk dresses — [inaudible] —

MS. FALINO: Knitted silk?

MS. ARENTZEN: Knitted fine silk, not as fine as petit point, but really fine silk — [inaudible] — we're not talking really —

MS. FALINO: That's very high-end.

MS. ARENTZEN: Oh, it was extraordinary. My grandfather, in his travels, he — being a cocoa broker, he needed to take a boat to Europe, London or Paris, and then take another boat into Africa. That was one of the places. And maybe he'd spend, you know, a week in London or Paris before the boat was ready to go. And he introduced me to opera and so forth, which he saw there, not in New York, you know, after he got married.

MS. FALINO: So your family had a lot of culture, interest in culture and interest in fabrication, at least on the textile side.

MS. ARENTZEN: Yes, and — yes, I think they were all — got great joy out of making things. And remember, in that era too — and I wanted to say something about this too. In that era, you had relatives who sewed, who did all your mending. You did home improvements yourself. You belonged to the Girl Scouts, which introduced you to other things. My grammar school did not have art —

MS. FALINO: Uh-huh, really? [Affirmative.]

MS. ARENTZEN: — or music. It was a Catholic school. And I'll take another loop about that in a bit. But everybody could do things. There was support in the public schools, however, at the high school level, because there were good art programs. And as a matter of fact, my aunt took a course in jewelry making at Ridgewood High School in probably 1910, 1912. And they still have jewelry there as a course.

MS. FALINO: That's probably an extension of the old manual arts movement.

MS. ARENTZEN: Could be.

MS. FALINO: Still, you know, that sort of transposed into industrial design later on.

MS. ARENTZEN: Yeah, very good point. We lived in Ridgewood. I was born in Ridgewood. Well, my brothers were actually born in Paterson, New Jersey, because that had a hospital. But our family moved from Ridgewood. My parents had — they knew each other in high school, but really, they met afterwards. In 1947 we moved to a

farm in Mahwah, which is about 20 minutes now from Ridgewood.

MS. FALINO: A farm!

MS. ARENTZEN: It had gone bust in the Depression. It was a — [inaudible] — farm, a lot of strawberries, strawberry farm. And they put electricity in it and running water, and my brothers, and my grandparents moved in too. We could not see any other houses from our house.

MS. FALINO: Oh. Was this an economical move or —

MS. ARENTZEN: No, no, it was a dream, to have — they moved sooner than they might have otherwise, but people — soldiers were coming back from the war, and when leases came up, if a soldier applied for your apartment — they were in a duplex in Ridgewood — and the veteran could take it. And they, before the war, purchased not only that property in Mahwah, but they had purchased a few acres in Saddle River that didn't have any buildings on it. And they decided that this had the house, and the whole family went — Uncle Pete came back from the war, and my grandfather was enlisted and —

MS. FALINO: Did your father serve in the war?

MS. ARENTZEN: No, much to his displeasure. But in retrospect, it was clear — he had had a hernia, and that kept him out. But he was active. And it was a very good thing at least one responsible person was left to manage the family — [laughs] — that was left. And then — so it was a family project. Oh, my uncle Carl [ph], who was married to my father's sister — I mean, everybody was skilled. And they made the plans, they rebuilt the house, and that was the house that my parents both lived in for 50 years and — [inaudible] — and died in.

MS. FALINO: And these parents — grandparents are your father's parents or your mother's parents?

MS. ARENTZEN: No, my father's parents.

MS. FALINO: Your father's parents, okay.

MS. ARENTZEN: Yeah, they moved in. And it was really wonderful. It was — it was a wonderful situation. Everybody seemed quite copacetic. There was enough room. There was enough room to do projects outdoors, good conversation at dinner because my mother would say there were four generations sitting at table, because my brothers were so much — my brothers were so much younger than I. They're twins, by the way. And that was — [inaudible] — my mother had twins at the age of 40. [They laugh.]

MS. FALINO: So what sort of projects did you take on as a youngster?

MS. ARENTZEN: Well, I was just always making things.

MS. FALINO: Like?

MS. ARENTZEN: Well, my mother —

MS. FALINO: You were sewing — [inaudible]?

MS. ARENTZEN: Oh, yes, absolutely. And Grandma took care of that. My mother took care of knitting. My mother and I — everybody could draw. My mother and I would watch the "Let's Draw" program on television when it — we would sit there and we would draw together.

MS. FALINO: [Laughs.]

MS. ARENTZEN: And during the period of time of the transition between Ridgewood and Mahwah, they had to get out of their apartment now. There were several months of — over the winter of my mother's late pregnancy and the birth of my brother — was the finishing of the house, my finishing kindergarten, or as much as I could, if possible. It was in — it all seemed very exciting to me. My mother and I moved in with Aunt Louise [ph]. And I could walk to school, and my father would visit and — my mother was almost immobilized by having twins. My brothers were standard size for those days, and —

MS. FALINO: So she had bed rest or —

MS. ARENTZEN: As much as possible. And she could put that stand-up telephone on her stomach and talk with her hands — gesticulate — [they laugh] — because she's very tiny. She was not tall and I guess only weighed 120 pounds or something like that, just tiny. It all went well, and my brothers were doing very well — [inaudible]. Something I'd like — if we'll continue with what I made and what was being made at the house, I'd like to mention that this grammar school with no art or music —

MS. FALINO: This is the Catholic school you attended.

MS. ARENTZEN: That's right. And —

MS. FALINO: What was the name of the school?

MS. ARENTZEN: Immaculate Conception, which was on the grounds of the archdiocese and seminary, which is —

MS. FALINO: Oh, great.

MS. ARENTZEN: — which is now — it's beyond McMansion. [Laughs.] The archdiocese sold their seminary property. And my mother, who was not Catholic — adamantly not Catholic — both my parents, believing in public school, visited the public school. And the public school had six grades in I guess two classrooms with an outdoor john that was attached to one of the buildings.

MS. FALINO: [Laughs.] [Inaudible.]

MS. ARENTZEN: And the Catholic school had eight grades in four classrooms with an indoor john. And my mother said, "Surely plumbing is more important than the religion," — [they laugh] — which — that's why I went to Catholic school.

MS. FALINO: I see.

MS. ARENTZEN: And they simply didn't have art. But the music was another case because one of — the task of one of the nuns was to organize anything that had to do with music. And we sang for the 40 hours service — I don't know whether — First Fridays and so forth, and there'd be time taken out from class to do all this kind of stuff.

MS. FALINO: Oh, sure.

MS. ARENTZEN: And she did the best she could and — with the material on hand. And she'd just fill up the choir with the number of people — all girls. She just didn't want to deal with the boys. [They laugh.] They were such idiots. And so I — and she knew enough about music, so I learned some of the basics. My mother also could play the piano. She had been involved in amateur dramatics when she was a kid, and my grandfather as well with an institution in Ridgewood that still exist, the Joe Jefferson Players. And my mother actually tap-danced too. [Laughs.]

MS. FALINO: Wow.

MS. ARENTZEN: She was really — [inaudible] — [laughs] —

MS. FALINO: Well, so she was quite an entertainer.

MS. ARENTZEN: Well — [inaudible] —

MS. FALINO: Or she had that side.

MS. ARENTZEN: She had that side, very gregarious, and she almost married a jazz musician. And she tells very funny stories about going into these jazz clubs. And a lot of the jazz musicians played at the hotels if they were big-band jazz musicians. And she would not go alone. And her parents wouldn't let her go with just one male. So sometimes my mother would go to listen to this gentleman friend, I think, and my grandmother would go with her.

MS. FALINO: Escorts.

MS. ARENTZEN: Now, my grandmother was from Brooklyn and, I think, a fundamentalist in her religious thought and always dressed conservatively and perfectly, and she read books and sewed and organized things, organized organizations — [laughs] — and so forth — the antithesis of somebody you'd think that would be enjoying jazz, but she did. [Laughs.]

MS. FALINO: She did her grandmotherly duty — [laughs] — her motherly duty.

MS. ARENTZEN: Some very funny — [inaudible] — that era. But going back to what you asked about, the things we made at home, it was really just — you just did it. I mean —

MS. FALINO: So making was a part of —

MS. ARENTZEN: Making was —

MS. FALINO: — a part of living at home with your family.

MS. ARENTZEN: Was part of — cooking and sewing, and mostly for personal expression, and it wasn't a grind. We lived very comfortably.

MS. FALINO: But did you make things for yourself, like did — I mean, you weren't doing carpentry, or were you?

MS. ARENTZEN: When I was four and a half, I was presented with an orange crate. And my mother said, "This is going to be fun; you need something by your bed, now that you have a big-girl bed, to put your books in." And I remembered she said, "First we're going to sand it." And it wasn't we. You know, nowadays with homework with kids, it's we. This is the sandpaper; this is what you do. And I had to sand it down. I thought I would never get it right.

MS. FALINO: [Laughs.]

MS. ARENTZEN: You know, any woman that can knit eentsy-weentsy stitches in silk is going to demand a smooth — [they laugh] — and she was nice about it. It was really fun. It was, "Oh, well, just a little more, just a little more." And I remember painting it. It had to be two coats. It was yellow.

MS. FALINO: At the age of four?

MS. ARENTZEN: Four and a half, probably.

MS. FALINO: Goodness.

MS. ARENTZEN: Four or four and a half, something like that. And then to decorate it, we went to a store and bought decals, which was another interesting operation. And I picked out the decals and put them on it. When the house was being remodeled, I was asked — my mother said, "We are going to pick out wallpapers, and Grandpa wants you to come. Grandpa the architect wants you to come and pick out the wallpaper."

MS. FALINO: So you were really brought into the whole process —

MS. ARENTZEN: Making the decisions —

MS. FALINO: — and decision-making.

MS. ARENTZEN: — and evaluating. You know, that is — that skill should not be underestimated. That's why people should go to art school, because the class critiques are worth 75 percent — [inaudible] —

MS. FALINO: Yes, it's the learning process, looking and judging and thinking about, you know, how do you make your selections.

MS. ARENTZEN: And I picked out one and — that I really liked, and my mother said, "It wouldn't be a bad idea to mention these other two to Grandpa too and see what he thinks." And Grandpa thought it was a very good choice.

MS. FALINO: How wonderful.

MS. ARENTZEN: [Laughs.] Matched — and I never lived in that room because my grandparents moved in. And so they got the little — the light-pink room — [inaudible] — with the little roses. [They laugh.]

MS. FALINO: [Inaudible] — you chose. So then high school — I mean, did you — in high school, did you have any kind of disciplines —

MS. ARENTZEN: Fantastic. Oh, fantastic.

MS. FALINO: So you attended Ridgewood High?

MS. ARENTZEN: No, Ramsey High School. And there were —

MS. FALINO: Ramsey, oh, right.

MS. ARENTZEN: There were — my — by the way, in eighth grade, my mother did send me to Saturday morning art — private art classes —

MS. FALINO: Oh, okay.

MS. ARENTZEN: — with one of my friends. And they realized that there was something they had to deal with

there. [Laughs.] It was, you know, drawing and painting.

MS. FALINO: So it was drawing and painting?

MS. ARENTZEN: Yes. High school — there were eight towns that went to it. I don't know how familiar you are — they were all Bergen County, of course: Saddle River, Upper Saddle River, Allendale, Franklin Lakes, Mahwah, which was a really big — Wyckoff, even bigger.

MS. FALINO: Must have been a very big high school.

MS. ARENTZEN: We were on a split session, at one point three sessions. There was enormous influx of people into Bergen County, in northwest Bergen County then. High school was built for 800, and our freshman class had 450 people in it.

MS. FALINO: Oh, gosh.

MS. ARENTZEN: My gym class had a hundred.

MS. FALINO: And your Catholic school must have been very small by comparison.

MS. ARENTZEN: Yes.

MS. FALINO: So that was quite an adjustment.

MS. ARENTZEN: It was — [inaudible] — split session. Freshman and sophomore went in the morning; juniors and seniors went in — oh, the first year they were overlapped, and the faculty in the school just said, we can't do this, over 1,200 people, you know, and more. And the — so they split it, freshman, sophomore, juniors and seniors. And you — it was — you — just the facts, you know, just four solids, the one elective. It was really tough. It was really tough. It was tough on everybody. And gym classes became smaller, or the — you know, the — you had to make some compromises with what you could take. But I always took — I took art all the way through. And I had an incredible art teacher that I — intuitively, I knew she was something special, but I had no idea until I had the perspective many decades later of how special she was.

MS. FALINO: Do you recall her name?

MS. ARENTZEN: Yes, Geraldine Mayer — M-A-Y-E-R — Smith. First of all, the projects were all interesting. She had a very logical way of building each year's course. And she lobbied for, and won, having art as a solid, as they called it those days, equal, thus, with math and the other courses.

MS. FALINO: Oh, so basically a requirement.

MS. ARENTZEN: You could still — you could elect it, just the way you could like different languages.

MS. FALINO: But — I see, but weighted — maybe given more weight?

MS. ARENTZEN: That's right, more weight. And so I was taking five solids my senior year, and one of them was art. And through the years, you know, we did the perfunctory into-the-Met kind of thing. And she was interesting because she tacked on galleries. She would tack on a gallery. And you know, a busload of 30 kids in a gallery — can you imagine what she had to do to organize that?

MS. FALINO: [Laughs.]

MS. ARENTZEN: And — well, I remember distinctly one gallery that was showing William Zorach's sculpture. And we went in, and she talked about it, and we looked at it, and we went out before anybody could be distracted by things teenagers get distracted by. And she had actually, we learned later, had modeled for some of that.

MS. FALINO: She had modeled for Zorach?

MS. ARENTZEN: Because Zorach and her family summered —

MS. FALINO: In Maine.

MS. ARENTZEN: — in Maine.

MS. FALINO: Oh! [Laughs.] How fantastic. So she really — she saw the — she was an artist from both sides.

MS. ARENTZEN: That's right.

MS. FALINO: [Laughs.]

MS. ARENTZEN: That's right. And she — the way she spoke about art was different. When we did paintings in — sometime in our junior or senior year, it was toward the end of this project, and several were finished, and she put them up, and she said, "You can talk about why the artists that we see in museums and galleries are different than maybe what you're doing; let me explain to you why." And she related each painting to something we had seen in a museum and why some of the characteristics that we were showing were those of an artist, not of somebody who's taking a high school art class, that kind of thing. We kept in touch, you know, until she died too.

MS. FALINO: Really.

MS. ARENTZEN: She was — she was extraordinary because she was a suburban housewife too. I mean, her husband was successful and not overly wealthy but very comfortable, and she could do it all and deal with the politics of teaching. My — I kept in touch with my kindergarten teacher too, and she turned up at one of my presentations at Ridgewood when she was in her 90s.

MS. FALINO: Oh — [inaudible] —

MS. ARENTZEN: And when we kept in touch in some of the early years — at this point I was in my late 20s, early 30s — because sometimes the Ridgewood papers would feature something that I was doing. And she invited me over for tea. By this time she was — [inaudible] — and we had tea and wonderful cake that she had made that I still make. And she said, "Would you like to see my paintings?" And I did, and they were unbelievable. She said I — she said, you know, you — she said, "I paint all morning. I get up, I paint all morning, and then I do some walking in the afternoon and do some reading and take naps." And she said, "I do it on such-and-such a schedule."

MS. FALINO: So she had a discipline.

MS. ARENTZEN: She said, "You know, if were living alone and you can't get out very often, you must be disciplined in your — you must have a structure."

MS. FALINO: And how old was she at this time?

MS. ARENTZEN: Oh, by that time she was probably in her late 80s, mid-80s, yeah.

MS. FALINO: [Inaudible.] So did she teach you metalworking at all?

MS. ARENTZEN: No, no, no.

MS. FALINO: No.

MS. ARENTZEN: In kindergarten, that was stick figure —

MS. FALINO: Oh, this was the — [inaudible] —

MS. ARENTZEN: This is stick figure drawings and oil painting with a little calendar on it. But I was headed toward the public school, of course, and down the street was the Catholic school. And my friends across the street were already in the Catholic school. And so I had visited there after school to go with older brother — a parent, pick them up and everything to get an idea of what the school was like. And we — I was introduced to this kindergarten teacher, and I saw all the wonderful artwork that was around. And I knew I had already been signed up for a public school, and I said, "I think I'd like to come here." And she was very sweet. And by golly, the next September, I turned up. And my parents were not happy about this. They wanted me to go to the public school, especially since it was an integrated school. Ridgewood had, and had had for decades, a hundred years or so, a significant number of African-American people. And this was the public school that had them.

MS. FALINO: That — it was integrated.

MS. ARENTZEN: Oh, yes, absolutely.

MS. FALINO: Oh, wonderful.

MS. ARENTZEN: And I can remember my interview because we went to the playroom. My mother was talking about what the activities were, and the principal suggested, or the teacher, whoever it was, suggested that, "While your mother and I talk, maybe you would like to go into this wonderful playhouse, and we've brought in another young girl who can show you the playhouse and all the toys that we have." And she was African American.

MS. FALINO: Oh, great.

MS. ARENTZEN: And it all worked out just fine, of course. [They laugh.] And — anyway, that's another story, though.

MS. FALINO: But you expressed your desire to be with this kindergarten teacher —

MS. ARENTZEN: Because of the artwork.

MS. FALINO: — because of the art. Well, so they listened.

MS. ARENTZEN: And it was a —

MS. FALINO: And they had indoor plumbing.

MS. ARENTZEN: Yes. [Laughs.] Well, Ridgewood always had the best of everything — [they laugh] — and still does.

MS. FALINO: Well, that's fascinating.

So then — so you were making a variety of things in high school, but you weren't doing jewelry work; you were doing painting?

MS. ARENTZEN: Girl Scouts — even in grammar school, there was a metal project and bending wire and things like that. We did make jewelry, made a little candlestick without the solder and — [inaudible] — no, not really. It was — we were always doing something.

MS. FALINO: Always making something. So then when you — when you decided to go to college, what made you decide to go to Skidmore?

MS. ARENTZEN: Well, I wanted to go to a college that wasn't bigger than 10,000 people. I wanted to have a strong art program. I wanted to be east of the Mississippi and not too far south.

MS. FALINO: And not too far from home.

MS. ARENTZEN: Oh, no, that would have been okay.

MS. FALINO: That would have been okay. Okay.

MS. ARENTZEN: Yes, that would have been okay. But I liked the whole New England, East Coast culture. It was the main thing that really attracted — remember, I'm an East Coast family, you know, with the —

MS. FALINO: Right. That was —

MS. ARENTZEN: — something different. [Laughs.] My mother did not marry the musician because she would have to move to California.

MS. FALINO: Ah. But you were rooted out here.

MS. ARENTZEN: Definitely rooted. And I came up with three colleges: Syracuse [University, Syracuse, NY], Skidmore [College, Saratoga Springs, NY] and Yale [University, New Haven, CT]. There was a little difficulty there with Yale because they did not accept women.

MS. FALINO: Oh, that was a problem.

MS. ARENTZEN: But — [inaudible] — I also knew that there's a back route. If you went to Cooper Union [New York, NY] for two years, you could go to Yale tuition-free —

MS. FALINO: Oh, really.

MS. ARENTZEN: — then tuition-free to finish up there and get your M.F.A. — or to get your B.F.A. It was a circuitous route, and — but it could be done.

MS. FALINO: But you didn't think of applying to Cooper Union, or did you?

MS. ARENTZEN: I thought about it, but I knew enough about the city because in high school, you know, even with girlfriends, you know, we'd go into the city, and I can remember going around — walking around the village and going to Sam Kramer's store — [inaudible] — high school person. And I thought, hmm, this is really interesting; I

don't identify with this studio, but it's really interesting. [Laughs.]

And I wrote to Yale for an application, and I got a really nasty letter back from saying they do not accept women. So that left Skidmore and Syracuse. And my mother, father and I went up to see Skidmore, and then my father and I flew up to Syracuse to see Syracuse. And I looked at the catalogs. I had the catalogs of all three, of course, because in those days you — [inaudible] — catalogs, right — [inaudible] — catalogs. And I chose Skidmore. And there was something about Syracuse that didn't sit right with me. And I still can't put my finger on it, but I just couldn't. And I'm so glad that I did go to Skidmore.

There's something I'd like to mention to you if you — and you may know it, but the state of New York certifies a school to have a B.F.A. program — [inaudible] — a B.S. program or a B.A. And it has to do with the amount of studio artwork that you have. And if you, you know, are in a B.A. program anywhere, then anyway, about a quarter of your major — a quarter of your classes would be in your major.

MS. FALINO: In your concentration, yeah.

MS. ARENTZEN: That's hardly enough.

MS. FALINO: Right. That's the liberal arts or —

MS. ARENTZEN: If it's a B.F.A., it can be more toward — between half and three-quarters. And that's quite a lot. But then the academic classes suffer. B.S. is sort of right in the middle.

MS. FALINO: Bachelor's of science.

MS. ARENTZEN: Yes. And that's what Skidmore gave. And that meant I had a lot of academic subjects and a lot of studio art. But what's even more important at Skidmore was the fact that unlike Syracuse and many art schools, art schools would generally — B.F.A. programs would start with a foundation year, and then you would go into a concentration. Skidmore didn't have that luxury because it was a small school. And so you would have your preliminary courses your freshman year, maybe advanced versions of those in some cases, and then the vast array of courses that were available — and there were a lot because then a third of the student body was majoring in art — I had experience in graphic arts. I had Arline Fisch for lettering. I had Arline Fisch for weaving in the one or two years that she was there. And I did a lot of painting and drawing, which was really my forte. I thought of textile design as a vocation. I took jewelry with Earl Pardon, one course, took — which was a disaster — took a course in enameling.

MS. FALINO: With whom?

MS. ARENTZEN: Earl.

MS. FALINO: With Earl.

MS. ARENTZEN: Did a senior project under Earl and painting with Earl, which was —

MS. FALINO: And — Okay, so he was a colorist, yeah, so —

MS. ARENTZEN: — which was an extraordinary experience. I saw differently after every class with him. It was — that was — and we were friends. We were friendly, you know? The jewelry course was a disaster because it was a semester when one of the faculty members took a sabbatical, and he had to fill in for some of that, at least one course. And so they put jewelry and enameling and advanced jewelry together. And it — you never got to talk. I mean, you'd wait half an hour. And I was given no encouragement whatsoever to stay in jewelry.

MS. FALINO: So for college, you self — identified yourself as a — as an artist, or you wanted to become an artist.

MS. ARENTZEN: Oh, yeah.

MS. FALINO: So — and did you know what medium you wanted when you entered college?

MS. ARENTZEN: No, but I realized that I wanted to earn my living doing this and that not even architecture, for which you would have a client, would allow you to control the whole process. And I liked the idea of making things for people. I had a kid game with a — with some friends where we'd play business, and we would have a dress-designing corporation. And we had an elevator marked off in this lobby of — entryway of our parents' home, and we'd set up tables and make things out of Tinkertoys — [inaudible] — like an office, and we did designs, and we'd put them in — we filed them, and we'd pretend we had clients.

MS. FALINO: [Laughs.] I love it.

MS. ARENTZEN: And I did jewelry. I still have some of those papers. It's hilarious. And so the idea of doing something for people was always there, I think — [inaudible] —

MS. FALINO: And being in charge of it.

MS. ARENTZEN: And being in charge of it. I could very quickly see that an entry level in textile design — I had a wonderful adviser for that too, adviser there who was a textile person. And —

MS. FALINO: Not Arline. Arline was — she didn't teach fiber there, did she?

MS. ARENTZEN: No, no, no, she — weaving. I had her for weaving.

MS. FALINO: Weaving, okay.

MS. ARENTZEN: But she went off to San Diego by the time I was a senior. And it was clear that an entry-level job would have been interesting and fun, but it would be a long time before your — it would be years. You know, in your 20s, how you think two or three years is an eternity. And so I didn't do that, but I thought, well, I could maybe teach some of this, and not at a university because you need an advanced degree and a lot more experience, to say nothing of skill and talent in crafts. And so the — while I came up — the craft students — [inaudible] — Y came up. I interviewed with the Y.

MS. FALINO: Wait a minute.

MS. ARENTZEN: The YMCA.

MS. FALINO: This was after — before —

MS. ARENTZEN: This was in May, I guess, of my senior year in college, where you're thinking of getting a job. I'm always very focused on trying to do things, but I realized I couldn't and thought teaching might work. So the Y came up, and they said, well, we've got something in New York City called the Craft Students League; you might ask them. So I made an appointment with the Craft Students League director with whom I spoke, and she said, "Well, we don't have an opening because we have somebody teaching metalwork" and wanted a person jewelry and enameling.

MS. FALINO: And who was that?

MS. ARENTZEN: Adda Husted-Andersen. And so I went in and met her. The director of Craft Students League gave me 15 cents for the crosstown bus, told me how to get on it, where her studio was, and I went over and had an interview. And I knew things weren't going well. And she said, "Is your last name Danish, by the way?" And I said yes. She said, "Oh." And then I thanked her very much, and I said I had to get back to the Port Authority building to get a bus back to Saratoga. And you know, I had gloves, hat and a little cotton suit. [They laugh.] And she said — and I said it was very nice meeting her, and she said that she was just figuring out how much she could afford to pay me and she would write to me. She was going to back to Denmark every summer for, I guess, six to eight weeks. So I worked at the Girl Scout camp that I had worked at every summer, and then it turned up on time in September.

MS. FALINO: Very good. So you were always thinking about practical applications of your — of your work —

MS. ARENTZEN: I think so.

MS. FALINO: — that it — you know, it wasn't just an open-ended, I love art and I like, you know, using my hands or whatever, but rather, you wanted to — you were interested in the practical application, to make a living.

MS. ARENTZEN: Yes, as a vocation. As a vocation, yes. Yes, my adviser said to me, when I mentioned what I wanted to do when I got out of Skidmore, she said, "Oh, well, dear, we don't think of you as a crafts person." [They laugh.] And I said, "I know, but I think I can learn this. I've been encouraged from the design aspect. I think I want to try this." But I was on my own to find a way for sure.

MS. FALINO: Right. All right, we're going to stop for a moment while I change the disc here. So let's see.

[End of Disc.]

MR. FALINO: Okay. This is track two of my interview with Glenda Arentzen.

And you were — you were telling us about your time at Skidmore. Would you tell us — just give us some little bits of your reminiscences about your professors in the arts. You mentioned that your first experience with Earl was a little difficult because of the class.

MS. ARENTZEN: That's right.

MS. FALINO: But then you got to know him. So how —

MS. ARENTZEN: Yes. Because he was encouraging because he — in a way, because during the critiques, he said, "you design so well." And he had already had me in painting at the time, and he said, "And you design well as a painter as well as a craftsperson, so you have a three-dimensional sensitivity as well as two-dimensional." I personally think I'm much more two-dimensional and much more — much less interested in color, but nonetheless, you know, physically, you change over the years. [Laughs.] And that might have something to do with it.

MS. FALINO: And what was his teaching style like?

MS. ARENTZEN: Oh, he's very much on task. And he was a superb craftsperson and truly an artist.

MS. FALINO: But did — was he — was he teaching what he was making, or was he really teaching more broadly? He taught enameling and — enameling and what else?

MS. ARENTZEN: Enameling, painting and jewelry.

MS. FALINO: And jewelry.

MS. ARENTZEN: At the time, actually, there was only one course — one semester in jewelry possible, one semester in enameling and one semester in painting, beginning painting course. That was it if you wanted to have Earl Pardon. I think he may have been teaching some drawing, but I had somebody else for drawing.

MS. FALINO: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] He didn't you teach you raising? You didn't do metalsmithing; you did jewelry.

MS. ARENTZEN: But that I did in Copenhagen.

MS. FALINO: Okay.

MS. ARENTZEN: Yes. And you remember, in this era, Scandinavian design was it. Function — that — interesting point, you know, functionality, I think one of the reasons I was always interested in doing things for people is because the Scandinavian and European model was functionality — functionality, smooth surfaces, some personal expression. It was the Americans, I think, that really took the personal expression bowl [ph] and ran with it, as did the painters with abstract expressionism and other things. But Earl was an outreach. He had just come back from serving — having a sabbatical where he designed for —

MS. FALINO: For Towle?

MS. ARENTZEN: Yes, one of the big silver companies.

MS. FALINO: And so he came — so you had him after his experience with Towle Silversmiths.

MS. ARENTZEN: That's right.

MS. FALINO: Okay.

MS. ARENTZEN: And he had been at Skidmore before, of course. And so some that came into play because he used that ear very well in developing some private architecture permissions too. So he was out in the world as well as in the studio. Yes.

MS. FALINO: Yes. So he had more practical applications for you to think about?

MS. ARENTZEN: He was broad-ranged, very balanced, very broad. He knew when he was talking about metal work as art and metal work as function. He knew the difference.

MS. FALINO: Did he ever talk about his experiences with the Handy and Harman conferences that Margret Craver ran?

MS. ARENTZEN: Margret — no, only that he had participated.

MS. FALINO: Okay.

MS. ARENTZEN: Nothing that I remember.

MS. FALINO: Right.

MS. ARENTZEN: One of the outreach things that he did was to have a traveling exhibition of craft come to Skidmore. He did not curate it, but it came. And a [Ruth] Radakovich pin that was in it. There were four units, one was — one of the units was either a moonstone or — [inaudible]. And there was some granulation on one of the — I think — it's one that's depicted often. And I looked at it. And that was — [inaudible] — to see that piece. And it was —

MS. FALINO: Was that the Hickok show that was up in Rochester?

MS. ARENTZEN: It traveled nationwide.

MS. FALINO: I don't know which one it was. I'll look into that. But a Ruth Radakovich pin.

MS. ARENTZEN: And I thought, "I want to make that."

MS. FALINO: Ah.

MS. ARENTZEN: "That's what I want to do."

Earl Pardon, by the way, taught granulation. A very different system is what has been perfected and is used many craftspeople now. His was a friction soldering. And he would put a pallion [ph] of sterling silver on silver or 14-carat gold on gold but mostly silver — he would do — and he would heat it in such a way with, you know, a gas torch, nothing fancy — fine point, but gas torch. And it would form a ball, and it would revolve, and the friction would cause it to adhere to the silver below.

MS. FALINO: Really?

MS. ARENTZEN: Really. Now, you can't do a field of those little granules. You could do lines, you could do dots, but you couldn't do a field. So there are many improvements on what he learned to do some of our —

MS. FALINO: And that was in the early '60s.

MS. ARENTZEN: That's right.

MS. FALINO: And John Paul Miller had already been doing his own out in Cleveland, but very different.

MS. ARENTZEN: Yes. And with John Paul Miller — I guess it was somewhere between 62 and — maybe the late '60s — sometime in the '60s. Anyway, John Paul Miller did a demonstration — not a demonstration, but a lecture with detailed slides of the process.

MS. FALINO: Hah. Where did — where did you see that?

MS. ARENTZEN: The museum.

MS. FALINO: At the Museum of Contemporary Craft — American Craft Museum?

MS. ARENTZEN: Yes. Mm-hmm.

MS. FALINO: I guess it was Contemporary Craft Museum.

MS. ARENTZEN: [Laughs.] Yes.

MS. FALINO: Oh, really? Did you ever see the film that he did?

MS. ARENTZEN: I don't think so, unless he showed that then, and I'm conflating the slides that he showed with the —

MS. FALINO: Yes, it's possible. Mm-hmm.

MS. ARENTZEN: And somebody raised their hand and said, "How do you polish it, get the bright surface that you present in the finished piece?" And his answer was, "I have to keep something for myself."

MS. FALINO: You mean he didn't want to tell.

MS. ARENTZEN: That's right.

MS. FALINO: Oh. [Laughs.]

MS. ARENTZEN: He did so graciously, it is very unusual for a craftsman in any era to not tell something. It's very unusual.

MS. FALINO: Yes. Well, it was I think very hard-won knowledge for him, and it was his — one of his claims to fame, I guess. Interesting. It is — I understand your point.

MS. ARENTZEN: Yes. It's — his work strikes me as being so breathtakingly over the top, beautiful and in thought because of the depth of the enamels just involving you through so many layers and things that his work would be admired, recognized, treasured and important for that alone.

MS. FALINO: Yes.

MS. ARENTZEN: I don't think it had anything to do with the little gold balls, except that it did form a texture to be used in a way that was — supported everything else that was really important about his pieces.

MS. FALINO: Yes. Well, he was younger then. I think he's — I think he did share that — a lot of that information later.

So — okay, so that was Earl. So tell us now about your experiences with Arline Fisch.

MS. ARENTZEN: Well, I took a lettering course with her. And the weaving course I took with her, I later asked about — asked her because the person who had been teaching weaving retired, and so she was brought in to do that. Or she was already on the faculty, but then she was brought in to do the weaving, teaching the weaving. So she went to Haystack [Mountain School of Crafts, Deer Isle, ME] and took I guess a long summer of weaving — [laughs] — or even just one course or something. I don't know what else she did.

MS. FALINO: I think maybe she studied with Jack Lenor Larsen in that summer.

MS. ARENTZEN: I would believe it.

MS. FALINO: I'd have to double-check that.

MS. ARENTZEN: And so she came back to Skidmore and said, "I will now be teaching weaving."

MS. FALINO: [Laughs.]

MS. ARENTZEN: She was asked to do it, you know.

And there three of us in the class. And she set up her own loom and wove and then periodically came around to check on what the three of us were doing. I still have some of those pieces. It was in the loft of an old barn that was heated. And so I took a loom, then I had to climb upstairs in a room about this big with just with the loom. And she was way down there. I was in — you know, I could look down into the lower level. She was there. And then Rhoda Goldberg was over here downstairs. And the other one was sort of under me in a loom, and I couldn't see that person; I don't remember who that was. [Laughs.]

MS. FALINO: So it was just three of you in the class. How beautiful.

MS. ARENTZEN: Yes. And she was very much an on-task teacher.

MS. FALINO: So she was teaching you technique?

MS. ARENTZEN: We did a sampler.

MS. FALINO: A — oh, okay.

MS. ARENTZEN: A long sampler on one warp trying different techniques and different yarns and different patterns — all these different things. It was a long —

MS. FALINO: So that you would master them.

MS. ARENTZEN: — sampler, or at least have ideas for other projects. And then the next project was to take one of those samples and design something based on that. So you already had the technique kind of in mind, but you could change the design of it and make something larger. And then there was a third thing that was of your own impetus.

MS. FALINO: So she gave you the vocabulary of techniques and then allowed you to build on that.

MS. ARENTZEN: Yes. And she — very much a designer and knew what would work and what wouldn't, and —

[inaudible].

MS. FALINO: So lettering and weaving.

MS. ARENTZEN: Yeah. Hand lettering.

MS. FALINO: Hand lettering. A lost art.

MS. ARENTZEN: Pre-digital. Oh.

MS. FALINO: [Laughs.]

MS. ARENTZEN: Ah, it was — it was really, really something else. I don't really remember much about it. It did involve the last project, designing a small booklet and then just a poem that we did. And it was — I learned very — some very important things about the spacing of letters, words, graphic design. It was really, of course, in graphic design.

MS. FALINO: Yeah, and the subtleties of those relationships.

MS. ARENTZEN: So important to know that.

MS. FALINO: That — and were there any other art teachers who were particularly important for you at Skidmore?

MS. ARENTZEN: Yes. My life drawing professor, John Heins, was the one that had come from New York, where he had gotten his advanced degrees at Teachers College Columbia, which was the only place for an advanced degree then — I think. Cooper probably did, but it wasn't in painting and sculpture. Pratt might have, but I'm sure that might have a little bit earlier for them. I'm not sure about that.

But he talked to me about Teachers College and how many artists and craftspeople had gone there, which many people forget. And so I considered that. And I thought, "Well, now, this is interesting." My Skiddy friends were thinking of sharing an apartment in New York — [inaudible] — different places — sounds really like fun, like a gentle landing. And I had gotten the job with Adda. And my father said, "You must get your credits for college for teaching. You must do that." And he said, "I will find a way for supporting that." And so I went. And that was part-time for two years. And I paid for all the extraneous expenses. But it was a wonderful gift because it was a program that really was organized to train you as an artist, and people don't understand that.

MS. FALINO: But before we go on to Columbia —

MS. ARENTZEN: Yes, back to Skidmore.

MS. FALINO: Were there any other teachers before we move on from that at Skidmore?

MS. ARENTZEN: Well, Skidmore was small enough, you got to know a lot — know a lot of them as people. They exhibited at the college. So you knew them as artists. And you may not have had them for class, but you absorbed so much.

MS. FALINO: And so it was a community of art teachers and students.

MS. ARENTZEN: Absolutely.

MS. FALINO: And you felt very comfortable there.

MS. ARENTZEN: Oh, very. Very.

MS. FALINO: [Inaudible] —

MS. ARENTZEN: Our history professor was wonderful. And my 50th college reunion was last June. And a group of us had a table for our history professor, who was older than God now.

MS. FALINO: [Laughs.]

MS. ARENTZEN: Spungy is the term that was used. [They laugh.] But he was always that way. And he was a wonderful teacher. And he still is a wonderful teacher. He's a very stimulating man with whom to speak.

MS. FALINO: Now, what about classmates? Are any artists that you got very connected to or influenced you in any particular way?

MS. ARENTZEN: I remember one young lady who was in my freshman drawing class. I can't remember her name.

She only stayed a year, and she transferred to the Cleveland Institute of Art because Skidmore wasn't focused enough for her. And we sat next to each other. And we were — we were certainly competitive with each other, and I missed that when she left. But it was a very supportive give-and-take because we were talking about things that other — the other students in the class were even noticing yet in a way. And this sounds kind of braggy, but — not very humble, but the fact is we had better preparation from high school.

MS. FALINO: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] So you had a leg up.

And what about — what about metalsmiths? Any metalsmithing students that you fell in with?

MS. ARENTZEN: Well, yes. Helen Shirk was a year behind me.

MS. FALINO: Oh. Okay.

MS. ARENTZEN: Helen Shirk and I met when I was a freshman and she was in high school, and we were both dating guys at West Point in the plebe class in the same company. And that's how I met her. And when it came time to be big sister to somebody —

MS. FALINO: You were her big sister?

MS. ARENTZEN: I was her big sister.

MS. FALINO: [Laughs.]

MS. ARENTZEN: And she came to Skidmore with a twin sister who became a nurse.

MS. FALINO: I did not know that.

MS. ARENTZEN: And a very different person, very different person.

And so I knew her. And because art classes at Skidmore generally beyond — well, certainly beyond the foundation courses — if you took jewelry, you'd have — they'd be for, like, juniors and seniors or sophomores and juniors or something — all classes were built like that, so we were in actually the same American history class my senior year, and we were in the same jewelry class, enamel class.

MS. FALINO: Nice. Very nice.

MS. ARENTZEN: And Earl being Earl and ambitious for his students as well as his own work but for the school too, had several of us apply for Young Americans. He said it is what done — it is done here. It's —

MS. FALINO: Good for him. Smart man. So you would —

MS. ARENTZEN: And we both had pieces in it.

MS. FALINO: You both did.

And that's where you had your little box.

MS. ARENTZEN: That's right.

MS. FALINO: All right. Now, I don't have a picture of the box, I don't think, but can you describe it for us? Because I think — although I know it wasn't a huge success, it was an important first piece, and of course, you got into Young Americans.

MS. ARENTZEN: That's right. Earl, for his own use and for those of his students, had wooden boxes made that were very elegant and perfect. And they had a hole in the middle. And they — the hole fit plaques from Thompson that were —

MS. FALINO: Thompson Enamel.

MS. ARENTZEN: — which were pre-enameled. And it was —

MS. FALINO: Pre-enameled with a — with a counterenamel, you mean?

MS. ARENTZEN: With both. With both a white on the top and —

MS. FALINO: Really?

MS. ARENTZEN: — counter on the — on the back.

MS. FALINO: And the boxes were made by whom?

MS. ARENTZEN: I don't know.

MS. FALINO: Okay.

MS. ARENTZEN: If I knew — [inaudible].

MS. FALINO: Okay. So this was an exercise. He had these boxes made and ready for his students.

MS. ARENTZEN: Yes.

MS. FALINO: They were all the same kind of box, or they were different?

MS. ARENTZEN: Yes. No, no. The same.

MS. FALINO: So you all had the same exercise to speak — so to speak.

MS. ARENTZEN: Yes. [Laughs.] And you — it was a project you could elect or not. But what he wanted to do for you is to give you an experience without having to fool around with the counter and the — and the top, a painterly experience and a possibility of perhaps embellishing it in some way to do something. And mine were blues [ph], and I used a lot of foils and things like that. And Helen also embedded I think some silver dots on the side through — hers was more decorative, and mine was more painterly. That's what we did. And it's referred to and described in an issue of American Craft, except they put my name to her box.

MS. FALINO: Oh, no. Let the record show —

MS. ARENTZEN: So it goes.

MS. FALINO: [Laughs.]

But now, you had a problem with the box or you had a problem with Earl?

MS. ARENTZEN: No, my problem with this — the jewelry setup for the course, for the jewelry course, that was the big problem. Enameling wasn't so bad because I took that the next year, and the class wasn't that filled. I mean, it was a full class, you know, 15 to 18 people. But the jewelry class was a total disaster.

MS. FALINO: Oh. So that's — it wasn't — the box wasn't the problem.

MS. ARENTZEN: Oh, no, no, no, no. No, no, no.

MS. FALINO: It was the class. Okay.

MS. ARENTZEN: And what — Earl did the best he could. I mean, if you are teaching two courses and advising special projects, there weren't enough places for the students to sit.

MS. FALINO: Goodness.

MS. ARENTZEN: And he was good about coming back on odd hours and helping with whoever had free time and sitting there making things. He was very good about it. But he was — it was not a good — not a good situation.

MS. FALINO: So — but you — getting into Young Americans — and this was before you graduated. Is that right?

MS. ARENTZEN: Well — yes, at the end of the year.

MS. FALINO: It must have been quite wonderful to have a — have a show in New York City that included your work.

MS. ARENTZEN: I didn't know what that meant.

MS. FALINO: So you — when you came to New York for the opening —

MS. ARENTZEN: Oh, I didn't come for the opening.

MS. FALINO: You didn't come for the opening?

MS. ARENTZEN: No — which I think is really too bad. I thought at the time — when I delivered the box, I thought,

"Oh, well, this is convenient; I don't have to mail it and spend all that money to ship it and find boxes because I have an interview the Museum of Modern Art for a job perspective, a job." And that went really well. The person that interviewed me was so sweet. And I knew I could type at 25 words —

MS. FALINO: A minute.

MS. ARENTZEN: — per day. [Laughs.] I knew I could — I was sort of skilled that way, but I was not a typist. I did not present myself as that. I was — I was just wondering if they had any kind of a job. And she said, "well, it's possible, but I really" — she said, "I really think — let me just give you an example of what has to — you know, your job description, what would be. And part of it I think you'd do just very, very well, we'd love to see you here, but it — you really do need to type, dear."

MS. FALINO: [Laughs.]

MS. ARENTZEN: And I said, "Well, I really want to be a craftsman, and I have this box on my lap that I have to deliver across this street after I leave you." I said, "I think I'm going to see where that takes me first. But it was really nice of you to mention that because you've done it in such a nice way." [They laugh.]

MS. FALINO: That was — that — it's an interesting exchange.

MS. ARENTZEN: Wasn't that nice? Wasn't that nice?

MS. FALINO: And I — and there you are, you know. It's, like, you know, there's — there are two paths.

MS. ARENTZEN: That was a moment where — well, the poem in Arline's lettering class that I chose was "The Path Not Taken."

MS. FALINO: By Robert Frost.

MS. ARENTZEN: Yes.

MS. FALINO: I love that. One of my favorites.

Now, that's what — that's what I like about these interviews, because it is really about those paths, you know. At each moment, you know, you have these opportunities to change your path, and the rest is history, isn't it?

MS. ARENTZEN: Yeah. And even if you don't know that it's a change, it's going to be a change.

MS. FALINO: Yes. Yes.

So let's see — and this was in the early '60s. So was it Paul Smith that you delivered your box to?

MS. ARENTZEN: It was the registrar, of whom I'm — was very fond. She deceased now.

MS. FALINO: She just passed away.

MS. ARENTZEN: Yes. At a very old age.

MS. FALINO: And I can't think of her name.

MS. ARENTZEN: Long name. Beginning with W, maybe? Last name?

MS. FALINO: Doris [ph]?

MS. ARENTZEN: Doris [ph].

MS. FALINO: I will find her name.

MS. ARENTZEN: Yes. Oh, she was just wonderful.

MS. FALINO: So you — so you didn't really understand what a big opportunity Earl had created for you by suggesting that you submit your work. At the time you just thought it was something else to do, and —

MS. ARENTZEN: No. Well, it wasn't just something else because along anybody's life, you know that you have to — your next objective is high school, and your next objective is college, you know. And you — if you enjoy the challenge, even just for the sake of the challenge, you know, you can just do it.

MS. FALINO: Right.

Well, you know, as you know, the Young Americans series proved to be a real proving ground for so many young artists, really got them their first foot in the door of museums and gave them the opportunity to see what the possibilities were in terms of exhibiting. You were reading *Craft Horizons* at the time, I assume. And *Craft Horizons* always had advertisements for, you know, applying to different shows around the country.

MS. ARENTZEN: That's right. And that's what I did.

MS. FALINO: Did you ever apply to the Wichita nationals?

MS. ARENTZEN: No. There was something in Pennsylvania, in Scranton, that I did for at least two, maybe three years, until they no longer — they took a different direction with their shows in some way. Anyway, that — so I did apply to shows.

MS. FALINO: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] So that — but that — so that gave you your first taste.

MS. ARENTZEN: Yes. And all through the '60s and '70s, I would apply to shows. I would take it as a professional obligation, in a way, to apply for a show every year. And I did. And I was very happy to get into so many.

MS. FALINO: Good. Good.

Now, so by the time you finish college, you really had decided that you were going to be a metalsmith or a jeweler?

MS. ARENTZEN: Yes. Well, by the time I — yes, I really — that was my dream.

MS. FALINO: That was your dream at that time. So who were your big heroes in the — in the metalsmithing world at that point? I mean, you knew — you knew Earl. He was a well-respected jeweler on his own. So who else — who else were you aware of in those days that you looked up to?

MS. ARENTZEN: Anybody that Earl mentioned because that was my conduit.

MS. FALINO: So did he mention Margret Craver?

MS. ARENTZEN: Oh, yes.

MS. FALINO: So —

MS. ARENTZEN: Finally. Yes. And my friends in the Boston area still do because some of them knew her fairly well in the Boston area.

I'm a — I'm a member of something called Forge and Gorge.

MS. FALINO: Yes.

MS. ARENTZEN: And it's nine now female metalsmiths who get together once a month, year-round — well, maybe not in the summer sometimes — but for shop talk and gourmet potluck supper.

MS. FALINO: And this has been going on for how many years?

MS. ARENTZEN: Somewhere between 15 and 20.

MS. FALINO: Wow.

MS. ARENTZEN: But I've only been a member for about 13.

MS. FALINO: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.] And who are the members?

MS. ARENTZEN: Well, right now, Cindy Eid, Linda Kindler Priest, Beth Solomon, Munya Upin —

MS. FALINO: Upin?

MS. ARENTZEN: — Upin, yes — Tovaes —

MS. FALINO: Who is Tovaes?

MS. ARENTZEN: Her husband.

MS. FALINO: Oh.

MS. ARENTZEN: It's her — that's her married name.

MS. FALINO: Oh. Munya. Munya's last name? Okay.

MS. ARENTZEN: But she goes — she doesn't —

MS. FALINO: She goes by Munya.

MS. ARENTZEN: Yes.

She's just opened a gallery, by the way.

MS. FALINO: Munya?

MS. ARENTZEN: [Laughs.] I know.

MS. FALINO: Wow. Oh, that's fantastic.

MS. ARENTZEN: And it's doing well, and it's wonderful. As she says, "My whole early background was retailing, for heaven's sakes."

MS. FALINO: Oh, this is the right moment, then.

MS. ARENTZEN: And she's made a lot of — and she knows everybody in the area because of her teaching at the high school.

MS. FALINO: Right. That's right. Great.

MS. ARENTZEN: And she's very personable. And she's very well-organized.

MS. FALINO: How fantastic.

MS. ARENTZEN: And she hasn't had a migraine headache since she signed the lease. [They laugh.]

MS. FALINO: I'm going to have to find out more.

So Cindy, Beth, Munya — who else did you say?

MS. ARENTZEN: Let's see — Linda Kindler Priest.

MS. FALINO: Oh, Linda.

MS. ARENTZEN: Jan Stigberg, who was one of the founders but is no longer active as a metalsmith. I mentioned Cindy Eid. Deborah Richardson, who does a low end silver collection for — in shows, really low end and is quite remarkable for doing that. Paula Wolfe, who taught at Lincoln-Sudbury high school and does hollowware exclusively, really wonderful things. See, I'm marching around suburban Boston. I just — [Laughs] —

MS. FALINO: Not Betsy Ruchelle [ph], or — no.

MS. ARENTZEN: No. It used to be fairly balanced between people who did — oh, oh, oh. Sarah Nelson, who taught at the Worcester Craft Center.

MS. FALINO: Okay.

MS. ARENTZEN: And when they reorganized and cut faculty, cut the remuneration for the faculty and then put in a stipulation that if your class doesn't fill to a certain number, it will not be given — she never had any trouble with that, but it was too iffy. And the DeCordova — several of these people teach at the DeCordova.

MS. FALINO: Yeah. That's — because that's closed, right?

MS. ARENTZEN: The classes that they give now are family participatory and not necessarily metal. I mean, the tools and stuff are all —

MS. FALINO: Not very skilled.

MS. ARENTZEN: Oh, no. Skill is nothing. You know, it's the Etsy culture. And — I shouldn't have said that. The — all those tools have been glommed onto by — and financed by two or three women who have been steady, serious amateurs at the DeCordova. And what they want to do is to pick up all that stuff and give it to an Art

Center [possibly Newtown Art Center], which has a big program, and they want to put it in a studio there. And the payback for them will be, they will control the use of the tools and use them free for themselves. So they're going to try to move the tools and have a studio for themselves at the art center, I am told.

Now, enter Munya, no shrinking violet on some going causes — [Laughs] — because she's on the board of Metalwerx. Cindy Eid is as well. And so Munya was the first to realize this was happening. And she wants to gather all those tools and give them to — get them, finance it so they all go to Metalwerx.

MS. FALINO: Which is a — which is a — it's not a non-profit, Metalwerx, it's — but it offers classes, and it offers bench space —

MS. ARENTZEN: That's right.

MS. FALINO: — to jewelers and camaraderie and some workshops.

MS. ARENTZEN: They probably have a gallery, and they recently had a trade shows of some — mini trade show. They either own their own — they don't own their own building, but I think they have a sweetheart deal on a building there. So they have a self-standing —

MS. FALINO: Yes, they do — which I've been to.

But to go back, those tools and that studio at DeCordova — and this is a little bit of a detour from our conversation — but that — those were the tools, and what the building was named for, a very early and important Lexington metro west jeweler — and I cannot remember her name right now, but you didn't know her. We'll have to come back to this. I'll find her name tomorrow. I'll come up with it.

MS. ARENTZEN: Oh. No. I remember meeting a woman who had founded it or at least founded the present incarnation of it, been the motivating force behind that.

MS. FALINO: I — she wasn't — she lived in Lincoln — [inaudible]. But she also was in a number of shows when she was an early pioneer. And it was — it was based upon her leadership that that workshop had been established to begin with.

MS. ARENTZEN: Maybe that's the same person I'm thinking because she'd be a contemporary of mine.

MS. FALINO: So anyway, let's go back to Forge and —

MS. ARENTZEN: Gorge.

MS. FALINO: Forge and Gorge, which I love the name. So that's been a great kind of support system for you.

MS. ARENTZEN: Oh, yeah.

MS. FALINO: And you share things, or you probably share tools occasionally or help people out with ideas.

MS. ARENTZEN: Oh, it's been — it's been wonderful because New Hampshire's — living — moving to New Hampshire, moving the studio to New Hampshire was a big shock. And in New Hampshire, I think I mentioned in one of the interviews of way back that it's impolite to stand out in New Hampshire, so the kind of avant-garde jewelry that anybody, my colleagues and myself, would be making would not be appropriate dress. Furthermore, so many of the people, craftspeople, who moved to New Hampshire to do their artwork did it as much for the lifestyle as for the objects.

Now, I recognize, being much older and wiser, that in a big city like New York, you have to stand out in — speaking in a larger voice, so larger jewelry is appropriate in New York as an identity thing and not worried about your lifestyle; you're just worried about paying for it in New York, so — [they laugh] —

MS. FALINO: So — all right, so we were talking about exhibiting, we talked about the Young Americans show, and I don't know quite how we got to these Forge and Gorge folks, but it's interesting they're all female. No man in the group?

MS. ARENTZEN: No. Anne Besse-Shepard used to be in it.

MS. FALINO: Oh, yeah.

MS. ARENTZEN: And she — when she gave up making jewelry, she gave up Forge and Gorge. But anyway, she knew — she had a friend who had a low-end gold business, multiples, a factory. And Jan Stigberg had actually worked for this guy, and one of the other persons had worked for him. And he was invited to dinner once,

because every now and then we invite somebody for dinner. And a year later somebody suggested we invite him to be a member. And I had to speak out because I thought there was something special about it being just female.

MS. FALINO: Interesting.

MS. ARENTZEN: And I think we should carefully consider how the chemistry changes, even if he is one of the — I mean, he's not gay, but he's one of the girls, so to speak. I mean, he relates very well —

MS. FALINO: Relates — he relates well to everybody.

MS. ARENTZEN: Yes. But I just think we'd become a different type of organization.

Oh, another thing: People do ask about joining. And we very gracefully say that we keep it to eight or nine because that it's the number that can fit around the table for dinner.

MS. FALINO: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.] And you're not a formal group. I mean, you're not incorporated or anything. You're just —

MS. ARENTZEN: No incorporation, no bylaws, no — [inaudible] — no handshake. [They laugh.] But what's really interesting, you can go to the — especially when — and oh, Sally Craig was a member. But she was way out in Amherst. And Conna Gildae, who did some of the big trade shows with — it was her collection. Sally Craig had studied with Arlene too and did — has incorporated woven metal into her work in a very distinctive way.

MS. FALINO: Or Yoshiko Yamamoto?

MS. ARENTZEN: No. Wonder why that is.

MS. FALINO: Well, she was — she's — she was very devoted to her work. She may not have had a lot of free time.

MS. ARENTZEN: I think that's true because she would have been a great addition. And I don't think she lives exactly on this — that side of Boston.

MS. FALINO: She lives right by Symphony Hall.

MS. ARENTZEN: Oh, yeah. Maybe that — maybe that counts for — that's interesting.

MS. FALINO: But what did you get out of being just a women's group, if you could just think about that for a minute — I mean, what — you obviously had a strong feeling about it, so what did you feel you gained by being in all women's group of metalsmiths?

MS. ARENTZEN: Support.

MS. FALINO: Plain and simple.

MS. ARENTZEN: That just came out. It's support, personal and professional. I think the professional support might have come with males being at table as well. Such as if you are throwing out — for instance, out of — after a fair — "I just got an order for so — from so-and-so. Has anybody had any dealings with them?"

MS. FALINO: Right.

MS. ARENTZEN: That kind of thing.

Now, I think a woman give — I know the women around the table give a nuanced description of their dealings. You know, "these are the pluses, these are the minuses. This is how I got around this plus, this minus. Your work might be a — I don't think you'd get in that detail."

MS. FALINO: See, and you think people are more forthcoming, and you can also be more vulnerable in that group, you can open yourself up.

MS. ARENTZEN: Absolutely. Absolutely. Especially — and they're all ages. I'm the oldest but not that much. And the youngest is now, you know, 40. [Inaudible] — looking for younger people, which is not so easy. But a lot of the personal things come up too. And we share life experience around that and are supportive and sometimes say — you know, Cindy will sometimes boom out at one person and say, "pull up your socks and get on with it. Stop this crap." [They laugh.] Or — but it's rarely that kind of thing. It's usually much more supportive.

MS. FALINO: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.] Well, that's support too when Cindy says that.

MS. ARENTZEN: And it's — and it's not, "everything you do is fine."

Oh, and we bring out work. Part of the obligation is bringing out work.

MS. FALINO: So you share your latest —

MS. ARENTZEN: So we share the work. And that's been very helpful for me, especially now since I deal only with a few galleries, and I don't really do shows so much anymore. It's very helpful for me because, I don't want you to say, "yes," "no," "good." Or maybe sometimes, because I'm the oldest and go back to the old days, they're a little reticent to say something negative.

MS. FALINO: A little deference there?

MS. ARENTZEN: Yes. And so I have to break that down. And, "I really want your reaction to this, not good or bad, but where do your eyes go first? What do you think about this? What do you think about that?"

MS. FALINO: That's a great. It's a great group to have.

MS. ARENTZEN: It's fabulous.

MS. FALINO: All right. We're going to stop at this point because I think others are going to be needing this room, and we will pick up later on.

MS. ARENTZEN: Okay.

[End of disc.]

MR. FALINO: This is Jeannine Falino speaking on November 13th with Glenda Arentzen here at the Museum of Arts and Design for the [Archives of American Art] Smithsonian Institution.

This is our second day of discussions about Glenda's career. And we had a brief detour yesterday talking about your Forge and Gorge friends in Boston, which are sort of a later part of your history. So today we'll go back, and we'd love to hear — tell us about your time spent working for Adda Husted-Andersen.

MS. ARENTZEN: I've previously described how — about the job. And I appeared September of 1962 and sat down at a bench and started to work. There was a part-time assistant there at the time, Ruth Hanna, who is now deceased. And on Friday nights, to do some of the really special setting and such, a German gentleman, Wolfgang Scherer [ph], who had worked for her but now was working for a bigger jewelry house.

MS. FALINO: Wolfgang Scherer [ph]?

MS. ARENTZEN: Scherer [ph].

MS. FALINO: S-C-H —

MS. ARENTZEN: Not sure.

MS. FALINO: Oh.

MS. ARENTZEN: I'm not sure.

MS. FALINO: And he was German?

MS. ARENTZEN: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] Delightful guy.

MS. FALINO: And what was his specialty?

MS. ARENTZEN: He was trained as a German goldsmith, bench jeweler. And it was very fine, and I think he did a lot of setting for Adda and a lot of very fancy work. As I remember, Adda did have a propane torch, and I think anything that had to be done in platinum and so forth, for which you need a propane torch, I think he did. I think he did that because it was — it was one bench and one torch for that. The rest of them are gas for solder, and it was really city gas that either was converted or came in at the proper pressure. And we applied air to it through a foot bellows. So while you were trying to do something delicate, you were pumping with your right foot — [they laugh] — which is rather old-fashioned, I guess. It was somewhat old-fashioned even then. And it was exactly the same system I used in Denmark for a while.

MS. FALINO: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] Now, could you, Glenda, describe — I know that her — Adda's space was across from the United Nations, but could you describe what the — what the front portion or the retail side of the

store looked like, for starters?

MS. ARENTZEN: Certainly. It was — first of all, the store was on First Avenue. It's an 800 block. It was on the west side of the street between 49th and 50th. And at the time they were all small stores. And I would guess that the store's width might have been maybe 12 to 15 feet wide, and with the retail portion was maybe, if you include the window, maybe 25 to 28 feet long. I would say not 18 wide, but I would say 15. You walked in past the window, in which there was a display and the glass sign with her name — I don't think anything else other than that, and her hallmark, which was a double A in a particular way, and they were overlapping. And in a European tradition, when you set up business, you have to get a hallmark. For my own business I took one A because my last name is — begins with A, but in her style. And she seemed very pleased about that.

MS. FALINO: Oh, that's nice.

MS. ARENTZEN: You walk through the door, and on your right were wall cases, along the entire wall, handmade wooden wall cases, very clean and modern, and probably a foot to 18 inches high. Right in front of you was a wall with sliding glass doors, again, wall display. And then there was a small built-in couch to the left. Two people would be comfortable on it. And then there was another small bench that she could sit on that was more movable, and that was where she spoke — and the glass coffee table in the — between the couch and her chair, and that's where she would talk with clients.

MS. FALINO: So really, it was kind of a conversational arrangement.

MS. ARENTZEN: Absolutely.

MS. FALINO: It wasn't a matter of coming in to a counter.

MS. ARENTZEN: Absolutely. No counters.

MS. FALINO: So people who came in were really thinking and talking with her about their selection.

MS. ARENTZEN: Absolutely.

MS. FALINO: She guided them.

MS. ARENTZEN: Absolutely. And she not — did not only do private orders, but she made work for exhibitions. She made work to be sold. Everyone in the area knew that she would also do fine repairs. It was still not far enough away from World War II that we didn't have many European refugees come in with things to sell.

MS. FALINO: Oh, really. So did she — did she have a little antique section of —

MS. ARENTZEN: No, these are people who knew she was a goldsmith, and in the European tradition, a goldsmith would do repairs as well as make work for sale and special orders. And so they would come in and ask, you know, if you wanted to buy them.

MS. FALINO: But did she?

MS. ARENTZEN: No.

MS. FALINO: No.

MS. ARENTZEN: Never.

MS. FALINO: And — or sometimes maybe they brought things to — for her to buy for scrap, for metal?

MS. ARENTZEN: Sometimes probably, but I doubt — I can't remember an instance of ever doing that. Repairs, yes. I can remember something that had come from the Getty family — this is not a refugee — [Laughs] — family, but from the Getty family, just because I guess they must have had an apartment — somebody in the family had an apartment in the area. And it was a beautiful thing. So if you can imagine a cover for — there were two of them, covers for wine bottles that covered the entire wine bottle. They had a hinge and a clasp.

MS. FALINO: Oh, oh, like a case?

MS. ARENTZEN: Exactly.

MS. FALINO: Oh.

MS. ARENTZEN: They were very three-dimensional, chased, and they weren't stamped; it was chased, hand-chased. And some minor repair had to be done. I can remember a chalice that was going to be a gift to someone

that had to be repaired before — there were wonderful — there were wonderful special orders — [inaudible] —

MS. FALINO: Oh, that's great. And did she have a lot of United Nations business, do you think, because of her location?

MS. ARENTZEN: No, she had a lot of business for anybody who lived in the area. And since I managed this shop, really — because she did a lot of teaching, she very often wasn't there.

MS. FALINO: Where — and where was she teaching?

MS. ARENTZEN: Craft Students League, which she loved very much. And because of that, I was — I was the only person in the shop usually, and certainly I was the one to answer the phone and answer the door. The door was not locked in those days.

MS. FALINO: [Laughs.]

MS. ARENTZEN: And we only know of — I worked for her for two years, and we only know of one piece that was stolen.

MS. FALINO: But everything was behind glass.

MS. ARENTZEN: But not locked.

MS. FALINO: But not locked. [They laugh.] That was another time. Yes, it was.

MS. ARENTZEN: I mean, can you imagine leaving a relative stranger — you know, after two years I was not a stranger, but can you imagine leaving me in the shop alone, leaving any single person alone in the shop? But I met all kinds of people through that in the neighborhood, and it was another wonderful experience.

MS. FALINO: Yeah. Now, I think of her work as being very Scandinavian in outlook, very simple, clean lines. I also think of her work as being associated with enameling.

MS. ARENTZEN: Absolutely. I own an enameled necklace and earrings.

MS. FALINO: Do you?

MS. ARENTZEN: Yes, that, actually, my father purchased for my mother for Christmas.

MS. FALINO: Oh, great.

MS. ARENTZEN: And it's — these are very simple. It was what she would have called production. And — but she herself did make it. I learned to do some enameling, really fine enameling with her, and I learned that you need not make the enamel the last part of what you do; you can indeed solder metal to the piece on which the enamel is, because she made spoons and especially straws, sterling silver straws with enamel —

MS. FALINO: Oh, a tip — enamel — oh.

MS. ARENTZEN: It had a spoon at the bottom.

MS. FALINO: Nice.

MS. ARENTZEN: And she did plique-a-jour. How many people do plique-a-jour for production?

MS. FALINO: Oh, my gosh, really? I've never seen a piece.

MS. ARENTZEN: She did a shot glass with three holes cut out. She also did some earrings that have much bigger pieces of plique-a-jour in it. But she — they had three. And one was sort of one ounce, one-and-a-half and two ounces, and one was red and one was yellow and one was green — [inaudible] —

MS. FALINO: And —

MS. ARENTZEN: I think what happens in general, not only in that era but now, that the objects that people know about and remember are the ones that were very, very special, really extraordinary examples and worthy of a photograph and worthy of being put into a book. And those are the things that people who are researching see, and they don't see the —

MS. FALINO: The breadth.

MS. ARENTZEN: — the breadth, and I think it's very worthwhile for many gallery owners and people who write about crafts and so forth to see the — [inaudible] — you do, but some don't.

MS. FALINO: Did you do flatware?

MS. ARENTZEN: Oh, absolutely.

MS. FALINO: Really. So you did sets?

MS. ARENTZEN: I don't — I don't think her sets were competitive, but she did have an example. And she wasn't really fond of making them.

MS. FALINO: But someone would come in and say, "I want flatware for a set of six" or something, and she would produce them?

MS. ARENTZEN: She wouldn't do it. I mean, nobody would do that, I mean, because she would refer them to Georg Jensen.

MS. FALINO: Oh, okay. So she would do, like, the occasional spoon, you mean, or baby spoon or —

MS. ARENTZEN: Oh, her baby spoons were wonderful. She had a little rabbit baby spoon that was — [laughs] — hilarious that was chased, and it was wonderful.

MS. FALINO: So it was more the occasional spoon, not flatware.

MS. ARENTZEN: Exactly.

MS. FALINO: Did she have a relationship with Jensen? They didn't sell any of her work there, did they?

MS. ARENTZEN: She did have a relationship during — she did.

MS. FALINO: During the war — she was here before the war?

MS. ARENTZEN: Yes. She came — well, leaving Denmark and went to Germany to train and then worked in the workshop of Jean Dunand in Paris —

MS. FALINO: I forgot that. My God.

MS. ARENTZEN: — which — where she did a lot of enameling for them. And then it was time to see more of the world, and she came to New York thinking she'd stay a few years before the war intervened. And by the time — and I don't know for whom she worked in New York or whether she set up shop immediately. I would have thought she would have been able to accumulate enough resources to open up, but things were a lot less expensive to do in those days. She must have had some connection with — I don't know what it was. And she did open a shop and was there before the war and thought she'd get back, but she didn't, now, same time as, you know, Georg Jensen began to have things — looked like a long haul. So Georg Jensen's — the people who owned Georg Jensen started having things Georg Jensen things made in this country. And she had a Jensen stamp. And so she designed some of the things that had the Jensen stamp on it.

MS. FALINO: So it was — it was — did she mark it with her mark and with the Jensen stamp?

MS. ARENTZEN: No, just the Jensen one. We had the Jensen stamp.

MS. FALINO: So you — so unless you know what Adda was doing, you won't know which ones were hers.

MS. ARENTZEN: No, but you would — you would know that it was Georg Jensen New York, not Georg Jensen Copenhagen.

MS. FALINO: I see.

MS. ARENTZEN: It was a different design. It wasn't copying Georg — the Denmark designs. It was her design but with the Jensen store stamp on it.

MS. FALINO: Oh, fascinating.

MS. ARENTZEN: Isn't it? And she did have a friend — you know, the Danes — it was the Danish mafia in New York. [They laugh.] And you know, they gathered together — [laughs] — and she knew the family that owned Jensen, not well, but enough that they gathered at Christmas, and then they gathered several times a year to do things. And they — she met a lot of people through that, and there was a gentleman friend who worked for

Jensen all his life that she was very friendly with.

MS. FALINO: Do you remember who that was?

MS. ARENTZEN: I will probably within 24 hours, but I can't remember his name now. [Laughs.]

MS. FALINO: Okay. That would be nice to know.

MS. ARENTZEN: He was a lovely man and, you know, just delightful. And whether they were a couple or not, I do not know, but I know that they were really, really good friends. His name was Sven Ilsoe.

MS. FALINO: And she never married.

MS. ARENTZEN: No. No, I think that she would like to have, but the world took her in a different direction. There just wasn't the opportunity. Very close to her family in Denmark, and she had two brothers, one of whom came to the United States. He had a plastics manufacturing business. And I knew him from New York, and they were very good to me when I moved to Denmark, and — as were my own relatives, as I mentioned. Whenever Adda came over during the summer to Denmark, I would see her there and do something. There was one — Ellen Broker — I don't know whether you know her name — B-R-O, with a slash through it, K-E-R. She was a goldsmith in Denmark. And I worked for her for about six weeks or so. She was able to give me some work.

MS. FALINO: While you were in Denmark.

MS. ARENTZEN: While I was in Denmark. I had finished the Fulbright business. I had traveled the Aegean during the summer. I came back and worked for her for, I guess, six to eight weeks and then traveled in Europe. I went to museum to museum to museum, just made sketches of things. I was — I focused on metalwork and looking at everything else, of course. And then I came back to New York on Christmas. But one excursion with Ellen was remarkable. She was a very good friend of Arline Fisch, which is why it becomes relevant.

MS. FALINO: Oh, okay.

MS. ARENTZEN: And they would visit back and forth. And Ellen — Arline would know better than myself, but Ellen was over here for a significant amount of time at some point either teaching or studying or something like that. And she was older than I am, probably more of a contemporary with Arline than myself. So Ellen got together her sister and niece, Adda, myself — I think there was a sixth person — to have dinner. And she sailed. And she didn't live in Copenhagen proper. So she picked us — Adda and I were told to get onto a commercial wharf in downtown Copenhagen at 5:30. [They laugh.] And I tell you, in Copenhagen, it's rush hour on the water as well as on the land with the bicycles. And so there Adda and I were, dressed, you know, for a dinner party, and Ellen's sailboat comes up, we get on — [inaudible] — as a freighter's coming in. And a man on the bow of the freighter was waving his arms hysterically. We did not have a motor. We couldn't do anything about it. [They laugh.] And then we arrived at her wharf and had a lovely dinner with 24-carat gold floating in the bullion as one might do. And —

MS. FALINO: Ooh! [Laughs.] This was a very special dinner.

MS. ARENTZEN: Oh, we just had such a good time. So it was — I'm emphasizing some of the social aspects of being involved in the craft world, which is so important and so fueling.

MS. FALINO: Yes. Now, take us into the backroom of Adda's shop.

MS. ARENTZEN: Okay. You walk through the door from the retail shop, and it's still the same width. [Laughs.] And there's one window at the end with a very small lady's room. And then above there is a very dirty skylight. She was lucky. And not much sunlight came through, but it was diffused, and we really needed bench lights, and there was nothing special about it. To the right was the telephone, her bench facing the back of the shop, and then against the wall, two more benches with Wolfgang's propane torch and then another bench farther back with the drill press, the hammers and the stakes and such. And of course there were many. And then behind that, there was a whole area for messy stuff, the use of hydrochloric acid, hydrofluoric, nitric occasionally, sulfuric, cleaning, all that, because the sink — there was a sink back there too, so that's why that ended up there. Going back to the — that was the right-hand side of the shop after you've left the showroom. Now, on the left-hand side, there was a dental case — you walk in, and there was a dental case against the wall.

MS. FALINO: And what did that hold?

MS. ARENTZEN: It was storage for metal and things. But on the top of this antique dental case — because then it wasn't antique — [laughs] — there were shelves and the little glass doors that closed over them that she called it her "ready" case, and in that were any pieces that were ready to be picked up, with the bills — [inaudible] —

MS. FALINO: Ah — [inaudible] —

MS. ARENTZEN: Then going down the left-hand side of the shop, there was the big wooden — I mean, it was like a refectory table — it was just really big and really solid and really worn, but in good shape — and maybe two or three chairs — no chair on that one. Then came two benches back to back, one Ruth Hanna used and one I used. And I used the one that looked back toward the showroom because the wall to the front of the showroom and the door and the source of light — anyway, I could see the door when somebody came in. There was a bell, but I could see it because it wasn't a high wall.

MS. FALINO: Yeah, so that was your cue to run out front.

MS. ARENTZEN: That was my cue to — yes, and if Adda was there, she very often took the telephone if she — [inaudible] — and then past that was an enameling kiln, another bench with enameling kiln. I don't think the acid really was there. It wasn't — [inaudible] — and water and so forth, and then the powder room. So that's all there was.

MS. FALINO: And where — so there was a — her bench was like a jeweler's bench, with the curve?

MS. ARENTZEN: Oh, they were all —

MS. FALINO: Oh, they were all jewelers' —

MS. ARENTZEN: Yes, they were all European benches, and that's what I use now.

MS. FALINO: Okay. And where was — what do you call it, you know, where you do all the firing, the — where you apply the heat to the metal?

MS. ARENTZEN: A torch at every bench.

MS. FALINO: A torch at every bench — so no special place, like, for hollowware or —

MS. ARENTZEN: Well, yes, in the back there was a bigger —

MS. FALINO: In the back.

MS. ARENTZEN: — much bigger torch with a much bigger place to put bigger things. But no, no. And I don't quite understand how people manage — [laughs] — because you just — you just can't get up and down. You can't take the time to get up and down and hold the things that you've set up to solder to go to a soldering bench. I mean, you just can't. I mean, that's maybe — only takes a couple of minutes, but add that up all day — that's time. Furthermore, I find a European bench much more comfortable because your tools are in drawers; you know, they're out. You have a drop cloth up under you.

MS. FALINO: They're out. They're accessible. Right, classic.

MS. ARENTZEN: You have a place to put your arms. I — it's —

MS. FALINO: It's a really economic setup.

MS. ARENTZEN: It's — yes, and you sit low so that you don't hurt your back. It's —

MS. FALINO: Yeah. And what was the other question I had? Well, it'll come to me. Well, that's great. It's always lovely to get that kind of information about the shop. And so what's his name, Wolfgang, he was her major assistant.

MS. ARENTZEN: No.

MS. FALINO: Or he just came in when she needed him?

MS. ARENTZEN: Yes, and it usually — every Friday night for two or three hours, something like that.

MS. FALINO: I see. And she always had one assistant like you?

MS. ARENTZEN: That's why I never saw him, generally.

MS. FALINO: So you never saw him. Okay.

MS. ARENTZEN: Generally, yeah.

MS. FALINO: And she kept one assistant —

MS. ARENTZEN: Part-time.

MS. FALINO: — part-time.

MS. ARENTZEN: Ruth Hanna. She would work two or three days a week or maybe not at all. She had some family difficulties. Her father must have been schizophrenia. He — by this time her parents, you know, were in their 70s — late 70s, and he became — he was just crazy. I mean, he called the shop and said that — you know, I picked I up, and he said, "Please tell Ruth Hanna that her mother has been found in the East River." And I said, "Oh, thank" — Ruth wasn't there at the moment. And I said, "Oh, thank you so much for calling. I will tell Ruth that you called, and I will give her the message," which I did. "Ruth" — [laughs] — and I said, but I — it doesn't seem sensible; it doesn't make sense. And she said, "No, he's just really crazy." And so he did a lot of that kind of thing. And Ruth and her mother were both very grateful to the way I handled things, which was nice — [inaudible] —

MS. FALINO: Now, I don't know who Ruth is. It's Ruth Hanna?

MS. ARENTZEN: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

MS. FALINO: Can you tell us a little bit about her?

MS. ARENTZEN: H-A-N-N-A. And —

MS. FALINO: She was a metalsmith, jeweler?

MS. ARENTZEN: Yes, and she was very good.

MS. FALINO: And where did she come from?

MS. ARENTZEN: Long Island, Hempstead, some area of Hempstead — [inaudible] —

MS. FALINO: Now, where did she study? Do you know?

MS. ARENTZEN: No. She did go to college.

MS. FALINO: So you don't know where she learned her skills?

MS. ARENTZEN: I think it might have been the League. I think it must have been the league, and Adda hired her from that, because that's a fairly — yeah, I think all of that is employees generally were from the league, so Adda knew them and knew what they could do. They'd been trained. And when I walked in in September, there was an agate and some silver on my workbench, and I was to make a bezel, but I hadn't — had only made one bezel in my life, and I thought, I am going to die.

MS. FALINO: [Laughs.]

MS. ARENTZEN: It took me a week. I was paid minimum wage, by the way, and which — for which I was very grateful. And —

MS. FALINO: Did Ruth help you?

MS. ARENTZEN: No. She offered suggestions, but never hands-on, never. But after a month or so, Adda said — Adda and Ruth had a discussion and said — I don't know — Adda said, "I really want to have her here, and she helps — she's so good out in the front." And she — Ruth said yes, she is getting better. And I mean —

MS. FALINO: [Laughs.] I'm so glad they kept you on.

MS. ARENTZEN: And Ruth said, "Let's give her another month." And Adda said, "Yes, let's."

MS. FALINO: [Laughs.]

MS. ARENTZEN: And they did, and I succeeded and so forth. And it turns out that part of my job was to go to 47th Street — take the crosstown bus, go to 47th Street, do all the errands, take things to perhaps the caster if she needed that, though that was infrequent; most of her stuff was hand-fabricated — to pick up findings for things, all the — all the stuff you would do on 47th Street, and in some cases buy stones if it was something she could return. And she liked to buy stones herself, but —

MS. FALINO: I understand that.

MS. ARENTZEN: — which — and there was also another errand that was way downtown, for stones that I was trusted to go and buy. So I learned a great —

MS. FALINO: Yeah, so you really became quite an important and well-trusted member.

MS. ARENTZEN: I really learned a — and I was so different — and I was so different — I guess anybody who's making work by — with their hands, especially somebody young, is so — they stand out in the jewelry district even then. And everybody was either Jewish or Italian. Well, Mr. Carolla, the setter, took time to show me some of the beautiful things he was working on and how to do it, and I would ask questions. And this would be 10 minutes, maybe, with my errands, the same with a platter.

MS. FALINO: So you were picking things up along the way.

MS. ARENTZEN: The findings person, Magic Findings, run and owned by a Jewish woman who had fled Austria and who'd been the stage there, had to leave a budding career, so she said — but I rather think so because she was very dramatic. And she would see me coming and, in the middle of the exchange, say "Miss Innocensia!" — [they laugh] — "What can I get you today?"

MS. FALINO: I love it.

MS. ARENTZEN: And the engraver — also, there was another setter that was not well, overweight, probably diabetic, very skilled, didn't deal with pressure very well. He was someone that everyone came to and immediately sensed he was a victim and pushed, pushed, pushed. And I didn't, and craftspeople who went to him didn't. And we all had things that were different from 47th Street to be set. And he would get pleasure, and we were so happy, and Adda was happy. And I used him for many years.

MS. FALINO: Well, because you weren't bringing him run-of-the-mill things.

MS. ARENTZEN: No.

MS. FALINO: And he was — what did you — what was he, a stone setter, or he was a —

MS. ARENTZEN: He was a stone setter —

MS. FALINO: Stone setter.

MS. ARENTZEN: — in a booth. So you could watch him.

MS. FALINO: Uh-huh [affirmative], you could stay there while he did the work?

MS. ARENTZEN: Yes, but not generally, because I never wanted to do that.

MS. FALINO: That's pressure.

MS. ARENTZEN: That's pressure. I just didn't — I didn't have to. And —

MS. FALINO: Performance anxiety on his part, on — [laughs] —

MS. ARENTZEN: Yes, it was — yeah, terrible. And it was —

MS. FALINO: And it was your way of getting to know the whole — the operation in Manhattan with all the different jobbers that did aspects of the work.

MS. ARENTZEN: Unbelievable. Unbelievable, the skills in the city. And the wave of Russians that have replaced some of those people are equal in skill. They have a different design sensibility entirely. [Laughs.]

MS. FALINO: Yes.

MS. ARENTZEN: But their skill level is phenomenal. And they are young.

MS. FALINO: And Mr. Carolla, what did he do? What was —

MS. ARENTZEN: He was a setter and goldsmith.

MS. FALINO: He was a setter, and he was also on 47th Street?

MS. ARENTZEN: That's right. There were two setters that Adda used. Mr. Carolla also had metalworking skills, so if there was something where the metal itself had to be manipulated, he could do it. The other man was in a

booth downstairs in a different building, and he did the more perfunctory things generally for everybody. And he did them well. I mean, he did pave like you can't imagine. But Mr. Carolla could build settings if he had to do the — well, they both could do the engraving that was necessary to set stones, but Mr. Carolla could also do the chiseling that has to be done sometimes. And —

MS. FALINO: Oh, when you sort of pull up the metal to —

MS. ARENTZEN: Yeah, but in big chunks, not just an engraving thing, but when you're really —

MS. FALINO: To set a stone, you mean? To help — what's that word?

MS. ARENTZEN: It will — it will not be necessarily over the stone; it will be near the stone, but he will have to adjust the shape of the setting dramatically. And Mr. Carolla could do that.

MS. FALINO: Yeah. I know the other question I had about Adda's work was if you had to say what the scale was — I mean, she did some hollowware. She did jewelry. In terms of a balance between jewelry versus hollowware, what would you say it was, more — like 50/50 or 70 percent jewelry?

MS. ARENTZEN: I'd say on display, 10 percent hollowware.

MS. FALINO: Ten percent.

MS. ARENTZEN: I would say what she actually made, say, for customers, a little bit more. And as far as the scale goes, not just of the numbers of objects that she did, her enameled bowls — oh, she did big enameled bowls. And —

MS. FALINO: You're holding maybe 12 inches, or more, 15 inches?

MS. ARENTZEN: Yeah, I would say maximum 12. I mean, the kiln was a little bit bigger. It was governed by the kiln. She didn't make many of those, but she always had at least one on display that was that big, and it'd be one that was smaller. And those were copper, and the silver ones were much smaller.

MS. FALINO: Okay, because of the cost to the client — so the large bowls were made of copper generally.

MS. ARENTZEN: Yes, and they were not counter-enameled, and —

MS. FALINO: Really?

MS. ARENTZEN: She did a lot of work that was not counter-enamel.

MS. FALINO: And why would that be?

MS. ARENTZEN: Because the shape doesn't require it. Flat —

MS. FALINO: Flat requires more?

MS. ARENTZEN: I think so. Now, I'm making something up. I'm just — I'm just telling you what my hands know, that if you're doing something round or shaped in a way, you really don't need to counter it. Every enamel has its different coefficient of expansion, and you may — if you begin to know colors, whether they're transparent or opaque, what will survive. And indeed, she didn't use a broad spectrum of colors in the really big things.

MS. FALINO: So when she did that with the copper, did she — did she leave the copper exposed, or did she have it plated afterwards?

MS. ARENTZEN: No, exposed.

MS. FALINO: Oh, so just polished copper. Very nice.

MS. ARENTZEN: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] They're beautiful.

MS. FALINO: Yeah, I'm sure they are.

MS. ARENTZEN: And usually just one color on the inside, gold and maybe — or green, and always transparent.

MS. FALINO: Transparent, yeah. And she fully planished her forms because that was the Scandinavian way, or —

MS. ARENTZEN: Yeah.

MS. FALINO: Yeah, so they were very mirror-surfaced.

MS. ARENTZEN: No, that's what machines can do. [Laughs.] You would look — just with handmade Georg Jensen things, you will look — if you look carefully —

MS. FALINO: There is that glimmer of —

MS. ARENTZEN: There's a little shimmer. You don't see hammer marks, but there's the little shimmer.

MS. FALINO: Yeah. But by and large, I mean, it was —

MS. ARENTZEN: Oh, yeah.

MS. FALINO: You didn't — you didn't see planishing marks. You didn't see hammer marks.

MS. ARENTZEN: No, no arts and crafts type stuff.

MS. FALINO: Yeah, not that — not — okay. Okay. Oh, that's all terrifically fascinating information, and very rich. Now, tell us about your Fulbright, because that must have been a terrifically formative experience for you.

MS. ARENTZEN: Yes, well, the — I learned about Fulbrights — I had vaguely heard about them, but then in my sophomore year in college, I was dating a fellow from RPI who ended up getting a Fulbright to Paris to study at the Sorbonne, study philosophy. So — and he was an engineer. He's a scientist. He majored in physics, very bright guy. And, exit boyfriend, but I retained the idea of a Fulbright as being a scholarship. [Laughs.] And then I knew that — let's see, remember the Helen Shirk — Helen Zittel — and — was a year behind me at Skidmore. So I'm off at Adda's, and she is a senior in college, and she gets a Fulbright to go to Denmark. Now — so she's there on my second year in New York, on my second year at Adda's.

MS. FALINO: With Adda.

MS. ARENTZEN: But I'm making a portfolio. I had my photographs enlarged at a kiosk near the shuttle in Grand Central Station on the subway level, because that's where I could get to during lunch hour. And the agency that administered the Fulbrights was two blocks down on First Avenue at the U.N.

MS. FALINO: Perfect.

MS. ARENTZEN: And so on my lunch hour, I would also clean my fingernails and, you know —

MS. FALINO: [Laughs.] Make yourself presentable.

MS. ARENTZEN: — put on my gloves and go up there and ask what was required. And I was in graduate school at the same time, so I — quite by accident, I realized I had to be recommended by my graduate school I was enrolled in — [inaudible] — and — but anyway, I applied, and I went. Arlene had come over to visit.

MS. FALINO: And Arline Fisch had already been to Denmark at that point — yes.

MS. ARENTZEN: Several — oh, yes. It was her second. And while I was already set up with things to do there because of my application and because of the connections at the Fulbright office — but she was really responsible for a lot of what happened to me there because she was in Denmark when I arrived. So we went out for dinner. We went to Tivoli. And — oh, I —

MS. FALINO: This is Tivoli Gardens?

MS. ARENTZEN: Yes, and she introduced me personally to the owner of the factory where I was going to have a bench to do my own work.

MS. FALINO: And where was that?

MS. ARENTZEN: Copenhagen.

MS. FALINO: I mean the name of the — [inaudible] —

MS. ARENTZEN: Bernhard Hertz.

MS. FALINO: H-E-R —

MS. ARENTZEN: T-Z, a very old firm. They had the franchise to do the exact replica of *The Little Mermaid*.

MS. FALINO: [Laughs.] This is the sculpture that's in the —

MS. ARENTZEN: That is —

MS. FALINO: — in the port, or is it —

MS. ARENTZEN: It's in the port. It was — it's been stolen. It goes missing every now and then.

MS. FALINO: Yeah, this is the Hans — based on the Hans Christian Andersen tale.

MS. ARENTZEN: That's right. But they — their firm was known for its very nicely made hollowware, and they did a lot of chains, gold chains. It was mostly gold work.

MS. FALINO: Was that where Arline was based as well?

MS. ARENTZEN: Maybe. She had done a variety of different things. Oh, and when — once, I think, when she was there, she was at Ellen Broker's studio. I'm not — I'm not sure about that. But anyway, she put a face on it for me. Oh, and I was also one day at the Goldsmiths High School, which is where, in those days, if you finished your apprenticeship, you were eligible to apply for Goldsmiths High School to learn a little bit about drawing, a little bit about design. And if you were — had been trained as a goldsmith, you would have a day of silversmithing, and if you had been trained as a silversmith, you would have a day of goldsmithing. And I had been trained as a goldsmith, so I did hollowware all day. But there was — I also took a course in spinning. We used old Jensen machines and strapped ourselves in. We'd go up on a platform, and these big long milling machines, and you strap yourself in and rest against it. And I mean, it's got to be dangerous. [Laughs.] And the whole class could work at the same time.

MS. FALINO: And spinning is like — is like turning. It's just a different term.

MS. ARENTZEN: That's exactly it.

MS. FALINO: And you're using a big — like, a very heavy long rod to push the metal, is that right?

MS. ARENTZEN: That's right. And —

MS. FALINO: And you had a strap on you? How was —

MS. ARENTZEN: Well, it's — a wide strap was hooked onto the machines. Imagine a spindle, you know, that's maybe 12 feet long and people working on both sides. And you have wood blocks that are turning around, and your flat metal piece is spinning too, and then you push the metal over the shaped wood block as the whole thing is spinning. And going back to the strap, it's only three inches wide, and you hook it onto the machinery. And you sit back against it so you get pressure.

MS. FALINO: So you brace yourself.

MS. ARENTZEN: Now, I'm — I was about the size that I am today, and my friend Marianne was about 5 foot 4 and weighed 110 pounds. [Laughs.] She really couldn't —

MS. FALINO: Yeah. But were you forming over chucks [ph] or —

MS. ARENTZEN: Yes.

MS. FALINO: And so there were forms that they had devised that they — that you were creating yourself.

MS. ARENTZEN: That is correct. Used their forms, yeah.

MS. FALINO: But it was really a — [inaudible] — it's something to learn.

MS. ARENTZEN: Right.

MS. FALINO: I mean, it's definitely before Ocean [ph].

MS. ARENTZEN: Yeah. I may have cut one of the projects, one of the projects I made, two small spun forms and put them together. I couldn't have made the wood [ph]. I would have remembered that. I really would have. And then one I hammered so much to make a spout in a — an opening that I might as well have raised the whole thing. Oh, it was something that small. You don't — [inaudible]. And our — in silversmithing class — [inaudible] — year, the first project was one curve outward, the next project was one curve inward, and the next was something more complicated. And we had — I made a [how sauce] pitcher. And after my first project, I went over to the head of the class, I mean, the teacher.

MS. FALINO: And this is all back at the high school, the Goldsmith's High School?

MS. ARENTZEN: "Oh, I'm so excited." I — you know, I had never done anything like this. You know how Americans are — "wow!"

MS. FALINO: Wow!

MS. ARENTZEN: And Mr. Malinowski said, "What do you want? Roses?"

MS. FALINO: [Laughs.]

MS. ARENTZEN: And I said, "Well, one rose." [They laugh.] I mean, all the students looked around me. [Laughs.]

MS. FALINO: Well, it's the enthusiasm.

MS. ARENTZEN: It might be of interest to you since you're interested in the history of these things, that the way the shop day was organized, that all of us were in the same room when we were making hollowware or jewelry, and I guess that must have been 12 people.

MS. FALINO: But you were the only Fulbright person.

MS. ARENTZEN: Oh, yes.

MS. FALINO: Okay.

MS. ARENTZEN: And there was Marianne, and there was one other girl.

MS. FALINO: And Marianne was who?

MS. ARENTZEN: Marianne Herring. Marianne came over to me the first day of class and in perfect idiomatic American English said, "If there's anything you don't understand, let me know, because my family spent a year in Montclair, New Jersey, and I was in sixth grade there. And I didn't have this person for a teacher, but there was a Miss Arentzen who was teaching there." I said, "Oh, that's my father's cousin." And then she said, "And by the way, my uncle is Karl Otto Hertz who owns and runs the factory now that you're going to be at."

MS. FALINO: How perfect.

MS. ARENTZEN: And I said, "Well, thank you." In fact, Marianne, we became really good friends, and we still are in touch.

MS. FALINO: That's wonderful. So she was Danish, but she had just — she had spent her sixth grade year —

MS. ARENTZEN: Yes, they had planned to immigrate and her mother said, "I can't stand this," and moved back. And so we were really good friends. Going back to Adda, once — Adda did not know I was applying for a Fulbright, and when I got it I told her. And she said, "Okay now, that's wonderful, but we will miss you."

Now, by the way, with a — [inaudible] — now, at 5:00 each or 5:10, Adda said, "Depending on what's going on, at the end of the day we will have Danish lessons." Now I had been taking Danish lessons at the American Scandinavian Institute for a year in — or more than this [ph] in preparation for this.

MS. FALINO: For preparation? You're very organized.

MS. ARENTZEN: Well, not really, but I did that. But she said, "I understand you've been taking Danish lessons at" — Ruth told her, she said, "Don't say anything personal on the phone in Danish. She might understand." [They laugh.] And she said, "But you need to [ph] know the names of the tools," and so we did that. And she and her friends in the shop gave me a shower before I left. Each one gave me a tool.

MS. FALINO: Oh, my gosh.

MS. ARENTZEN: That was my first group of hand tools.

MS. FALINO: They were very proud of you.

MS. ARENTZEN: Well, I don't know.

MS. FALINO: I'm sure they were.

MS. ARENTZEN: It was — so the way this shop class was arranged in Goldsmith's High School — and I told you

how it was divided and who was going to do what — there was the head of it, because you're supposed to learn designing, and this was a designer that was affiliated with George Jensen for a long time, Arno Malinowski — M-A-L-I-N-O-W-S-K-I — I think. Maybe Y.

MS. FALINO: And he taught — he taught at the high school, the Goldsmith's High School?

MS. ARENTZEN: [Inaudible] — Goldsmith's High School. Its higher school, not really what we think of as high school, and everybody's in their twenties, late twenties.

Now, his claim to fame, I guess, for Jensen, was doing a lot of medallions for them, and he did a lot of very conservative work, design work. He did not know how to raise a hammer to anything.

MS. FALINO: But he was all on paper, you mean.

MS. ARENTZEN: He was all on paper.

MS. FALINO: Ah.

MS. ARENTZEN: He had two assistants; they were technical assistants, and one was for hollowware and one was for jewelry. And the one for hollowware was Herr Jensen, who worked at Georg Jensen. And I remember once toward the end of my pitcher project, he said, "What you need is a such and such to finish this such and such to — [inaudible] — this in such a way." And so we hobbled along with something. And then he disappeared at lunch. Usually he ate with his colleagues. And he came back after lunch, and he had gone over to the Jensen factory and gotten the stake that was — what I needed. And he did it for other people, too.

MS. FALINO: Very nice.

MS. ARENTZEN: But he did that. And so that was the atmosphere.

MS. FALINO: This was Mr. Jensen.

MS. ARENTZEN: Yes, Mr. Jensen. They did one thing that I refused to stay in the room for, it was a room that had no ventilation other than some windows, narrow — not too narrow but they were high, way up over the benches, and no fans of any kind in the cellar of the building. And there was going to be a demonstration of mercury gilding, where you take gold, fine gold and mix it in a mortar — with a mortar and pestle.

MS. FALINO: Into a paste.

MS. ARENTZEN: Into a paste and put it on — on then — on your object and then burn off the mercury, and even then in the '60s, I mean, this was not a good idea. And so I stayed out in the hall. I said, "I don't think this is a good idea. Can't you open some windows?" "Oh, yes, we'll open some windows." And —

MS. FALINO: But you did have — that's interesting that they were still demonstrating with mercury gilding. This is in the '60s.

MS. ARENTZEN: That's right.

MS. FALINO: So now going back to Bernard Hertz at the firm, how did they set you up there?

MS. ARENTZEN: It was the Fulbright office that made the affiliations. They look at your application if — if you've ever applied for a Fulbright, or at least for Denmark — I mean, things have changed, of course — but if you can set up contacts beforehand, you have a much better chance of being placed. You may make the first round just because of who you are and what you've done, but you're not going to go anywhere if they — [inaudible].

MS. FALINO: [Inaudible.]

MS. ARENTZEN: And when I was there, the office was in a state of anxiety over an African-American woman who wanted to do ballet with the ballet company and The Royal Danish Ballet would not take her because her skin was dark. And it — the Danes weren't particularly anti-black —

MS. FALINO: It wasn't —

MS. ARENTZEN: It was just the color. It was just the color. And I'm sure that's changed.

MS. FALINO: I'm sure.

MS. ARENTZEN: Actually, I'm not that sure, but it's —

MS. FALINO: Let's hope.

MS. ARENTZEN: Let's hope.

MS. FALINO: So you had set this up with her.

MS. ARENTZEN: No I didn't. I just said I wanted to do such and such and — I could learn casting in Denmark, not in some European country and I didn't speak the languages of the others. I had very little Danish, but I could do it in Denmark. And I knew that much, although I didn't know what factory. It was not taught in any university in the United States.

MS. FALINO: So you asked to do casting.

MS. ARENTZEN: Casting and granulation.

MS. FALINO: Oh, really? Because that wasn't in your application. That's interesting.

MS. ARENTZEN: Those two things were in the application. And because Arlene had been there and had kept contact — she was a great little networker — kept contact, some people have the knack for staying in touch and really enjoyed doing that. And she was one, and she stayed in contact, so they were well aware of places she had been. And Helen Shirk had the same possibility of affiliations. So when I came, they just said, oh, let's see if Hertz will take another one.

They weren't as keen after the most recent experience for one reason or another. So it wasn't an easy slide to get into it. And so when I did — and I spent one day at school, three days in the factory, one day — one morning in the library of the Goldsmiths magazine, which had the library in the editor's office. And I just went from left to right, top to bottom, book to book. When I came back, that's exactly what I did at the —

MS. FALINO: At the ACC Library?

MS. ARENTZEN: At the ACC Library.

Lois Moran's desk was right there, and she let me — I didn't go as often, but she was very gracious and let me do that.

MS. FALINO: How wonderful.

MS. ARENTZEN: And looked at my — she said, "I'd like to see the photographs of your work." And I showed it to her, and she was — she has been wonderful to me over the years, very gracefully saying, maybe the quality of photographs needs to be improved. Have you considered a professional photographer?" [Laughs.]

MS. FALINO: Well, that's good advice coming from Lois, who understood the power of the image.

MS. ARENTZEN: Which was very helpful, very helpful. She was the education director then, and that was why the books were in her room. They were — it was very, very helpful.

MS. FALINO: So at Hertz's factory, you were doing your own thing, and you were asking for help. You had ideas of what you wanted to make and you called on their talents.

MS. ARENTZEN: At Goldsmith's High School there were — there were strictures. One curve outward was the first one. And you did a drawing, presented your drawing. And if the designer thought, you know —

MS. FALINO: So you submitted it to their designer for their —

MS. ARENTZEN: Mr. Malinowski, and if he said it was okay and appropriate. Then you went to get the material and worked with the — except Malinowski, Herr Jensen would talk to each other, too.

MS. FALINO: Yes, sure.

MS. ARENTZEN: It was a formal situation but a very friendly one.

MS. FALINO: A supportive one.

MS. ARENTZEN: Oh, yes.

MS. FALINO: Yes.

So — and this vessel that you made, was it cast or was it raised?

MS. ARENTZEN: Oh, no, raised. And all — it was all raising.

MS. FALINO: All raising.

MS. ARENTZEN: Except for —

MS. FALINO: But you had asked for to learn casting and granulation.

MS. ARENTZEN: [Inaudible] — factory.

MS. FALINO: Right. So that's what I'm saying. And the factory —

MS. ARENTZEN: Oh, I'm sorry.

MS. FALINO: — the factory, you came up with your own designs, and then did you go to anybody for approval or —

MS. ARENTZEN: No. I was given a bench next to a bench worker who was making chains, foot after foot after foot.

MS. FALINO: By hand?

MS. ARENTZEN: Yes, right from the wire. The process is the shop manager comes over and says, "We need such and such, here are the requirements in writing, and so he gets up, takes the requirements to a cage, gets — signs out for the material necessary and goes about making it."

MS. FALINO: Right.

MS. ARENTZEN: And the material's in wire, so he has to make this — maybe it has to go into the rolling mill at the end, have to be soldered — I mean, the whole business. Now, I was doing my own thing, and so you can imagine — there was one other woman in the shop. And you can just imagine, you know, all these — [inaudible].

MS. FALINO: So — and none of them spoke English.

MS. ARENTZEN: The man from Israel did. He was married to a Dane. That's why he was there, in Denmark.

MS. FALINO: But when you — so what did you decide to make? I — [inaudible] — what you made.

MS. ARENTZEN: Oh, well, let's see. I started off with casting. I did some cuttlebone casting. Oh, I —

MS. FALINO: What kind?

MS. ARENTZEN: Cuttlebone.

MS. FALINO: Oh, cuttlebone.

MS. ARENTZEN: Yes. The lost wax casting was all done in the basement, so I would do models and go down and see how it was done and do as much of it as I could. And depending upon their workflow, sometimes I could help out with bits and pieces of the parts. But the hand casting was something that I really could do from start to finish myself, and so I would do that down there, and they would help me with that.

MS. FALINO: So when you did lost wax casting, what sort of things did you make? Or was it the cuttlebone? Were you making things out of wax, making shapes out of — like teapot spouts or —

MS. ARENTZEN: Oh, no, nothing like that. Nothing for hollowware. I didn't make — it was all for jewelry. And the cast parts are just as I do today, parts of things, never the whole thing, almost never the whole thing. And —

MS. FALINO: Like a portion of a pendant, or an element.

MS. ARENTZEN: Yeah, or a ring, a smooth ring, Scandinavian-kind of looking thing.

MS. FALINO: Or you could cast a ring. You could — you could do the ring.

MS. ARENTZEN: Yes. And there were some other funny little things that I did. But it was — oh, and there were — I was working with the hard waxes, not the soft waxes. That was a big difference.

MS. FALINO: Ah, the dark wax. Is it brown wax?

MS. ARENTZEN: They're hard. [Inaudible] — no, browns are awfully [ph] very soft.

MS. FALINO: Oh, maybe I had it wrong.

MS. ARENTZEN: They're the ones for sculpture, and they have different melting temperatures and softness. But there are hard blocks and they — nowadays we get is either green, or red, or purple, and they're of varying densities. And it has to do — a lot to do with the amount of plastic in it.

MS. FALINO: So you're basically — not to say — I don't want to say you're making findings, but you're making elements, decorative elements to —

MS. ARENTZEN: Yeah, carving something. And it was never anything bigger than a ring.

MS. FALINO: And it was simply difficult to get that experience in New York?

MS. ARENTZEN: Oh, yeah. You'd have to be hired.

MS. FALINO: Yeah. So with Adda, somebody came in for a ring.

MS. ARENTZEN: She'd contract it, if it was to be cast.

MS. FALINO: Really?

MS. ARENTZEN: She'd make the model, but she'd contract it.

MS. FALINO: She would make the model out of wax and then she would send it out to somebody to cast.

MS. ARENTZEN: That's right.

MS. FALINO: Okay.

MS. ARENTZEN: And it became apparent to me even then that I was wasting my time trying to learn how to cast a lot [ph] myself.

MS. FALINO: Really? Because it was too — because it was a separate specialty unto itself?

MS. ARENTZEN: It is. And I ended up teaching it, you know, in a small scale, and then it really confirmed — I mean, you cannot — you cannot do it unless you have hundreds of thousands of dollars for equipment that's digitized and so forth that the monitors — [inaudible] — you cannot get a good casting.

MS. FALINO: Really?

MS. ARENTZEN: Really. — and a perfectly compact — there may be others that differ, but the standards are quite different.

MS. FALINO: Because you get air holes or —

MS. ARENTZEN: [Inaudible.] Or it burns. It's just not reliable. If you're doing it commercially, even on the scale I did, it has to be reliable every time.

MS. FALINO: Every time, otherwise you're wasting time and money.

MS. ARENTZEN: But I did that, and I made much more progress with granulation because I found in both the museum the design museum in Copenhagen's library and the Goldsmith's Library — there was a little — anything that was known [ph] was there and — so I built on that, and I did some of that.

MS. FALINO: And what did you all use it on?

MS. ARENTZEN: Well, I used it on little balls that were — on a ring. I mean, everybody nowadays has much more knowledge about how to do it and can really do it well. I mean, there are phenomenal things being made that turn up at craft fairs that I think — [inaudible].

MS. FALINO: Right. And at the time, were you — I can't remember if we actually discussed this in detail, but were you aware of John Paul Miller's work in granulation before you —

MS. ARENTZEN: Yes, yes.

MS. FALINO: Oh, you were. Okay.

MS. ARENTZEN: It was one of the glamour questions of the era. Casting was a glamor question largely because Irena Brynner did a lot of casting or had casting — [inaudible] — done.

MS. FALINO: Did she?

MS. ARENTZEN: She had it done — I'm almost sure — yeah, she had a relationship with Billanti [Frank Billanti Casting], I think.

MS. FALINO: With who?

MS. ARENTZEN: Billanti, the caster.

MS. FALINO: Billanti.

MS. ARENTZEN: Yes, Billanti was and is still known for dealing with craftspeople.

MS. FALINO: Are they in the city?

MS. ARENTZEN: Hyde Park, New York. It used to be in Manhattan.

MS. FALINO: North of — north of the city, okay.

MS. ARENTZEN: Oh, no, not that Hyde Park, the one out in Long Island.

MS. FALINO: Oh. I'm still new here. [Laughs.]

MS. ARENTZEN: [Laughs.]

MS. FALINO: All right. Let's — I think I need to stop this now and we'll go on to the next disk. So we're going to conclude for a moment.

[End of Disc.]

MS. FALINO: This is Jeannine Falino and we're returning after lunch with Glenda Arentzen here at the Museum of Arts and Design for another session on her very interesting and rich career in metal.

And now Glenda, I would love it if you would talk to us about this wonderful nexus of relationships that you enjoyed in New York before and after your travels to Denmark and the organizations, the places you've been, some of the places you taught at or organizations you joined and the Westbeth artist housing project that you were able to join as a resident. Just take it from whatever — whatever order works best for you.

MS. ARENTZEN: When we spoke — when we were speaking before, I spoke a little bit about working for Adda and the people that I met through my association with that store because I had a very public face for Adda managing her store. Many people came in and out. And I began to have an idea of what it meant to be to meet the clients and see what their needs were and such. And that has stood me well over the years.

And the fact that Adda's mission statement would have included special order work, designs perhaps for industry, the repairs, very — plus teaching. I think all of that has been something that I've modeled over the years, if not consciously, different opportunities that I've thought important.

As far as meeting craftspeople that were to be colleagues of mine, that really started when I returned from Denmark. I was living with my parents in New Jersey. I immediately was sought out by my former high school art teacher, Geraldine Mayer Smith, and she knew of an art school that was being founded in Ridgewood, New Jersey, and I was hired to teach drawing at the same time.

MS. FALINO: What was the name of the school?

MS. ARENTZEN: The Ridgewood School of Art —

MS. FALINO: Okay.

MS. ARENTZEN: — which was sold — after a decade or so sold to I think the New York Institute of Technology or something like that.

MS. FALINO: Okay.

MS. ARENTZEN: So I was teaching there. And I was asked by Seelig Lewitz, the superintendent of schools in the town where I lived, in the town that I had gone to high school with, if I would start an adult program in metals.

And one of my students in that, who was in high school at the time, although it was really for adults — it was adult ed — eventually went to art school and became a metalsmith.

MS. FALINO: And who was that?

MS. ARENTZEN: I'd have to think a while.

MS. FALINO: Okay. But you're saying that she does —

MS. ARENTZEN: She's no longer active.

MS. FALINO: Okay. But you got pleasure out of getting people into the field.

MS. ARENTZEN: Yes. Oh, yes. But I had great pleasure in — I mean, I knew some of the people because they thought, "Oh, it would be fun." I also signed up for practice — not practice teaching, but substitute teaching in the high school that I had gone to —

MS. FALINO: With all your old teachers.

MS. ARENTZEN: — which was really fun. I subbed in English and mechanical drawing.

MS. FALINO: Okay. So from New Jersey, then what?

MS. ARENTZEN: I set up shop in the basement of my parents' home. I went to an exhibition that I had read about and heard about of the New Jersey Designer Craftsmen. And at that exhibition, I met some of the members of it, and I asked what this organization was, what that meant. And I was invited to join them and — "By all means, come to a meeting," which I did. But most of the meetings were farther south in New Jersey than I was living, but I was invited eventually to join their board.

MS. FALINO: Now, do you remember who were some of the chief people involved in this?

MS. ARENTZEN: Oh, yes. Carolyn Kriegman, for one. And when I was talking with her at the door, because she was at the door, she was asking me what I did. And she did metal too. And I said, "Well, I sell my work." And she said, well — she said, "We do have a fair." And they did have a fair.

And the connections — that connection led to the first fair that I did. And Lois Moran bought a pin. And she said, "You know, I go to a lot of these things and I don't buy anything, but I really have to have this."

MS. FALINO: Well, that's high praise.

MS. ARENTZEN: And I thought it was really nice. And we talked for a while. And that's what gave me the invitation to work in her library. She was head of the Education Department then and so the library was her home. And so that was another connection —

MS. FALINO: Excellent.

MS. ARENTZEN: — that — now, I had also heard during this period of time anyway that a very large building in New York City, the old Bell Telephone Laboratories, had moved to New Jersey and that this building in New York City was a white elephant. It was going to be sold. And it was. And it was being renovated for artists. The J. M. Kaplan Fund was behind it, and I signed up for it. And in January 1970, I moved in, 384 units in which at least one of the persons was an artist, one of the grownups was an artist.

MS. FALINO: You mean, it was designed as — it was rehabbed as a building for artists to live in.

MS. ARENTZEN: That's right —

MS. FALINO: — and work in as studios and homes?

MS. ARENTZEN: The possibility should be there. Obviously, Merce Cunningham needed much more space and he did not live there. He lived down the street. And he has one of the commercial spaces, or did. I mean, it's in the process of being dismantled.

MS. FALINO: Now, now it's being dismantled?

MS. ARENTZEN: Still. Still. Yeah. Oh, yeah. It was in his will. When Merce Cunningham dies, Merce Cunningham's everything should be disbursed.

MS. FALINO: Right. But the building is still there.

MS. ARENTZEN: Oh, yes. Oh, yes.

MS. FALINO: And thriving.

MS. ARENTZEN: Yes.

MS. FALINO: Okay.

MS. ARENTZEN: And Hurricane Sandy has done its evil work.

MS. FALINO: Okay. So New Jersey designer, craftsmen — the other question I had about the group was, did you have to submit your work in order to be accepted?

MS. ARENTZEN: Yes.

MS. FALINO: You did? So they basically juried you into the group.

MS. ARENTZEN: That's right.

MS. FALINO: Okay.

MS. ARENTZEN: Yes. That was a group where you had to be juried. What was interesting in those days — and I'm talking about most of the craft organizations but not all — you had to be juried in. I would think all. You'd have to be juried in. And with the objects, not with visuals, which is another thing that just doesn't happen anymore —

MS. FALINO: Right.

MS. ARENTZEN: And craft fairs, even Rhinebeck was juried by objects or — not — well, certainly the earlier ones. And Carolyn Kriegman, by the way, who as an important person, maybe the chair of the Northeast Region of the American Crafts Council, decided, let's have a fair. And so the first fair at Stowe was very much her idea. And giving them her merchandising techniques, she made — well, the first one was a pig roast. Well, everybody's bringing their work to show each other. "Why don't we have a mini conference next year and maybe an exhibition," she said? And so there was a mini conference and a pig roast and a big exhibition in a central area.

MS. FALINO: Now, you've moved — talking about New Jersey craftsmen, designer craftsmen, to the fairs because of her involvement.

MS. ARENTZEN: Because she — because she — her involvement in the Northeast Region of the American Crafts Council.

MS. FALINO: So they proved to be an influential group because of people like Caroline.

MS. ARENTZEN: Extremely. She was astonishing.

MS. FALINO: Is the group still in existence?

MS. ARENTZEN: I believe so. Then the following year, I guess it moved to Bennington. And they said, "Well, let's have these objects for sale and then maybe some people would like to exhibit." But then there was no pig. Bennington High School didn't have pigs. [They laugh.]

MS. FALINO: Okay. So now — so you got involved in the Designer Craftsmen in New Jersey and you also became a member of the board?

MS. ARENTZEN: Yes.

MS. FALINO: And did that happen very quickly or —

MS. ARENTZEN: Within a year.

MS. FALINO: Okay.

MS. ARENTZEN: Yeah.

MS. FALINO: So they recognized you're a serious craftsman, and welcomed you, and you assumed the leadership role.

MS. ARENTZEN: You know, I was single. I didn't have small children. I had the time, you know, to do it. [They laugh.] That so often is the case. But what was interesting to me too about craft organizations in that era that

very few people, if any, had a degree in fine arts, let alone crafts. There were a lot of dentists who were metal smiths because they're used to casting. And it wasn't that they wanted to make simply functional things and see how well they could demonstrate their hand-eye coordination. They really wanted to make art using the skills they had.

MS. FALINO: Sure.

MS. ARENTZEN: And we had a very lively lecture program at meetings. Olaf Skoogfors, of course, came to talk, other people came to talk. There were further fairs just within New Jersey. It was very meaningful.

MS. FALINO: Right. And did you do — and the show that you saw, was it at the Montclair Art Museum?

MS. ARENTZEN: Yes.

MS. FALINO: And did they continue to have a relationship with Montclair to have like annual shows or —

MS. ARENTZEN: They certainly had more than one, but I don't know about forever.

MS. FALINO: Okay.

MS. ARENTZEN: They had one at the Newark Museum I think. You know, I think it was the Newark Museum who said, "We are having the show on New Jersey artists."

MS. FALINO: Oh. Which is a little bit different.

MS. ARENTZEN: Which is a little bit different.

MS. FALINO: Yeah. But which probably included a lot of those members.

MS. ARENTZEN: Right. And Carolyn being Carolyn —

MS. FALINO: That's great.

MS. ARENTZEN: Carolyn's master's degree was from Yale in the fine arts department. And so you could see how she has a different, broader, more global view of art and craft and how they come together. And she herself got her start doing metalwork, sitting next to a dentist in an airplane.

MS. FALINO: [Laughs.] I love those stories. So now — so it didn't take long, maybe even before that, you started getting involved in New York groups.

MS. ARENTZEN: Yes. I did. And, again, that was through probably *Craft Horizons* and their ads for things. It was also true that I moved into Westbeth. I had some teaching — I was still teaching in New Jersey, but I knew of a craft organization that exhibited at Lever House every year. And so I went to these exhibitions and I found out that it was an organization and that I could join. And I did. And I eventually became a board member there too.

MS. FALINO: And which group was that?

MS. ARENTZEN: This is Artist Craftsmen of New York.

MS. FALINO: Okay. Tell us a little bit about the organization as you — when you arrived, became a member, because they've been around for a while.

MS. ARENTZEN: That's right. They were very interesting to me, very different from the New York state craftsmen, which I guess was founded somewhat after that time, in the '70s. They were different because their founders were mostly refugees from Europe and several of them had been to the Bauhaus. So their idea of craft in the art world was that it's on equal footing with the craft — the crafts with the fine arts. That's why the name is Artists Craftsmen of New York —

MS. FALINO: Right.

MS. ARENTZEN: — and not designer craftsmen, as so many of the other state crafts organizations were.

MS. FALINO: Yes.

MS. ARENTZEN: And indeed, they emphasized the art angle of it. I don't remember many meetings. There weren't too many meetings of everyone, but there were some.

MS. FALINO: Do you remember any prominent members?

MS. ARENTZEN: I remember Ruth Krebs very well.

MS. FALINO: Ruth Krebs.

MS. ARENTZEN: K-R-E-P-B-S. K-R-E-B-S.

MS. FALINO: And what does she do?

MS. ARENTZEN: Pottery.

MS. FALINO: Pottery.

MS. ARENTZEN: Ceramics. And she had been a Bauhaus student. Joan Zimet was active.

MS. FALINO: Z-I-M-M —

MS. ARENTZEN: Z-I-M-E-T. And she was a ceramist too.

MS. FALINO: Also from the Bauhaus?

MS. ARENTZEN: No. No. Joan is a native New Yorker I think. Bernie Bernstein.

MS. FALINO: Oh, yes. The silversmith.

MS. ARENTZEN: Yes. Bernie and I remain good friends.

MS. FALINO: Yes. He's a terrific guy.

MS. ARENTZEN: You know, I can't really remember offhand. It was, you know, a large group. There were no glass blowers. Glass wasn't — there was no glass blowing.

MS. FALINO: But there wasn't much glass. Yeah. But were there wood — many wood workers or jewelers?

MS. ARENTZEN: You know, that's — if you were to name five or six top woodworkers in the New York-New Jersey area, they would have been members of one or both, even if they — I mean, Jerry Osgood was New Jersey and he moved to New Hampshire.

MS. FALINO: Oh, I forgot that. Okay. Okay.

MS. ARENTZEN: Moulthrop.

MS. FALINO: Ed?

MS. ARENTZEN: Yes. New Jersey and then Florida, maybe New York. It wasn't unusual to have people be members of both.

MS. FALINO: Right.

MS. ARENTZEN: Who else?

MS. FALINO: You didn't have to live in state necessarily to belong?

MS. ARENTZEN: No.

MS. FALINO: And do you remember if that one was juried?

MS. ARENTZEN: Yes, it was.

MS. FALINO: Okay. Interesting. And then, were you also a member — or you taught rather at the Crafts Students League?

MS. ARENTZEN: No. That was something where you — that was an art school really.

MS. FALINO: Okay.

MS. ARENTZEN: And I never took a course there. But my former employer Adda Husted-Anderson taught metal there.

MS. FALINO: She taught metal there. Who else was there? But what about the 92nd Street Y? Was that —

MS. ARENTZEN: It was a going concern then. Very much so.

MS. FALINO: Bernie was involved. Bernie Bernstein taught there.

MS. ARENTZEN: And he still is in a way.

MS. FALINO: He still is.

MS. ARENTZEN: In ways of supporting it. I don't know whether he still does work at the Jewish Museum or not.

MS. FALINO: I don't think so.

MS. ARENTZEN: I think he's pretty much retired now because he moved into the city.

MS. FALINO: Right. But you did you ever — were you ever involved up there at the 92nd Street Y?

MS. ARENTZEN: No, I wasn't.

MS. FALINO: Too far north?

MS. ARENTZEN: Yes. [Laughs.] Just like Ed Koch. He'd get bends if he went north of 14th Street. [They laugh.] I mean, it's another world. [They laugh.]

MS. FALINO: All right. So then, why don't you tell us about how you found and what you gained from your experience with Westbeth Artist Housing? You still reside there now.

MS. ARENTZEN: I do.

MS. FALINO: And you were there since 1966?

MS. ARENTZEN: Nineteen seventy.

MS. FALINO: Nineteen seventy, so after you left New Jersey? Because you say you got to New Jersey January 1970.

MS. ARENTZEN: Oh, I'm sorry. That was — that was Westbeth.

MS. FALINO: That was Westbeth. Okay.

MS. ARENTZEN: Yes. New Jersey was probably — let's see — probably it was '68. I'm missing a couple of years there.

MS. FALINO: That's okay.

MS. ARENTZEN: I don't know.

MS. FALINO: But it was about 1970 that you moved to Westbeth.

MS. ARENTZEN: January 7.

MS. FALINO: Okay. That was an important day, obviously.

MS. ARENTZEN: And I was one of the first tenants and it was amazing. It was an amazing scene. It brought together so many different disciplines. There were very few craftspeople.

MS. FALINO: So roughly — tell us about the building. Where is it?

MS. ARENTZEN: West Village, on what was the West Side Highway, which is right on the Hudson River. On the other side is Washington Street, and it's bound in north and south by Bethune on the north and Bank on the south. And it was many buildings. Several were taken down and a courtyard put in the center. There are studios for rent to tenants and for people outside of Westbeth. There are commercial spaces previously rented by Merce Cunningham, Moor Graphics [ph], a couple of other dance companies, theaters, and a school has their drama department in the building.

MS. FALINO: And who established Westbeth?

MS. ARENTZEN: Well, Roger Stevens in Washington, D.C., who was on a cultural commission of some kind. This is maybe somebody's story. I mean, I wasn't there. But asked somebody at a cocktail party — it all sounds too

true [ph] to me — but what do artists need? But there again, it's a connection. And the connection was with the J. M. Kaplan, oh, artist housing. He said, artist housing. And connections were made.

J. M. Kaplan Fund had done a very small project in Greenwich Village, probably less than a quarter of the size of Westbeth, way over in the center of Greenwich Village. And as the — he bought the building low, Mr. J. M. Kaplan. And artists moved in thinking that they would stay forever. And the corporation, the legal organization of the building, allowed for the fact that J. M. Kaplan could at a certain point take over the building and sell it to a for-profit entity, which happened, and the people had to move out.

Now, Westbeth legally is still supported by the J. M. Kaplan Fund where — the seed money went in for that. And part of the deal is he can keep a representative on the board, but the legal structure for Westbeth — and I've seen — what I'm telling you now, I've seen in writing.

MS. FALINO: Are you on the board there now?

MS. ARENTZEN: No.

MS. FALINO: No.

MS. ARENTZEN: No. There is a tenants association that has three representatives on the board. The board is a self-perpetuating group of people who seem to have an interest in Westbeth for one reason or another. And they allow the three representatives from the tenants to sit there. They may or may not speak. They certainly may not vote, but they may not tell any person outside that room of anything that's going on.

MS. FALINO: Oh, really?

MS. ARENTZEN: Oh, really. Now, put that together with a self-perpetuating board and, you know, you have a recipe for disaster. In fact, I think the people there, the majority of the people on the board, were not tenants; pretty good, because we were infiltrated by a member of the management association that we hired to manage the building, to collect the rents, to do, to do, to do. Well, they put somebody on the board.

Now, all you have to do with any kind of building in New York is if you want to get out — if you want to change the building into a luxury high rise —

MS. FALINO: Right.

MS. ARENTZEN: — well, what you do is you raise — you cause costs to escalate, building expenses. Well, let's not just put in this wooden door, let's put it in marble. I mean, these are exaggerations, but he was beginning to try to restructure the financing of the building because the HUD, the end of the HUD mortgage was coming up and would have to be privately — or there would be another mortgage. And he tried to control that. He was acting for his organization. It was nothing personal. He was trying to structure it in such a way that it could be easily transferred into a for-profit group as far as I can see. In fact, the way the legal structure was for this building, having — the people who put it together having seen what had happened to the previous J. M. Kaplan building, locked it in and that it really can't happen.

MS. FALINO: So the property is really held in perpetuity —

MS. ARENTZEN: As a non-profit corporation.

MS. FALINO: As a non — and that rents to people in the arts.

MS. ARENTZEN: To artists. Yes. And at lowest — just as low a rent as possible. It just went into rent stabilization. So we will have increases every year or every two years.

MS. FALINO: Do you have any idea how many units there are?

MS. ARENTZEN: Yeah, 384 or 364.

MS. FALINO: That's remarkable really. And do you have any guess as to the average size of the apartment?

MS. ARENTZEN: Oh, yes. I have 375 square feet as a studio apartment. And that is the smallest apartment in the building.

MS. FALINO: I just want to say that's pretty small.

MS. ARENTZEN: A quarter of the apartments are for one person. The rest are for two or more. It goes not only by square footage but the number of windows you have. That's kind of the city legal thing. You have to have a

certain amount of windows for the number of people.

MS. FALINO: But they're intended as living quarters and working space?

MS. ARENTZEN: It's hoping that many people could work in their apartments. I did it for a long time before I got my commercial space in the old Port Authority building.

MS. FALINO: Do you remember what your initial rent was?

MS. ARENTZEN: Yes. It was more or less \$100.

MS. FALINO: Right.

MS. ARENTZEN: And I worried that I couldn't pay it, but I did.

MS. FALINO: Yeah. And do you have any idea — like this was — this was 1970. So what were — what were — I mean, that's a small apartment.

MS. ARENTZEN: Well, let me tell you. If you have two people with maybe a child or something like that, they're eligible for a duplex. Now, the duplex, you walk into a room that's probably 250, 300 — 200 square feet roughly. And then you walk upstairs or downstairs into a space that's enormous, that's as wide — wider than anything that's downstairs in that room that you walk into. And then it goes from the courtyard out to one of the side streets. And all these rooms that I'm describing to you so far have ceilings that are at least nine feet. They have no view of the Hudson River.

MS. FALINO: So beautiful high ceiling spaces.

MS. ARENTZEN: Others look out over the Hudson River. I didn't when I moved in. But piers all burned down — and the West Side Highway either collapsed or was taken down, a combination of both.

MS. FALINO: So as a result, you got views. [Laughs.]

MS. ARENTZEN: I've got a big time, big time view.

MS. FALINO: So that was a big boon. Did you know any other craftspeople in the building?

MS. ARENTZEN: Yes, I did. I knew one. And I can't remember her name. But she and I had met only once. And we were both taking things to America House for sale, because even when I was in New Jersey, before moving into Westbeth, I was making things, and having small showings, and going to any kind of crafts store, did some research in their own craft stores, their boutiques in that era, at those times. But she — she and I presented work at America House at the same time during that year. I also went to Georg Jensen and sold my work there too.

MS. FALINO: In the '70s.

MS. ARENTZEN: Sixties.

MS. FALINO: Sixties.

MS. ARENTZEN: It continued through the '70s.

MS. FALINO: But it provided you with a greatly stabilized existence. You could be independent from your parents. You already had a place, but now you were —

MS. ARENTZEN: Very much so.

MS. FALINO: Yeah. And you were — you were still on a trajectory for your career. You weren't with a career yet. You were still growing.

MS. ARENTZEN: Oh, yeah. And during — you mentioned organizations that might have been an opportunity to meet people. So I've already talked about 47th Street on a technical level before.

MS. FALINO: Right. Visiting the shops for Adda.

MS. ARENTZEN: But I had — in the course of whatever — I knew of the contest supported by the trade to promote diamonds, called Diamonds International.

MS. FALINO: Oh, yeah.

MS. ARENTZEN: That was a very big deal commercially. It was a big deal for the people who sold diamonds because they had — and especially retail because they could perhaps have this exhibition. And this exhibition tended to be shown at museums, small museums in really special places for a period of time, but it got a great deal of publicity. It was strictly for the trade.

MS. FALINO: This contest, Diamond International, was it an organization based in New York?

MS. ARENTZEN: Diamond Information Council was the instigator, and they did that through — there was a very cozy arrangement between the information council and the N.W. Ayer.

MS. FALINO: What?

MS. ARENTZEN: N.W. Ayer, an advertising agency, N, period, W, period, A-Y-E-R.

MS. FALINO: Okay.

MS. ARENTZEN: And they organized the publicity for it and everything about it. It meant an exhibition in New York, and television crews, and so forth. And that's how I met some of the anchors for New York television.

I mean, that had a very small lead to — especially the second time I had won one, a small lead. Someone had suggested, "Well, crafts is really big now. Would you like to consider having a television show, a craft show?" And we talked it over a little bit, just sort of back-of-the-envelope stuff. And I thought this was not for me. And, you know, they had a very different idea about craft than I did. And that was nice.

MS. FALINO: But it shows the increasing awareness of artists working in craft media.

MS. ARENTZEN: Now, this Diamonds International award program had — it certainly was going on in the '50s, the late '50s. And what they did was to take the designs that had been submitted — they were submitted on paper — around to important jewelry stores, important clients. And those were the people that voted.

And then the agency decided they had to do something a little bit different. So they opened it up in a different way for the jury, jurors. And then somebody there — I don't know the timeframe, but somebody there in the late '60s I guess said, "You know, crafts were becoming interesting. Let's call Paul Smith." And Paul Smith was a juror on the first one that I won.

And I — what I did was a gold necklace that was textured, and it was modern. There was no clasp. I used very small diamonds that I could afford. Gold was \$30 an ounce then. And it was — imagine sticks of wood sort of wrapped around your neck, get a good kind of spring on, very different from the 5th Avenue jewelers that were trying to win this prize.

MS. FALINO: Yes. And Paul had sway.

MS. ARENTZEN: He was — he must have. And I thanked him later. He at least made a cause. I don't flatter myself that I was the only craftsman that submitted, but he must have made a case for the importance of craft. He must have.

The Cultured Pearl Association — I won two more eventually, which put me in a different category with them, which is a very, very nice thing.

And the only other person who was making inroads this way, with the high profile jewelry was Stan Lechtzin, who, when the Culture Pearl Association decided to have a competition, because the diamond people were doing it and the diamond people were so successful, they started one, and Stan won an award. And then later, Stan and I both won awards. And so that was all good fun.

MS. ARENTZEN: Stan Lechtzin. That's great. Yes. He did have early successes in some of these exhibitions. He had a great show in Japan actually with Miye Matsukata and Olaf Skoogfors.

MS. ARENTZEN: Yes. And then, later, I did something similar with I think the same — same department store, Seibu Department Store.

MS. FALINO: Yeah. Oh, really?

MS. ARENTZEN: And I did the same thing with — I forget who it was with. Yeah.

MS. FALINO: It would be wonderful to know who you did yours with.

MS. ARENTZEN: You know, I rather think it wasn't just three people. I rather think it was more of a — I know I

sent more than one piece.

MS. FALINO: They may have changed their —

MS. ARENTZEN: I think they've changed their format somehow.

MS. FALINO: How interesting. So you were — you were not just applying for the craftsmen shows. You were applying to these, you know, high-net-worth kinds of competitions.

MS. ARENTZEN: Oh, absolutely.

MS. FALINO: And, generally, I mean, were you doing much with diamonds or pearls in your work at that point or did you —

MS. ARENTZEN: Pearls, yes. Diamonds, no.

MS. FALINO: Diamonds, no. It was — typically, few craftsmen did.

MS. ARENTZEN: Yes. And then I really got on track to work with diamonds. And through these contests and people I met, when I needed some colored diamonds — I thought it would be really fun to make something out of color diamonds and so I called the Lazare Kaplan, Top of the Sixes, whole floor then. This was the corporation that was sold to Jackie Kennedy's partner.

MS. FALINO: Maurice Tempelsman.

MS. ARENTZEN: Maurice Tempelsman.

MS. FALINO: He worked for Lazare Kaplan?

MS. ARENTZEN: No. No. No. He was on several levels above that in global investments and he owned a lot of gold, gold fields and that kind of thing. Maurice Tempelsman. Yes. And he bought Lazare Kaplan. It might at the Top of the Sixes still, but it's not — the Kaplans don't have any — [inaudible].

MS. FALINO: I've missed the connection. What's the connection between the competition and Lazare Kaplan?

MS. ARENTZEN: Because at the competition, I met the people from Lazare Kaplan who were selling diamonds. And they were the premier place to buy loose diamonds.

MS. FALINO: Oh, they were diamonds dealers?

MS. ARENTZEN: Oh, yeah.

MS. FALINO: Okay.

MS. ARENTZEN: And Grandpa Lazare himself was a cutter of great note. I mean, it was some enormous diamond that he cut when he was young that was a great famous diamond to cut, and he did it perfectly and the whole company was built on that. He was Belgian and very much a gentleman. And his sons — two sons took over and their grandsons who are still in the diamond business but have their own businesses now. And so —

MS. FALINO: And Maurice Tempelsman owned Lazare Kaplan?

MS. ARENTZEN: Not then.

MS. FALINO: But later.

MS. ARENTZEN: But much later. Much later.

MS. FALINO: Okay.

MS. ARENTZEN: So I went there and asked for diamonds. And I said, colored diamonds. And what I wanted to do was to have — I don't know, five or six diamonds, of exactly the same colors but — different colors so I'd have pairs of — but different sizes. You know, that was maybe an hour or two to pick those out.

MS. FALINO: Sure.

MS. ARENTZEN: And I told them what I wanted to do. And, you know, how you walk into a diamond room, went into a small room.

MS. FALINO: Several layers of security.

MS. ARENTZEN: Yes. And without — it's all very white glove there so you don't notice the security, but I know it's there and they know I know it's there. And I very casually put my bags, you know, to the side and my coat on a different place so that I'm clean, you know, I don't have anything.

MS. FALINO: Oh, yeah.

MS. ARENTZEN: And they let me sit there by myself. Now, they may have had hidden cameras. I rather think not. I was afraid of dropping something. I mean, I was working with small stones and I was afraid of dropping something on the carpet and being there for 24 hours trying to find these colored diamonds in a gray felt rug, but that — so that was one kind of connection.

Another kind of connection, because my parents had sat next to this guy, and he was working for a jewelry store on Madison Avenue then, and he had been forced out of a long-term job with one place and gone to another one, which was very nice but much smaller. And he was a real gentleman. And he — because of that connection, he remembered me and I did some designing for him, did some designing for McTeigue — so designing on paper was something that I was prepared to do and did it. And I learned a lot doing it.

MS. FALINO: But did you ever do stuff in trade like you needed diamonds and maybe that — they were out of your budget — did you design to get a diamond, or did they —

MS. ARENTZEN: No.

MS. FALINO: No. There was nothing like that.

MS. ARENTZEN: I don't even trade with craftspeople.

MS. FALINO: Oh, really?

MS. ARENTZEN: Yeah. If they would like to have my work, that's wonderful. And at the fairs, I always gave them deep, deep discounts. And — well, "Shall we trade, shall we trade"? And I said, "Well, I would really love to have a piece of yours." That's — I wanted to have a piece of their work.

MS. FALINO: Right.

MS. ARENTZEN: And —

MS. FALINO: In my case, I'm asking more like —

MS. ARENTZEN: No, no, no.

MS. FALINO: In order to — because you were young and diamonds were kind of a step up. I mean, you're dealing with valuable material but diamonds are yet another level.

MS. ARENTZEN: No. No. I love working with small diamonds.

MS. FALINO: Yeah.

MS. ARENTZEN: And you could always get high quality. I learned about — a lot about buying diamonds, too, from the Kaplans because my particular salesperson — I usually worked with two different ones — really educated me and it turned out my eyesight was really good. And I really like some of the things I had. And it was good fun. But no, not like that.

MS. FALINO: So do you think, though, that applying for these contests sort of pushed you more toward experimenting with precious stones or were you doing it already?

MS. ARENTZEN: Yes. Certainly pushed me forward on doing diamonds because once you start working with them, I love them.

MS. FALINO: Yeah. But you were kind of early in that because I think of contemporary jewelers, you know, of the '60s and '70s and even '80s, you know, there was this very minimalist approach. There was — you know, I mean even gold was not used very much in those days and it was — you know —

MS. ARENTZEN: That's right.

MS. FALINO: It was a very anti-commercial look, and diamonds represented the commercial world. So I think you were an early adopter.

MS. ARENTZEN: Yes. Well, Adda used diamonds and gold and Irena Brynner did too, not much but she did.

MS. FALINO: She did.

MS. ARENTZEN: I want to correct something, when I said I don't ever barter even with craftspeople. I do buy crafts pieces and I never ask for a discount. Sometimes they offer it and I customarily give a deep discount to craftspeople or did when I was doing the fairs. And so I'm not hard-assed about it, you know.

MS. FALINO: Oh, no. That's — I wasn't —

MS. ARENTZEN: I just don't. It's just complicated.

MS. FALINO: I think sometimes it's complicated. It is complicated because things are not always what you could say are equal. They're equivalent things. I was thinking of it more in terms of trading for labor, you know, to get — you need something, I need something. Trading each other's work is a whole different subject.

MS. ARENTZEN: Yes. Because you have — even in the definition that you have — you have to quantify it in terms of dollars.

MS. FALINO: Somehow. Right.

MS. ARENTZEN: And then you might as well exchange money and have what you need when you need it. [Laughs.]

MS. FALINO: Unless you don't have the money, you know, when you're young. So that was my —

MS. ARENTZEN: Well, no I didn't have the money when I was young and so I didn't buy those things, you know.

MS. FALINO: So you just went without.

MS. ARENTZEN: I just did what I could do.

MS. FALINO: Right.

MS. ARENTZEN: There was plenty to do.

MS. FALINO: Exactly. So what are the other commissions that you found really exciting? I mean, there are a number of them. There's — you got DeBeers. You did a mount, General Electric Company, for a man-made diamond. You produced something for Queen Elizabeth II, for an Ascot race, Random House, Skidmore, you know. And then you had production designs and you have different — you have several different kinds of commissions. Do you want to address that in some way?

MS. ARENTZEN: Well, I will say that in the years that we're talking about, 95 percent of my business was special order. Although I did the fairs, it was really people who came to me to buy something that I had already made or had an idea of what they wanted.

MS. FALINO: And this is the 1970s?

MS. ARENTZEN: Yes.

MS. FALINO: Okay.

MS. ARENTZEN: Primarily — yeah. Yeah, through the '70s.

MS. FALINO: So how do you think most people found you? You didn't have a shop.

MS. ARENTZEN: No.

MS. FALINO: A front — you know, a store front.

MS. ARENTZEN: No store front. How did they find me? Well —

MS. FALINO: Did it start with like a circle around your family or was it totally separate from that?

MS. ARENTZEN: I think all of the above. Some of my parents' friends knew that I was making jewelry. And a couple of them thought, hmm, I really would like something — I don't like modern jewelry myself, but I think my daughter would like something, and I'll get just a little something. And they liked it. And so they came back. So that was the New Jersey connection. The other connections through other friends in New York and so forth, one

of the — the mother of one of my friend said, "I would like to have a tea for you and bring your jewelry."

MS. FALINO: Really? So you had a little trunk show?

MS. ARENTZEN: And another friend of my mother did the same thing in her home. And that meant the name got around. And even if they never bought things, their friends did. Then there were the fairs of all types.

Oddly enough, I dealt with two stores in New York then, one almost immediately and the other one — well, yeah, both of them almost immediately. One was Aaron Faber and the other one was 8th Street and — a French name.

MS. FALINO: And then later it was Fairtree [ph].

MS. ARENTZEN: I never dealt with Fairtree.

MS. FALINO: You never did? Okay.

MS. ARENTZEN: No, because they only had work on consignment.

MS. FALINO: Okay.

MS. ARENTZEN: And I needed to sell the work.

MS. FALINO: So Faber purchased your pieces and —

MS. ARENTZEN: Yes. He still does, not if he has a show, not that he has a trunk show for me, but definitely.

MS. FALINO: Okay. For their stock forever.

MS. ARENTZEN: Absolutely. And my work is not so expensive for what it is. So that's my gift to them. [They laugh.] These two stores, you would think that they would be in competition and you would think that they would try to get a hold of me privately. It only happened once.

It just — in New York, it was just so convenient to know that if you go to a store at a particular time at a particular place on your own schedule, that unless you have a reason to really talk with the artist, you're not going to think about doing it, you know.

But one thing leads to another. Some of my friends at Columbia — I made wedding rings for one couple. Well, the wife, whom I did not know before I made these wedding rings, worked for Vogue Buttrick.

MS. FALINO: Oh, Vogue Buttrick being the pattern, dress patterns.

MS. ARENTZEN: That's right. And they were a very appreciate group of handwork and I was always making something for one of them or selling something to — and I'm still friendly in making Christmas tree ornaments for the twin step daughters of one of them.

MS. FALINO: That's wonderful. So you really did build — build on the relationships that you found.

MS. ARENTZEN: You build. You build. I would say that my association with the American Crafts Council was not directly helpful. I mean, some colleagues, you know, on committees and things did buy things, but that was not a primary source in a way.

MS. FALINO: And then you also mentioned you sold through America House.

MS. ARENTZEN: I did.

MS. FALINO: What sort of things did you sell for them or sell to them?

MS. ARENTZEN: I still have one of the things that survived our fire. Scandinavian women's jewelry — Scandinavian in feeling. Not terribly expensive, sometimes using wood.

MS. FALINO: Wooden elements, ornamental elements. And this was in the '60s? It must have been because that —

MS. ARENTZEN: That's right. They closed during the '70s.

MS. FALINO: America House closed in like '69, I think.

MS. ARENTZEN: I bet, right before I moved into New York again.

MS. FALINO: Yeah. And the things that you saw at America House, how did you feel about the stock that they had in their inventory?

MS. ARENTZEN: Wonderful. It was the only place to buy any kind of craft in Manhattan at the time, really, I thought. You know, there were bigger pieces at — [inaudible] — or something, but that they really — they were wonderful.

MS. FALINO: And was it — in terms of the value, was it most at the lower price point or did you find it sort of a range of prices?

MS. ARENTZEN: I think it was a range of prices then. It was very accessible in its design, and yet at the same time very special. I'm thinking of the enamel work and the textiles and such.

MS. FALINO: Yes. And you saw the iteration that was designed by John — what's his name — Campbell. Oh, dear.

MS. ARENTZEN: David.

MS. FALINO: David Campbell — thank you — with the brick — exposed brick walls and he designed the cabinetry. What was that space like? Can you recall that?

MS. ARENTZEN: No, except that it was very warm and welcoming.

MS. FALINO: Okay. Okay.

MS. ARENTZEN: I'm still friendly with his daughter.

MS. FALINO: Who lives up in Maine?

MS. ARENTZEN: That's right.

MS. FALINO: Cathy?

MS. ARENTZEN: Pat.

MS. FALINO: She was doing a film on him I heard.

MS. ARENTZEN: Really?

MS. FALINO: I think so.

MS. ARENTZEN: It's wonderful.

MS. FALINO: Yes. So the outlets where you could — I don't mean outlet in a big sense but the opportunities for buying craft, good quality craft were in your opinion America House one of the best? And then Faber was great for jewelry?

MS. ARENTZEN: Yes. And he didn't come online until the '70s. And when he did, by that time, there were more places to buy craft work.

MS. FALINO: Right.

MS. ARENTZEN: Never many in Manhattan, but —

MS. FALINO: Jensen to an extent for American.

MS. ARENTZEN: Yes. Very little of it. They don't like to admit to it, but they did.

MS. FALINO: And then this place further south that you can't remember. You can't remember.

MS. ARENTZEN: Yeah. It will come. There was a place in Brooklyn even then. I never saw it. That's too far away.

MS. FALINO: And do you recall much about Fairtree? I know you said you didn't sell there, but tell us about that.

MS. ARENTZEN: Yes. Yes. I did. It had — it was lovely. The work was presented in a much more museum way than America House was.

MS. FALINO: With cases you mean?

MS. ARENTZEN: Cases and lighting. Everything was a step up professionally. I think America House was perfect

in very — but it wasn't slick. The Fairtree was just a little step above — a little bit more theatrical. And it meant that besides the openings at the Museum of Contemporary Craft, the Fairtree would have openings.

MS. FALINO: Did they ever coincide them, like if there was going to be a show on —

MS. ARENTZEN: No. Thank God, because we craftspeople in New York and the Boroughs and New Jersey would go to these very often. And then the groups would coalesce to go down to Chinatown to eat. It was a meeting place for us and we would discuss the work and see — you know, talk to each other about our own work and then go down to Chinatown, talk some more.

MS. FALINO: Right. Yeah.

MS. ARENTZEN: And it was a time in the '60s and certainly through the '70s that metalsmith not only knew the other metalsmith, but they knew other media and they knew the other person's work. And you'd know a textile person plus the work they're doing now plus what they did five years ago. You kind of kept track in all these different media. That's not true anymore.

MS. FALINO: It was a smaller circle.

MS. ARENTZEN: Exactly.

MS. FALINO: I mean, there was — as you mentioned I think yesterday, there was like a New York-centric group, but then you began to know what was happening in San Francisco and, you know, if you're keeping up with *Craft Horizons* or *American Craft*, as it was later called, you could really hold that world, you know, more or less in your grasp.

MS. ARENTZEN: You're absolutely true — absolutely right, because you — most of the work that was being done turned up in the magazine.

MS. FALINO: Yeah. And then, many of you were in the same age group too so you were — you were growing together in the field.

MS. ARENTZEN: You know, at a time in your life when that's your job description.

MS. FALINO: That's your life. Your life was your work. And work is life.

MS. ARENTZEN: You were asking me about commissions.

MS. FALINO: Yeah.

MS. ARENTZEN: I've had a wonderful time doing commissions and solving the problems has been very interesting. And you learn a great deal.

I can remember — I did a commission for a wedding ring, a young lady who worked for the Museum of Contemporary Crafts, whose name, of course, I do not remember. And she was marrying an accountant, and they were marrying in the Jewish tradition and this means an unbroken band. And a gold band, if possible matching.

And they came to visit me. And he was a quintessential accountant, anything you want to think about — and she was a very well-organized, well-respected person who worked at the museum. But she had a different sensibility. She wanted textures. And he wanted smooth. And there they were. And what could we do? And we went through everything, all the samples, and we went through everything. And he wasn't going to budge and she wasn't going to budge.

So I said, "How about this? Okay. I make two textured bands and then I take yours and I hammer it until it's smooth and polish it until smooth so they match." They're done from the same batch of gold. They started out looking exactly alike. And they end up same width, same thickness, same amount of gold more or less. And so it was amazing.

MS. FALINO: That's lovely.

MS. ARENTZEN: And there was another one. I had a picture in *American Craft*. Now that's another thing. People would read that magazine and get in touch with me even without Google.

MS. FALINO: It was the Google of our times, those old magazines.

MS. ARENTZEN: They featured a picture of a big textured necklace with some diamonds in it, some dark stones,

and so forth. Somebody calls from Chicago. He's in construction in Chicago. He has a big construction firm that's growing. And he saw this picture. He wants a ring like that, rings for his — engagement ring for his bride and another ring for himself. She may eventually have a gold band too, but these are the — they were both having essentially engagement rings.

They made an appointment to fly in from Chicago. They came into my apartment, because that's where I had my studio at that time. And he is a diamond in the rough if there ever was one. She is blonde, sleek, sweet, blue-eyed.

MS. FALINO: Calm.

MS. ARENTZEN: Calm, I thought. Oh, no. And I was very sympathetic to her. This was clearly not her kind of jewelry, but they wanted them identical or just very, very similar.

And my solution to that was — and she wanted a sapphire with diamonds. You know right away what she wanted, you know, diamonds, sapphires. And so I said, how about for you I make the diamond with the sapphires symmetrically placed on a gold band, and I will make it a slightly different thickness perhaps than you might see in a jewelry store or width or something like that so that it really makes sense for you to buy it from me and not the jewelry store. She smiled at last.

Now I have to defuse this guy. So he — and I said, "And for you, I will get you a sapphire in the rough and two diamonds in the rough. And I will put it in a textured ring." I said, "I cannot make your ring look like an entire necklace, but I'll keep — I'll keep the feeling of it."

MS. FALINO: How nice.

MS. ARENTZEN: They were both thrilled.

MS. FALINO: Not everybody is good at commissions because you really have to be quick on your feet and think about the needs of the —

MS. ARENTZEN: You have to be a little bit empathetic.

MS. FALINO: Empathetic. Yes.

MS. ARENTZEN: And, at some point, you can say, "I don't want to do this, thank you." You know, I don't say it that way. I say it — "I have seen something very similar to this in such and such a store. And I think that you might want to take a look at that." Speaking of commissions — I have made Christmas tree ornaments over the years for the twin step-daughters of a person. Also, I have commissioned Christmas ornaments for myself.

MS. FALINO: People have commissioned them from you?

MS. ARENTZEN: No. I have commissioned them from other craftspeople. So I've been in the buyer's seat.

MS. FALINO: You've been collecting them.

MS. ARENTZEN: I have. And I guess I have 25 or 30.

MS. FALINO: Really?

MS. ARENTZEN: I don't collect them every year. And my letter is on business stationery asking them if they would consider a commission for the munificent sum of — and I — you know, it has gone up over the years. And I said, "I'm giving you enough that you take it seriously but not so much that you get tied up in knots over it." It does not need to be in metal," if it's a metal craftsman. "It does not need to be — [inaudible] — at all. I just want to be surrounded by my friends and people whose work I like at Christmas."

MS. FALINO: I love that.

MS. ARENTZEN: And what's interesting is who delivers, who delivers on time, who ignores your letter, who eventually says, "I don't do this kind of thing." I mean, I have been astonished at that. And when I talked this over with a gallery owner, a very nice gallery out of Michigan, she said, "Oh, Glenda." She said, "I know if I invite 30 people to participate in an exhibition," she said, "half will come in on time; another quarter will come in really late but before the opening; and the other quarter you never hear from." So I was astounded. I said, "No wonder the stores only deal with — [inaudible]."

MS. FALINO: There's one other store. You mentioned Conason's which I have not heard.

MS. ARENTZEN: Conason's, yes.

MS. FALINO: In White Plains, New York.

MS. ARENTZEN: And I think Conason's was the name of their store. I did go up there once to show them work. They were just wonderful to deal with and had been in business a long time.

MS. FALINO: And did you — I mean, did you ever — did you know them personally? Did you get to know them very well?

MS. ARENTZEN: Yes. Well, yes. I got to know them fairly well.

MS. FALINO: Do you think they took their model from America House?

MS. ARENTZEN: Oh, no. They were in business before America House.

MS. FALINO: Really?

MS. ARENTZEN: They have to have been. And it was their only job. A lot of craft galleries, as the craft movement got going — and I will say the American Crafts Council and the museum and all the publicity that they could do and do in New York, I mean, that just made the craft movement so visible that it was just astonishing.

MS. FALINO: Right.

MS. ARENTZEN: And — but I think they were in it before. And the people who got in it after to start craft galleries in the '70s were very, very dedicated. And most of them were stay-at-home moms, I think. And some — they were at the time of their life where they didn't have little, little kids, and they needed something to do. And crafts was interesting and they'd always wanted to retail. And maybe it goes back to their — for some, they had been artists before. They had retailing experience or they wanted to have a store in their community. There were all kinds of reasons, but there were very few stores that said, "This will be retailing opportunity because I really want to present this kind of work."

MS. FALINO: And that's what the Conason's were in your opinion.

MS. ARENTZEN: Absolutely. Absolutely.

MS. FALINO: Okay. Did you ever sell at Shop One?

MS. ARENTZEN: No.

MS. FALINO: No. Okay.

MS. ARENTZEN: And some of these craft galleries that opened up opened up, you know, in the '70s, and they were all — I mean, they were learning how to be retailers when we were learning to make stuff —

MS. FALINO: Right. Everybody was learning.

MS. ARENTZEN: — which was exhausting on both sides. And so a few of those stores exist now. And I think one of the reasons is it's not just the economy or the cyclical nature of crafts, but they're as old as we are. And they're tired too, you know, being on it. The Rotenbergs who have Alianza in Boston, for instance.

MS. FALINO: Yes.

MS. ARENTZEN: She's remained active in various ways in the arts. And she and her husband became personal friends.

MS. FALINO: But there — you don't find many young people opening up craft galleries, do you?

MS. ARENTZEN: No.

MS. FALINO: It's a disturbing trend.

MS. ARENTZEN: Yes. But because of the work that is being done, I think many of the craftspeople that I hear from are doing some of the bigger trade shows and their work is being presented mostly because of the design rather than because of the handcraft work at boutiques and other such store. You know, I think they're finding a different venue because they're doing a different kind of work.

MS. FALINO: Right. Barney's.

MS. ARENTZEN: Yes. Barney's does really exciting —

MS. FALINO: Some great stuff, yeah. All right. I think we're now — should probably conclude for now. But that was a great, great review of all these wonderful galleries and places where you've been involved in the city. So thank you. We'll pick up soon with the next chapter. [They laugh.]

MS. ARENTZEN: What fun this has been, Jeannine.

MS. FALINO: Thank you. Thank you. I got panicked for a second.

MS. ARENTZEN: How did my name come up to be interviewed? Do you have any idea?

MS. FALINO: I hope that was recording.

[End of disc.]

MR. FALINO: Okay. This is Jeannine Falino. I am at my own home in New Rochelle, New York, and I am sitting here with Glenda Arentzen, and it is the 15th of February, and we are picking up on a conversation that we started in late 2012.

And when we last talked, Glenda, you were talking about the Diamond International Award. So they may have a little overlap, but why don't we pick up there, and tell us about that?

MS. ARENTZEN: The Diamonds International Awards were important to this country because it was a public relations event for De Beers, and this was then administered by N.W. Ayer and Company. It had been going for at least 15 years before I won an award in the late 1960s, and it continued for another decade, perhaps.

MS. FALINO: So it doesn't exist anymore?

MS. ARENTZEN: I don't think so. And a wonderful way of getting publicity for anything is having a contest. And De Beers did it; the Pearl Association, which is New York-based with some ties to Japan, thought it was a good idea, too, to have a contest. And so they started some pearl contests, and that lasted maybe five or six years. DeBeers then also had, besides the Diamonds International, Diamonds Today, and sometimes trade organizations will have contests for younger people. The stone dealers' organization, even today, has contests for lapidary skills, in jewelry or not — it's very costly to run these things but the — Diamonds International put together the prize-winning pieces and had them on tour for a year. And the —

MS. FALINO: Where did they tour? Do you remember?

MS. ARENTZEN: Oh — Goldsmith's Hall, London.

MS. FALINO: Wow.

MS. ARENTZEN: Japan. I mean, different, important entities would sign on for this. Not so easy to exhibit — I forget how many pieces were in these exhibitions — maybe 20 at the most, and there might be an American winner or not. And —

MS. FALINO: These were international contests?

MS. ARENTZEN: And they were — oh, yes, they were international contests. And if you won three of them, they made you a member of their Diamonds International Academy, but that really didn't have much strength to me PR-wise, I think, because it's such an unknown thing. If you win three you become a member of the academy. There are two American winners that have won three. And the other one says that he is the only American winner.

MS. FALINO: [Laughs.]

MS. ARENTZEN: But anyway, going back to these contests — it was, you know, just a wonderful experience, because when I won the first one, the idea of an American crafts person who actually designed and made these pieces was a completely new idea. The American craft movement was beginning to be visible to some people, but they had no idea that it was going to enter a commercial field the way it did. And so there I was.

MS. FALINO: And the first year you won it?

MS. ARENTZEN: And the first year I won it, the Diamonds International people —

MS. FALINO: So '76, you were a student of diamond competition.

MS. ARENTZEN: Yes.

MS. FALINO: Is that the same one?

MS. ARENTZEN: No, no, no. That was — that was different. The first Diamonds International was 1967.

MS. FALINO: Okay. Okay, and you — and you — that was the first year they offered it, and you won it?

MS. ARENTZEN: No, no, no. They had been issuing — they would — doing the contest for at least 15 years before I did it, at least. Previously, the contest has been juried by socialites, — in their words, socialites. And what they would do was to take these international pieces with diamonds and fly to various cities and have women judge them who were purchasers.

MS. FALINO: Clients.

MS. ARENTZEN: Yes. And the result was that it was not a very diverse collection. So then they started diversifying their jury, doing it in New York, and so immediately, that gave the show a different look. I heard about it because Gillian Packard, who, is now deceased — British goldsmith had won one for England, and had a very successful business making Avant Garde jewelry in England. And she came to New York to visit for one reason or another and made a courtesy call to my former employer, Adda. And it was a day when Adda was teaching, and I was there.

And so I offered her tea, and we talked for about an hour. And that's how I heard about the contest to begin with, and being in New York, you don't have to go too far each year to figure out when it's going to happen again. Well, I thought, Okay, I'll try that. And wouldn't you know, Paul Smith was one of the jurors. I did not know that when I applied.

MS. FALINO: When you applied.

MS. ARENTZEN: And you apply with a drawing, and are chosen, and then you produce the piece.

MS. FALINO: And do they keep the drawings?

MS. ARENTZEN: No, I have the drawings.

MS. FALINO: You still have them?

MS. ARENTZEN: Actually, I have that piece.

MS. FALINO: And the piece?

MS. ARENTZEN: I have the piece. I think I have the drawing. We had a shop fire that destroyed a great deal of work and documentation, but not all of it in the early '80s.

MS. FALINO: But luckily, that survived.

MS. ARENTZEN: Yes, it may have — if it did, it — I kind of think it did. I really should look, because I didn't have all my work and documentation in one place. Some was in the shop, some was in the house, some was in New York.

MS. FALINO: That's a lucky thing.

MS. ARENTZEN: And that was just luck. So there was that, and then I won a second one that next year, and then it was — there was a hiatus of two or three years before I won the third one.

MS. FALINO: [Affirmative.] Three times; that has got to be pretty rare.

MS. ARENTZEN: Yes, yes it was. And it was — as I knew the people better toward the end, because I was more involved with them because they — for instance, I had the opportunity, through De Beers, to make a prize for the winning jockey of an Ascot race that was named in honor of the Queen's father or something like that.

Anyway, the Queen does the presenting, the Queen comes to Ascot. There were four awards — the horse, the winner, the jockey and something else. And I made a ring for the jockey. Oh, and it was a female jockey. That was another thing that got them publicity.

MS. FALINO: Oh, cool. I see.

MS. ARENTZEN: The fact that I did this did not get the publicity, but the fact that — but — so over the years of

knowing these people at N.W. Ayer and doing the jurying for them and such, I got to know them. And —

MS. FALINO: Oh, so you went on the jurying side too, then.

MS. ARENTZEN: Not for Diamonds International, but for the young — you know, the Young Diamond Designer Award once.

MS. FALINO: Okay.

MS. ARENTZEN: And this was an organization that run a clean competition.

MS. FALINO: No inside favorites.

MS. ARENTZEN: No inside favors. And many years later, when I talked to Paul Smith, he did not disagree with that in his — and that's nice, because there are other competitions that are not run as cleanly, and there was even one where a fellow crafts person won an award that had a cash prize of a few hundred dollars where they asked the money back or with the — perhaps this person would choose not to accept it because the publicity was worth a lot.

MS. FALINO: So what did the prize entail for you? Was it just a name — a named prize? Or was there a cash prize or —

MS. ARENTZEN: Just being part of this exhibition — no cash. Wonderful publicity.

MS. FALINO: Yes.

MS. ARENTZEN: And they have a nice luncheon, a nice opening, television interviews.

MS. FALINO: So it's visibility.

MS. ARENTZEN: High visibility, and if you're clever enough, you meet other people in the industry. And I did, and there's some people I liked more than others, you know?

MS. FALINO: Of course.

MS. ARENTZEN: And where the chemistry was good, and I did some designing for some of the houses — and of course, they're — N.W. Ayer is very anxious to try to do something for you.

MS. FALINO: But they — was N.W. Ayer the publicity machine for —

MS. ARENTZEN: Oh, it's a big international advertising agency.

MS. FALINO: Advertising, okay.

MS. ARENTZEN: They're still in existence. And I mean, they're really big and really old school.

MS. FALINO: Okay, so it — but it — so for you, it translated into increased visibility not just in the craft world but to a much wider market?

MS. ARENTZEN: Absolutely. And a different slice of the market, and an entirely different type of project, and they, for instance, said to Cartier, would you like to meet this winner one year; she lives in New York.

MS. FALINO: And this Cartier who?

MS. ARENTZEN: The jewelry firm, Cartier?

MS. FALINO: Oh Cartier, yes. Okay.

MS. ARENTZEN: And that was — that was really another interesting experience. We both knew that this was not a good match, but it was an ArtCarved call me once [ph] just from having seen publicity in jewelry trade journals, and I said, "are you sure you want me to do — don't you want something like all the rest of the ArtCarved engagement rings?" And he said, "Well, yes, but just be a little bit different." And I said, "I don't do a little different. I do a lot different." [They laugh.]

MS. FALINO: And now — also, for our listeners, what is ArtCarved?

MS. ARENTZEN: Wholesale manufacturer of primarily diamond engagement rings and diamond wedding rings.

N.W. Ayer got me in touch with Bloomingdale's — the merchandise manager — he looked at — and we both knew that that wasn't going to work out either, but he looked at the selection of works that I'd brought and looked at them and asked me if they had all been manufactured in the United States, and I — this was a very savvy guy. But he had no concept of what the craft meant [ph] — which surprised me, because one of the Tiffany — early Tiffany designers had gone to Tiffany from Bloomingdale's — had made her own — [inaudible]

MS. FALINO: When was that?

MS. ARENTZEN: Before Paloma Picasso — the teardrop —

MS. FALINO: Oh, yeah. Cummings? Or — no, not Cummings — Peretti?

MS. ARENTZEN: Elsa Peretti.

MS. FALINO: Okay. I didn't realize she was at Bloomingdale's. What about places like Bergdorf's — a little bit — you know, have a little more luxury, sensibility that is a little more unique? Did people like — did firms like them approach you?

MS. ARENTZEN: No, but I took my work to Bendel's.

MS. FALINO: You did?

MS. ARENTZEN: That was on my own initiative, and that was great fun. They had open-look-see [ph] every Friday morning. And you met other craftspeople who had wearables, and I got another feeling for a slice of the market.

MS. FALINO: [Affirmative.] They had — they had — in other words, open call, every Friday morning? Wow. Well, that certainly ensures lots of great new material coming through the doors.

MS. ARENTZEN: Yeah. Now, I was already selling to Georg Jensen in New York when I won the first one. Yes, I'm pretty sure, because I came back from Denmark, went to America House — [inaudible] and Georg Jensen. People I knew, had tea parties for me in their homes.

MS. FALINO: Oh, you had little trunk shows.

MS. ARENTZEN: Mothers of friends would suggest — I didn't. I mean, I'm so naïve, and a friend of — you know, friends of mine — parents out in New Jersey — and I was living in New Jersey at the time, and then we were trying to do something — well actually, that happened after two or three of them as a courtesy, really, had me make something small and nice. And it looked like real jewelry, and they really liked it. And that's — see, so if you can rise to the occasion with it, sometimes you can expand your horizons. What else did all these contests do for me?

Well, I guess one thing led to another through that, and once — well, the buyer at Georg Jensen was at the Diamonds International luncheon. I think he must have been known to them. It may have been that I put him on the list, but I don't think I did that. I think he was there, and my parents, of course, were at the luncheon. My parents loved going to these things, too. You know, they had — [they laugh] — because they got the skinny. Both my parents are very savvy about reading people, and — [she laughs] — my mother would ask me after these — you know, to her grown daughter, "do you know so and so? What do you think of so and so? What do you," — and I'd say, "I think he's sleazy. And I think this one's really nice." She said, "yes, I thought so too. Not the kind who will put his hand under the table onto your knee." And I said, "I think you're right." [They laugh.]

You know, so that was a — just a little sidebar to all of it, but they were very, very nice to me.

MS. FALINO: And it sounds like — I mean, you were really paying attention to these competitions and actively engaging in them.

MS. ARENTZEN: Absolutely.

MS. FALINO: So tell us about a couple of the other ones, like this one for — this was for a company in Mexico City called —

MS. ARENTZEN: Oh, Tane.

MS. FALINO: Tane?

MS. ARENTZEN: Yes.

MS. FALINO: T-A-N-E?

MS. ARENTZEN: Yes. The owner of Tane — the family that owned Tane — a young man who was just a little bit older than I who had taken over the management of — was involved — it wasn't that he was involved in craft. The — there was an —

MS. FALINO: Well, what kind of a company was it, first of all?

MS. ARENTZEN: Mexican.

MS. FALINO: Yeah.

MS. ARENTZEN: Silversmithing plus jewelry. But hollowware was their thing, and he had modern tastes under his aegis — a collection of table sculpture meant to replace flowers at a formal dinner party.

MS. FALINO: Oh, centerpieces.

MS. ARENTZEN: [Off mic] — really good and very diverse. They were commissioned. I didn't have a — that was before my time with him, but I did see those.

MS. FALINO: And was most of it coming out of Taxico. Is that where he was getting a lot of his work?

MS. ARENTZEN: No, Tane had all the factories that manufactured all of this stuff in Mexico City.

MS. FALINO: They owned the factories? Oh, okay.

MS. ARENTZEN: Probably, those things were — well, I'm not sure, but — and I did see the factory, and got a tour of that. But because there was an international conference of craftspeople in Mexico, I think the organizers of that got any factory that would be amenable.

They had a retail store in Zona Rosa.

MS. FALINO: Zona Rosa?

MS. ARENTZEN: Zona Rosa, which the section — the old section of Mexico City.

MS. FALINO: Oh, okay.

MS. ARENTZEN: And it was a very upscale thing, and I did a really nice collection for them as well the Seibu Museum/Gallery recommendation from Takashi Wada —

MS. FALINO: And who is that?

MS. ARENTZEN: He's a metalsmith — a jewelry designer in New York — Japanese. He has his own retail store on — does wonderful work — on the East Side — just east of Madison Avenue in the '60s, I think — maybe '70s.

MS. FALINO: Okay, and so what — so go back again — what was the arrangement?

MS. ARENTZEN: He knew — he had a connection to the AIWA manufacturers.

MS. FALINO: Now, what is the AIWA manufacturers?

MS. ARENTZEN: I don't — it was —

MS. FALINO: American —

MS. ARENTZEN: No, it's a Japanese firm that dealt in diamonds, and they wanted to have a Japanese — they wanted to go into Japanese jewelry collection, and so that connection — I'm bringing Takashi into this again, but that came probably through the place where I would buy diamonds, which was Lazare Kaplan.

MS. FALINO: Oh, okay.

MS. ARENTZEN: And the negotiation for the collection was through that.

But I was vetted somehow behind the curtains, probably Japanese curtains, by Takashi Wada, who had recommended me for one of the three Americans participating in an international exhibition in Japan a few years before that.

MS. FALINO: That's not the one that —

MS. ARENTZEN: The Seibu department store.

MS. FALINO: Yeah, that's not the one with Stanley and —

MS. ARENTZEN: Yeah, it probably was, but different years.

MS. FALINO: Oh, okay.

MS. ARENTZEN: It didn't have it every year with Americans, but —

MS. FALINO: Right, the one that Stanley Lechtzin was in was with Olaf Skoogfors and Miye Matsukada.

MS. ARENTZEN: Probably, and I think that preceded the —

MS. FALINO: And who was with you on your year?

MS. ARENTZEN: — remember — and that catalog burned up, I'm sure.

So there was — that's the soup from which the collection for — I pronounced it AIWA, not sure that was correct — but ended up not doing a designer collection; whether they ever did anything, I don't know. I just designed and did the models.

MS. FALINO: So — and so somehow, through Mr. Wada, you got involved with these Tane people.

MS. ARENTZEN: No, Tane was through the international connection through the conference, and Tane already had an idea of doing something interesting. So that Mexico thing was completely different.

MS. FALINO: That was separate, and then — and then —

MS. ARENTZEN: Yeah, and this Japanese thing was —

MS. FALINO: — had to do with the show with the Seibu department store in Japan. SO that's two others.

And then there was Reed and Barton.

MS. ARENTZEN: That was directly through Arline Fisch.

MS. FALINO: Through Arline, yeah. That was a — like a group of about six of you, I think, wasn't it, Ron —

MS. ARENTZEN: Five, I think.

MS. FALINO: — wasn't it Ron Pearson?

MS. ARENTZEN: Yeah, Ron Pearson, Arline, myself, [Mary Ann] Scherr —

MS. FALINO: Oh, I know — Marjorie — or not Marjorie—

MS. ARENTZEN: She's still alive and she's still working. Isn't that great?

MS. FALINO: Yes, I'm ashamed of myself.

MS. ARENTZEN: Yeah, you should be. You're only — you're not even 60. [Laughs.]

MS. FALINO: Well, I — [inaudible] —

MS. ARENTZEN: [Inaudible.]

MS. FALINO: — Scherr and who else?

MS. ARENTZEN: Who was the fifth one? I keep thinking Lynda Watson, but I'm not sure that's the case.

MS. FALINO: Actually, I think you may be right — Lynda Watson, who now has another surname, but I'll get that — she remarried.

So Ron — okay, Linda — Ron — Scherr, Watson, Lynda — and who was the other person?

MS. ARENTZEN: Arline.

MS. FALINO: Arline.

MS. ARENTZEN: Arline negotiated the contract.

MS. FALINO: Oh, great.

MS. ARENTZEN: And I would say she was first-rate at protecting everybody's interests and dotting I's, crossing T's. And as I got to know the Reed and Barton people, later, I did some designer appearances.

That's another thing — you do some of these things and you do designer appearances — it's like book signings, in a way — and it just extends your life experience in a way that is never boring.

MS. FALINO: And so what did you make for them?

MS. ARENTZEN: For Reed and Barton?

MS. FALINO: Yeah.

MS. ARENTZEN: Oh, it was a collection all in silver, so — [inaudible] —

MS. FALINO: And it was all jewelry?

MS. ARENTZEN: It's all jewelry, maybe five or six pieces — I wasn't happy with some of the technical solutions that they made. They ended up sending a model maker around to those of us who had works — I don't know, the models that I presented to them, they didn't think they could make, and so they sent a model maker to do the models, and in fact, first of all, a lot was lost in the translation.

MS. FALINO: Translation.

MS. ARENTZEN: And in one case, it made a piece unwearable.

MS. FALINO: Ah, this is the classic problem, craftsmen desire world [ph].

MS. ARENTZEN: That's — you know, that's something you should put a folder in your computer, you know, examples of this — how things get lost and how it's so important for designers, say, of metal, whatever, to have hands-on experience, serious hands-on experience of a variety of techniques.

MS. FALINO: But even for those who really knew, like Jack Prip, who was raised in business, in the technical side of the business, knew his dad's business — when he came to work for Reed and Barton, it's impossible to keep the same level of — the same degree of artistry when you're translating something into something that is really mass-produced. That's — but he — you know — and he knew — he knew better than anybody else how to negotiate that relationship —

MS. ARENTZEN: That's right.

MS. FALINO: — to translate it into a mass-produced object. And I think they would — I mean, there are just — there are inevitable shortcomings, but I feel that there's still — there can be a net gained for everybody.

MS. ARENTZEN: Yes, I would agree with you in this particular case. And I wish I had the pieces in front of me; there is no question that they could have made molds from my pieces, no question.

MS. FALINO: Oh, what a shame.

MS. ARENTZEN: They attached the earring backs as posts on the earrings — it was an element on the ear, an element below the ear that could be removed. You know, it would be secure to the earring that it would be on and lovely and it's a continuation of graceful movement. And in order for the earring to look just right on the ear, the post had to be in a particular place, which was in the —

MS. FALINO: The original. [Laughs.]

MS. ARENTZEN: — and there is no reason at all why it couldn't have gone where I — well.

MS. FALINO: How about the others? Did you compare notes with the other people who were involved in how things got made?

MS. ARENTZEN: No, I didn't.

MS. FALINO: But they —

MS. ARENTZEN: Mary Ann Scherr. [Laughs.] Sorry.

MS. FALINO: Mary Ann, thank you. [Inaudible] — and — so they were — they were mass-produced, or limited production, I would assume.

MS. ARENTZEN: Oh, very, their salesmanship was terrible.

MS. FALINO: So the follow-through —

MS. ARENTZEN: The follow-through — I don't understand why not, because the person who was in charge of it — I think probably did all the right moves, exhibition, designer appearances. Altman's in New York did a very nice job for me. You know, I don't — I mean, stores — these stores — I don't expect stores to stop for a jewelry designer to move in — I mean, but again and again, things aren't — I just know that that's not the right thing for publicity, for — it's just not right.

MS. FALINO: So you're saying B. Altman sold these pieces?

MS. ARENTZEN: Yes, a designer appearance, and then they purchased a lot, I guess, and then had a —

MS. FALINO: Great.

MS. ARENTZEN: I went to — I guess Kaufman's in Pittsburgh, and did a designer appearance there. And I walked into the floor where the — all the Reed and Barton stuff was and it was — they were just finishing up with a promotion on Reed and Barton — an historical exhibition, probably most of it not for sale — of tea sets, silver tea sets. And they said, "Oh," the salespeople said, "Oh, so nice to meet you, thank you so much for coming. We hadn't heard from Reed and Barton, but here you are." I said, "Oh, I'm delighted." And they said, "Here are the tea services." And I said, "Oh, but I think I'm supposed to be here because of the designer jewelry — do you have those out?"

MS. FALINO: Oh, no.

MS. ARENTZEN: Oh, well, they had to find somebody who did, and they did. And I said, "Well, I'll help you put it out." I said, I — she said, "What are we going to do?" The buyer said, "Oh my goodness, what are we going to do about these tea services? We know nothing about a tea service; these tea services." I said, "You know, I can help you out. I know how these things are made. I can do it for you." And —

MS. FALINO: Boy, they were lucky to have you there.

MS. ARENTZEN: And I — and we had a nice time, but that's one example.

Another example, I went into a crafts store in New Jersey — this is a small local one — for a trunk show, so — the day trunk show or something to introduce the work. And I was shown where the work was, and I said, "Okay," and I took a deep breath and said, "I think I need to take down these pendants that you've purchased from somebody else that are on fishing wire; may I do that?" "Oh, we just took them up and it took so long. I said, "I think that my own work will not be featured properly and it would be hard to get past the pendants to pick up something to put on them. I think we have to do that."

MS. FALINO: And you convinced them?

MS. ARENTZEN: Yes, well I said, "Let me show you how easy it is. And I'll help you put it back together."

MS. FALINO: [Laughs.] You're so good.

MS. ARENTZEN: Well, not really — you know, just what's fair, you know, I'm not pushy, but just what's fair. And so again and again — but anyway, that — the whole commercial entrée that I had from the Diamonds International was just wonderful. And the jewelry trade at that level is — I mean, it's — family-owned businesses — or it was then — and it just — it's just wonderful. It's a wonderful group of people who take pride in what they're doing, even the secretaries and the receptionists, you know, it's —

MS. FALINO: Interestingly, I'm sure there was a certain temptation to working more with gemstones and working with, perhaps, more well-heeled clients to deliver things that they might — that might not be the — to produce things that are not necessarily in your, you know, personal aesthetic. Were you ever tempted to—

MS. ARENTZEN: Good question. [Laughs.] Well, I am attracted to problems that need to be solved, both technical and aesthetically, and that's certainly a problem. And there are two or three things in your question I'd like to address, and as far as an example of matching my aesthetic to someone else's, there was the wedding ring — customer engagement ring — wedding ring customers that I had talked about the last time that a guy flew in from Chicago with a fiancée. And she was blonde and very WASP-y looking and he was in construction and rather burly. But they had seen — he had seen a photograph on the cover of a magazine, and he wanted — they both

— she wanted sapphires and diamonds in gold, and she clearly wanted a classic setting, and he wanted a matching ring, but not that. And I did an uncut sapphire and two uncut diamonds and that satisfied me, because I knew it was a very interesting problem to solve, and I think I did so within my aesthetic parameters, I think.

MS. FALINO: Right, but for instance, going to Cartier —

MS. ARENTZEN: With Cartier — oh yeah.

MS. FALINO: — you just — I mean, the thought of working with them didn't hold any appeal?

MS. ARENTZEN: Oh, well, I think some of their customers are my customers, frankly.

MS. FALINO: That wouldn't surprise me, but those customers are just — have more wide-ranging taste. Cartier has a certain look.

MS. ARENTZEN: Right — a certain look, you're right.

MS. FALINO: And you would have to blend your — you would have to absorb yourself into their own aesthetic.

MS. ARENTZEN: I think that would have been a serious fallback position. I think I would have been — made a more strenuous effort to get a teaching job before I would do that, because you have so little contact with the recipient or even the salespeople, or you're drawing; you're not really working in the metal.

MS. FALINO: And you were experiencing a fair amount of success.

MS. ARENTZEN: Yeah, I guess, yeah. Things were moving along nicely.

MS. FALINO: So — yeah.

MS. ARENTZEN: But besides that, the impetus to do this was being involved with a personal expression where I would control it to the point of sale and even past that.

MS. FALINO: Yeah, that is a central — it's a core, I think, of the craft experience. It's really the relationship between the maker and the consumer or user, and that both really are united in their love of the craft and the relationship that is engendered through the purchase.

MS. ARENTZEN: That's right. One thing that Ed Faber had always said to his customers in the store, people would come in and admire things in the case — "Oh, this is sculpture, this" — not just mine, but a lot of people's were — "This is wonderful; this is sculpture, this is museum-quality." And —

[Off mic conversation.]

And he would say to them, "Yes," he would agree with them and they would discuss the work. He said, "You know, these works are meant to be worn and your fullest expression of your love for these pieces, your understanding [ph] is purchasing it." And I think that that — you mentioned the craft field, the continuum from thinking, designing, making, to the customer, is not upheld by those who are teaching it. And I think it's a more complete thing. They are working mostly with a concept and the technical aspects and they like showing in galleries, but the galleries in which they show — for the most part, they're very few that actually sell their work — not enough to — I'm not talking about enough to support themselves, but they're not as — all concerned with that. They're not — they're not even concerned with how something looks on a person, if it's jewelry.

MS. FALINO: A professor?

MS. ARENTZEN: Yeah, I would — yes, I absolutely think so. There is not the concern, at least not when you talk with them, not when you look at the work.

MS. FALINO: Because you think that they're just more involved in the abstract notion of jewelry making, and less on — with the end use?

MS. ARENTZEN: Yes, I do.

Now, I — unlike a lot of my colleagues who exhibit first — you know, with their works for sale and working — you know, many of those are more concerned — more concerned with the bottom line than I am — and I recognize that there is a place for even a piece of jewelry to be viewed — to be either handled by whoever or viewed in a case of some sort, where, you know, Linda Kindler Priest comes to mind; those are totally wearable, but they're really important — [inaudible] — as viewed, as well. And so I recognize that there's a place for that.

But I think that a lot of my colleagues who teach — and they have mainly not exhibited outside of museums and university galleries — I think they stop short of the fullness of the expression.

MS. FALINO: Okay, let's see, there's another one. This is really — you really were involved in so many competitions; it's really impressive — Random House?

MS. ARENTZEN: Oh, now, there's a woman who — I don't know how she heard about me; she may have gone with her husband to Rhinebeck; that may have been the connection. But I had done repairs for her. Well, it turns — I mean, I knew her husband worked for Random House, but when one of the founders, the president retired — because her husband was part of the top echelon of Random House, they asked her to find somebody to make a presentation gift. That's how that happened.

MS. FALINO: So that wasn't really a competition, that was a — that was more of a commission.

MS. ARENTZEN: That was a commission, yeah.

MS. FALINO: What was this America House-Franklin Mint designer collection? Is this a collaboration between America House and Franklin Mint?

MS. ARENTZEN: Yes.

MS. FALINO: Really?

MS. ARENTZEN: And it was when Mr. Hodges was still there.

MS. FALINO: Where?

MS. ARENTZEN: America House.

MS. FALINO: Oh, I don't — I don't know who that is.

MS. ARENTZEN: He may have retired there before it closed, but he was certainly working there in the late '60s. I guess he must have been there through the early '70s.

MS. FALINO: So he was the shop manager, or —

MS. ARENTZEN: Yes.

MS. FALINO: Okay. So what was the — what was it that happened with the Franklin Mint?

MS. ARENTZEN: Well, I don't know where the connection had been made or how, but Franklin Mint was going to experiment with American craft collection, an American craft collection of some sort, kind of fuzzily outlined, that would be collectible.

MS. FALINO: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] Because they — that's what that dealt [ph] him, the collectible market.

MS. ARENTZEN: Yes. And so I did I guess four pieces for them that they — but they very quickly dropped the whole idea, you know. It wasn't done after the first couple of years.

MS. FALINO: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.] But what was it you designed for them? Was it jewelry?

MS. ARENTZEN: The pins, yeah.

MS. FALINO: Pins. Okay.

And then Steuben.

MS. ARENTZEN: Now, that connection — [Laughs] — came directly from my involvement with the international craft conference and American Crafts Council. A woman who was working for them somehow knew the president of Steuben [Glass]. She was a networker, par excellence. She really was. And somehow the connection was made. They were going into making jewelry, which they hadn't done before. And that was the most wonderful experience.

That particular collection really didn't go past a half a season. They had glass pendants. They gave me three of them — I think three, yeah, three — and asked me to design the necklace part. And the reason they — it didn't go past that stage was because they were in deep financial difficulty, and the projects were halted, and the president of Steuben was let go. The Steuben — I don't — they probably do some jewelry still, but it's much more folded into the main flow of their manufacturing and the whole marketing system. It's not as separate.

MS. FALINO: Yeah. It seems that they have experimented periodically with metalsmiths. And — but I don't think they really know how to — how to do it when they're really focused so heavily on glass.

MS. ARENTZEN: They really liked one of the pieces. And so did I.

And what I did for these three pendants were to design a rather thick and flexible leather coil and with silver finials on the back that were sculptural and not too far out but nice — you know, think Scandinavian, that kind of thing — and some beads that could be put on either side of one of the pendants, and —

MS. FALINO: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.] And those would have been glass beads —

MS. ARENTZEN: No, no, no.

MS. FALINO: — or silver?

MS. ARENTZEN: With metal, silver metal. And yet you could pull it — pull it apart.

And what was interesting for me about that — another example of taking on these crazy things where we're not paid a lot, but you have a wonderful experience. It was in the years when leather-drapable clothing was hitting the runways. And that was occurring because a new technology allowed the leather to be skinned so — and prepared for manufactured objects, so thin that it was flexible. And you — they could get it in large sheets.

So I went from hither to thither. There are always trade associations that are anxious to connect you with. I went to all different kinds of places. I went down on Spring Street; the far end — far eastern end of Spring Street had leather people, and that was one thing. But they didn't have a wide variety of leathers. Went to Leather Association, which was then based in the Empire State Building. And they sent me to this place. And it was a large loft in the Fashion District — pristine white. Tables bigger than your dining room table, all the same size. Pristine white. And on each table — and there must have been 20 tables — piles of this flexible leather in the most glorious colors you've ever seen. Of course, I said, "what do you have in black?"

MS. FALINO: [Laughs.]

MS. ARENTZEN: And I still have some of that. And now you can get it readily, I think, in different places, but that was leading edge. But then what do you put it over? So then I was back down to Canal Street finding rubber tubes. And I had to do many different examples of how to get this leather on this tube.

MS. FALINO: And how to do it in an economical, easily reproducible fashion.

MS. ARENTZEN: That's right. That's right.

MS. FALINO: Yeah.

MS. ARENTZEN: And that — what I ended up doing was getting a heavy wall tubing and slicing it, holding it just so I could slice it; that was a big deal. And it had to be sliced perfectly. And then I had to get the right glues that wouldn't crack. And that was another project. And I sliced the tube, put the glue on the tube and folded the leather over and into that crevice.

MS. FALINO: I see.

MS. ARENTZEN: And it really worked, and it was really nice.

MS. FALINO: Ah, that's great. You still have examples of those?

MS. ARENTZEN: No, I don't. I don't think I do.

MS. FALINO: So let's see. So you really — so — you had Tane, America House, Reed and Barton, Steuben and then something in Tokyo called Aiwa?

MS. ARENTZEN: Aiwa. I — [inaudible] — about that initially.

MS. FALINO: Oh, okay. Okay. That's great.

And you also had other commissions, like you made something for GE and Skidmore?

MS. ARENTZEN: Yeah. Skidmore was a suite of awards, which they gave to winners and — they're service awards and achieving awards, for mostly alums, but not all, and I did that for quite a while.

And the GE piece, now, that came through circuitous route too. I did a lot of workshops, which was another thing

that I did in those years. I loved doing it, get out and about and meet interesting people. And there would be adults who had a lot of other things going on in their lives and were — brought something really special to their designing, which I thought was fascinating. I'm very interested in the process of creativity. And that can be physical, chemical, when it really sees its first expression through drawing or through metal, that — those moments I think are very interesting. So that's why I did so many workshops.

And I did one in Schenectady. And one of the women in the class, who signed up for many workshops doing different things, was married to somebody at GE, the R&D department.

MS. FALINO: How nice.

MS. ARENTZEN: And she had me come up — she was in charge of a lunchtime lecture program, enrichment program, for the GE employees. And I went up and gave a presentation. And then I guess it was the next year or two, she — her husband's still working at GE, but they needed a presentation piece for a retiring R&D president of the division who had done a great deal to keep R&D supplied with money from GE Corporate. And I did a wonderful design. And they sent a guy down to — from R&D to explain that they had looked at the design, and the committee had decided that it should include the guy's initial. And I said, "And they sent you, an engineer, down here to tell me that?" [Laughs.] My. And he said, "Yes. I'm so embarrassed." I said, "All that time and money, you could have just called. I know how to do initials." So I did an initial that was kind of interesting. But I said I'm going to make this — [inaudible] — anyway because I think it's really good. It was purchased by GE and is in their collection.

MS. FALINO: [Laughs.]

So aside from these — these were — these were highlights, and they helped to bring you greater renown within your field and outside of the field; most important, I think, gave you greater visibility. But by the '80s, were you pretty much just focused on your craft and fabricating and selling through galleries?

MS. ARENTZEN: Yes, because I spent more time in New Hampshire the very end of '82. And I was just finishing up the Steuben project. And it just wasn't doable. I traded in a — I traded in a lot of the things that I did — I wouldn't say free time, but weekends and evenings for being in New Hampshire. And what I hadn't anticipated was that it would be so hard financially because my business was 90 percent special order work in New York, and it had to reverse in New Hampshire. And it was very hard to make that transition because in some ways, my special order work had supported financially the other, and it was very, very difficult.

MS. FALINO: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.] And so — and your New York dealer was Aaron Faber?

MS. ARENTZEN: Yes, and another shop on West Eighth Street.

MS. FALINO: What was that called?

MS. ARENTZEN: Savage.

MS. FALINO: Savage.

MS. ARENTZEN: They were on West 8th Street when it was mostly shoes. Founded by a woman who — I had probably mentioned it in the previous interviews — she had been in New Jersey and part of the Pascack Valley Hadassah organization that put on a very successful art show each year, which included crafts. And the reason it included crafts was because the art teacher in their high school, who — Don Wyckoff, who eventually became president of the American Crafts Council — he was teaching art in that high school and talked to this woman. And when this woman, Thelma Klein — but included crafts in the show — and then when this woman left her husband and four children to move to the big city, she wanted to start, you know, a jewelry —

MS. FALINO: So it was a — it was a jewelry gallery.

MS. ARENTZEN: Yes, it was just jewelry.

MS. FALINO: Okay. And so do you know when you started showing with Faber?

MS. ARENTZEN: Yeah.

MS. FALINO: I mean, was it while you were working for Adda?

MS. ARENTZEN: Oh, no, no, no. It was much after that.

MS. FALINO: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

MS. ARENTZEN: It was — [inaudible] — started, and I was in Westbeth at the time, so it has to be after 1970. [Inaudible.] I would guess mid-'70s might have been when he started.

MS. FALINO: And you've remained with him until present day.

MS. ARENTZEN: I learned a great deal from Edward Faber. I learned to look at checks and make sure they were signed, look at checks, make sure they were not postdated. I have —

MS. FALINO: That's not because he was postdating? Or was it?

MS. ARENTZEN: Of course it was.

MS. FALINO: Oh, he was. Oh, no. [They laugh.] Get away till that check clears.

MS. ARENTZEN: I mean, if I were to tell all the stories of all the craftspeople that dealt with him, I mean, you cannot imagine what a rascal he is.

MS. FALINO: Oh. But you stayed with him.

MS. ARENTZEN: Yes. Edward has an incredible eye, for one thing. He can look at my collection and his hand will immediately go to something that's — that I'm excited to look at too. And I'd watch him work with other collections. And second and maybe most important is he's an incredible salesperson.

MS. FALINO: Well, that's obviously very important.

MS. ARENTZEN: He would never have gotten away with what he's been able to get away with in the jewelry trade, even outside of dealing with craftspeople. He just never could have done if he weren't really — [inaudible].

MS. FALINO: [Laughs.]

All right. We have to actually break and start the next tape, so hold that thought.

[End of audio.]

MS. FALINO: Okay, we are now picking up on the second portion of this discussion today, on February 15, with Glenda Arentzen.

So you were talking about Aaron Faber and what a rascal he was. Not Aaron but — sorry —

MS. ARENTZEN: Edward Faber.

MS. FALINO: — Edward Faber. Aaron was what? He must have been the father or the founder?

MS. ARENTZEN: No, Edward Faber and Ephraim Aaron, who was Afghani —

MS. FALINO: Oh.

MS. ARENTZEN: — and had a boutique of some sort out of Long Island —

MS. FALINO: Oh.

MS. ARENTZEN: — he said — somehow made a partnership, but Ephraim never took an active role in the management and was out of it fairly early. Edward subsequently attracted other supporters, financial supporters of the gallery.

MS. FALINO: Ah. Do you know who they were?

MS. ARENTZEN: Myron Toback, who is now deceased, he was one who contributed some money. I don't know the name of some others but I know that they've occurred. I know he has one now.

MS. FALINO: Well, it is the lifeblood of a lot of galleries. How they stay in business is often a mystery to me.

MS. ARENTZEN: Yeah, it is. It is. At some point his wife became active. Patricia Kiley Faber became active — she is now director of their gallery and does a superb job.

MS. FALINO: Yes.

MS. ARENTZEN: — in the business. She's a writer by trade —

MS. FALINO: I didn't realize that.

MS. ARENTZEN: — and I think she wanted to be an artistic writer but ended up having jobs that were more commercially satisfying. At some point he had her come in to do bookkeeping when they were just really two people running the business. You know, he started at a booth in 47th Street —

MS. FALINO: Oh.

MS. ARENTZEN: — and very quickly went to the mezzanine level upstairs, but it was really one tiny room. And —

MS. FALINO: When you say a booth on 47th Street, I'm not sure what you're referring to.

MS. ARENTZEN: Oh, 47th Street between 5th Avenue and 6th Avenue is the jewelry district now. It spreads out to other blocks.

MS. FALINO: Right.

MS. ARENTZEN: But those buildings — it's called the district because they — an instigator wants to pull a trade together. And the jewelry industry needs some special things. They need very special security, and for most buildings it includes vaults in the basement. And that's why so much of it's right there and doesn't move.

MS. FALINO: Right. So he was in a building —

MS. ARENTZEN: That's right, on the main floor. And these booths will be typically a counter in the front, a wall in the back, and perhaps a side wall, a half wall.

MS. FALINO: So no doors, not like a separate gallery with a separate entrance.

MS. ARENTZEN: That's right.

MS. FALINO: It's all open to people who would walk down the —

MS. ARENTZEN: Absolutely.

MS. FALINO: I see.

MS. ARENTZEN: And you'd pay more if you had a window onto 47th Street, which he did, right from the beginning — not dumb. He would not be lost in the midst of people. Now, the people in there were selling jewelry. You'll find an engraver, you'll find setters, the mixture of the trades generally. As I remember, he was in a building with the Fabricants who claimed they specialized in Faberge. That may or may not have been true.

MS. FALINO: And I remember, probably from the '90s, a location they had where Faber had two floors. They had like a — they had the main floor —

MS. ARENTZEN: Well, that's right. Yes.

MS. FALINO: — and then they had a little smaller private gallery upstairs.

MS. ARENTZEN: That's right.

MS. FALINO: But that was later, I guess.

MS. ARENTZEN: Yes, first the booth, then upstairs, the mezzanine. And then they made the move to where — physically the space where they are now but it was a different configuration. There was just what you said —

MS. FALINO: Yeah.

MS. ARENTZEN: — the downstairs and the upstairs.

MS. FALINO: Right, and they're currently on 53rd.

MS. ARENTZEN: They were then.

MS. FALINO: Oh, from the very beginning, you mean? No.

MS. ARENTZEN: When they left 47th —

MS. FALINO: Yes?

MS. ARENTZEN: — they were in the space they are now.

MS. FALINO: Fifty-third, right.

MS. ARENTZEN: But what they did — what 666 5th Avenue did was to change the configuration of their space. So now what they've got is the downstairs straight through, which meant some of — there's a little — their back office is part of another — when you saw it — and you remember the mezzanine upstairs —

MS. FALINO: Yes.

MS. ARENTZEN: — that mezzanine had a store downstairs, I think.

MS. FALINO: Yes.

MS. ARENTZEN: And you got to that through the downstairs. And then the top, I don't know what's happened to that. And then for that extra space that had been the mezzanine, 666 gave them some more space downstairs.

MS. FALINO: Okay. And 666 meets 5th Avenue at —

MS. ARENTZEN: Fifty-third.

MS. FALINO: — at 53rd.

MS. ARENTZEN: Between 53rd and 6th.

MS. FALINO: Yes.

MS. ARENTZEN: And it was I think when the building had been sold to the Japanese, and I think they were doing what most buildings do anyway, is to redesign the first level. The Restaurant 21 is on the other side of the building. That wasn't touched, but almost every other commercial space was touched. And it put them out of business really in a space they could call their own. For a year they went to 52nd Street but in the same building, next to the 21 Club. And then they came back.

But then by that time the Museum of Modern Art was rebuilding and the street was closed. It was just awful. It's awful. And they were not treated well. They really weren't. I mean, when they were on 52nd Street for over a year it was supposed to be, you know, just a few months. Well, it wasn't. And they had concrete floors. The sales people had a terrible time with that. They tried to solve the problem with rugs. They couldn't put in any money at all with decorations, so they — they did something kind of clever. They projected images on the walls.

MS. FALINO: But that location, still being on the same street as MoMA, has, I think, been good for them.

MS. ARENTZEN: Very good.

MS. FALINO: Yeah. And do you — I mean, do you feel that — I mean, it's been a — you were just saying it's been a beneficial relationship. I mean, you started off saying —

MS. ARENTZEN: Very.

MS. FALINO: — he was kind of a rascal, but they have done a great job of representing you.

MS. ARENTZEN: Yeah, I think so, for the right reasons. And when Patricia Faber took over, when she really put her effort into — full-time effort into the gallery, things changed dramatically with the organization.

MS. FALINO: For the better?

MS. ARENTZEN: Oh, yes, because she cannot stand, really, too much disorder. She has to have the numbers right. And they have a bookkeeper who's been with them for a long time.

MS. FALINO: Oh, that's great. Stability is important.

MS. ARENTZEN: And Dolly [ph] is wonderful. Patricia deals with certain members of the staff. She deals with directly hires/fires and that kind of thing, and they have kept staff loyal for many years.

MS. FALINO: Great.

MS. ARENTZEN: She has personally been able to. So I think there must be something going for them —

MS. FALINO: Okay.

MS. ARENTZEN: — I think.

MS. FALINO: Now, do you have any other representation, like on the west coast?

MS. ARENTZEN: Not anymore. I do very few galleries anymore because so much of it has gone to gallery —

MS. FALINO: Yeah.

MS. ARENTZEN: — gallery galleries.

And that was something I wanted to bring up, the continuum — I don't know how this fits into all of this information, but there's a continuum of — in the '60s somebody would open a gallery and they would buy work. They would do the publicity, take your photographs, have coherent bookkeeping, all kinds of things. And they would finance this — there might be some private financing. That would be typical. But they would also — the more professional of them would also get bridge loans, lines of credit from their local banks. Well, a lot has changed, first of all in the work itself.

MS. FALINO: Before you go on, what galleries do you have in mind when you say that?

MS. ARENTZEN: All of them.

MS. FALINO: All of the ones in the '60s that you knew?

MS. ARENTZEN: I would — yeah, pretty much.

MS. FALINO: Okay.

MS. ARENTZEN: There's some that I knew better and I knew more of what they were doing. I mean, I didn't get to see their books, but as they made changes I certainly could see what was happening.

MS. FALINO: Okay. All right, so continue.

MS. ARENTZEN: And it is why — first of all, the work that American craftspeople were doing became more intricate, more precious materials, and more expensive —

MS. FALINO: Right.

MS. ARENTZEN: — and harder to sell, in a way.

MS. FALINO: Right. That's definitely a trend.

MS. ARENTZEN: Definitely a trend. Craftspeople have come full cycle and coming back to limited editions, and then they can get more salable, but that's sort of — then you notice that there might be a little disruption, a little — in the way they would talk to — galleries would talk to you: "Oh, we're really having — we can't buy as much as we usually do. We're going to try to — we're trying to get a line of credit from the bank." Well, it turns out — I figured what the story was, especially on the east coast. The banks were consolidating and —

MS. FALINO: Oh.

MS. ARENTZEN: This was just a part of their own business procedures. This was before any kind of downturn. Actually there was a downturn in the '70s then. And therefore the decisions about lending money for lines of credit were not made locally. They were made at corporate headquarters someplace else.

MS. FALINO: Oh, right.

MS. ARENTZEN: And they were practically eliminated for craft galleries. Okay, so now what are these craft stores and craft galleries going to do? Well, now they were no longer taking photographs of your work. It's also true that they wanted better photographs for a greater variety of publications, so now you had to take the photographs or have them taken.

And then you had — there are all kinds of deals you make with galleries and craft stores, say X number of thousand dollars worth of stuff for a limited period of time. It could be two months, three months, four months, depending upon what season of the year, and you have a guaranteed sale of such and such, and then you negotiate the percentage for the gallery and the store and yourself.

You can give it all on memo and then charge a lot more, or — there are all different — so that's another thing, all

these different deals. It used to be cut and dried: A gallery buys, they double the price.

MS. FALINO: So they would buy it and it would become their inventory —

MS. ARENTZEN: That's right.

MS. FALINO: — and you were done and you would make the next piece for the next gallery or whomever.

MS. ARENTZEN: Something like that.

MS. FALINO: Yeah. And then there was this gray area, or spectrum, I guess, of alternatives in terms of how — how the arrangements were made.

MS. ARENTZEN: That's right. And most of those — so what's changed now is you have a lot of talk about your relationship before you get involved with a new gallery, and it changes —

MS. FALINO: Yes.

MS. ARENTZEN: — from time to time. It's a big change. And the craftspeople are doing a lot more of what galleries used to do.

MS. FALINO: Yes. And then issues of exclusivity, like are you allowed to show with any other galleries since you're working with Faber?

MS. ARENTZEN: I can do anything I want.

MS. FALINO: Oh, that's great. A lot of galleries are not —

MS. ARENTZEN: That is illegal.

MS. FALINO: Really?

MS. ARENTZEN: That is illegal.

MS. FALINO: Why is that?

MS. ARENTZEN: I suspect if you have a contract with a gallery and say you will be exclusive, that they can hold you to it. But if you have not, you really can't do it through restraint of trade. And that was tested in court by Signature Galleries in Boston.

MS. FALINO: Really?

MS. ARENTZEN: Really, yes.

MS. FALINO: So do you know the circumstances of that —

MS. ARENTZEN: No.

MS. FALINO: — or who was involved?

MS. ARENTZEN: No, and I think actually it was settled out of court.

MS. FALINO: But do you know what artist was involved?

MS. ARENTZEN: No, I don't. I did at the time, and it wasn't anybody I knew well, that I could call and say, "What's going on?"

MS. FALINO: Yes. But this is often an issue for artists trying to make a living. And you have a relationship with a gallery which is or is not working. And, you know, it's often not the — anybody's fault. It's often the economy or, you know, your work is not currently in favor with whoever's walking in the door. But meanwhile you've become hamstrung, or the gallery is hamstrung because they can't afford to front as much inventory as they would like.

MS. ARENTZEN: Yes. Well, I can only tell you how I worked it. You know, I was dealing New York is a big town, and I was dealing with somebody on West 8th Street. You go up 6th Avenue to 53rd and there was Faber.

MS. FALINO: Really?

MS. ARENTZEN: Their inventory didn't have much overlap. The price range didn't have much overlap. But there

was one serious collector of my work at that time, who I think is no longer active collecting anything. She's old enough — I mean, she's older than I am. But she was buying a lot from both places.

MS. FALINO: Both Faber —

MS. ARENTZEN: Faber and Savage.

MS. FALINO: I see.

MS. ARENTZEN: So that there was no — and they both — well, Thelma Klein, who was Savage, was pretty fast on her feet and never mentioned the exclusivity.

MS. FALINO: What other — those years, say the '80s — '70s, '80s —

MS. ARENTZEN: Oh, I want to say one more thing about exclusivity —

MS. FALINO: Sure.

MS. ARENTZEN: — about the way I handled it, because I think it gives you a feeling about what's happening.

For instance, I dealt with the gallery in Atlanta.

MS. FALINO: Was that the Hand and The Spirit?

MS. ARENTZEN: No, no, that's Arizona, I think.

MS. FALINO: That's Arizona. What was the one in Atlanta, the great American —

MS. ARENTZEN: "Quilt" was in the title but then it went to a woman's name. She started by showing quilts, yeah, in Atlanta. I'm awful. I should have paid more attention.

MS. FALINO: I can come up with that later.

MS. ARENTZEN: And as so many other people, this is a place that I was going to have to consign to: "So we're going to think about maybe a dozen pieces and see what happens."

MS. FALINO: Yeah.

MS. ARENTZEN: "I think that's not a bad idea." And she said, "I'm going to represent you and I want you to be only with me in the Southeast."

MS. FALINO: Okay.

MS. ARENTZEN: I said, "Okay, let's see, and what do you consider the Southeast, and what are you going to do for me?"

MS. FALINO: Right.

MS. ARENTZEN: "And how much do you think you can sell them?" "For this first group we can kind of see how it works out. We can redo it and be flexible that way." And she said, "Well" — she mentioned places and I said, "Well, I have a very good relationship, and have had for a long time, with Carol Saunders Gallery in Columbia, South Carolina."

MS. FALINO: Oh.

MS. ARENTZEN: And she said, "Well" — I said, "Would that be a conflict?" Then she said, "I think it might be." She said, "I really want to represent you — you know, get you in this and get you in that," and so forth. I said, "Oh, okay, that's interesting." I changed the subject to, you know, other things, and we were talking about other things. And I never did stop dealing with Carol Saunders.

MS. FALINO: And you never did join — or did you — did you take on that gallery in Atlanta?

MS. ARENTZEN: Sure I did.

MS. FALINO: You did.

MS. ARENTZEN: She knew where my other work was. I said I didn't think it would be a conflict. I'd be sure that — you see, what these galleries are worried about is that the work that you send them or that they purchase is

going to turn up down the road.

MS. FALINO: Sure.

MS. ARENTZEN: But the fact is my collection is one of a kind, as I point out. And I said, "There's never going to be an" —

MS. FALINO: Identical piece.

MS. ARENTZEN: — "identical piece."

MS. FALINO: Yeah.

MS. ARENTZEN: And I said, furthermore, I don't deal with that many stores that I can't keep track of, more or less, what I send to one or the other, who buys what. I said, "If you have any problem ever, tell me about it." And there's never any problem. I said, "Frankly, I think it will raise all ships, because one will validate the other, and if they do go back and forth — people who like crafts will go back and forth, and there will be a big difference in price."

Oh, that's another thing about prices. A gallery that deals with you even — see, how do I put this? We want your work — we want our work at the gallery — let me see, if I consign work, even for a show, I add 10 percent to the wholesale price and then I send it off.

MS. FALINO: Okay.

MS. ARENTZEN: And then they double it —

MS. FALINO: Right.

MS. ARENTZEN: — even if it's on consignment. And they say, "Oh, but that will make our work more expensive than other galleries." I said, "I don't think so. The other galleries are doubling the purchase — doubling plus anywhere from 5 [percent] to 18 percent." And I said — they — "But that means your work coming to the store is going to be more expensive to us." And I said, "That is correct. It's more difficult to deal with consigned work, and you are — remember, you are renting" —

MS. FALINO: Yes.

MS. ARENTZEN: — "a certain amount of merchandise. Think of me as your banker."

MS. FALINO: So you're — yes, we are building in your percentage up front, and they can — they just have to deal with the rest. They may get a less — less of a percentage in the end.

MS. ARENTZEN: That's what happens. And I said, your prices are going to be more or less what — you know, it will be very close. And one thing that I learned over the years, which I've never really thoroughly protected myself against, but if a gallery goes bankrupt, it's not just that you may not get your money from purchased work, but you will not get your work back for a consignment —

MS. FALINO: Yeah.

MS. ARENTZEN: — unless you have an agreement that's legal, that protects it, that's recognized by the state in which the gallery is.

MS. FALINO: Wow. Has that ever happened to you?

MS. ARENTZEN: No.

MS. FALINO: Thank goodness.

MS. ARENTZEN: And I've come so close.

MS. FALINO: [Laughs.]

MS. ARENTZEN: I have come so close.

MS. FALINO: So now you — so you had no representation — you've never had representation on the west coast, like Susan Cummins, for instance?

MS. ARENTZEN: I've had work there. I was part of a group show.

MS. FALINO: Okay, so that was a short relationship.

MS. ARENTZEN: Yeah, it was a short — it may have been a — yes, I think so, just — you know, I think that would have been ideal. Once when I was out there to visit relatives we all went over. And it was, I don't know, two days before Christmas and there was nobody in there. I know; it was a time when she'd approached me and I was enthusiastic and we were trying to work something out, and it was two days before Christmas and I thought I would just go in to see what was going on, and I did.

MS. FALINO: And this is in her gallery, which was in Mill Valley.

MS. ARENTZEN: That's right. And it was lovely, beautiful work, and there was only one person in there, and that was the salesperson. I thought, this is too far away for me being able to keep track of this. This is not good. Mobilia has tried to get my work over the years and I participated in a group show there.

MS. FALINO: Yes, they do run a lot of group shows.

MS. ARENTZEN: Yes, and I would nominate them for being the loveliest, most honest people in the world, and the least familiar with bookkeeping —

MS. FALINO: [Laughs.]

MS. ARENTZEN: — which is something I really can't tolerate.

MS. FALINO: Yeah.

MS. ARENTZEN: I can't tolerate their bookkeeping.

MS. FALINO: Right.

MS. ARENTZEN: But I was dealing with two other people in Boston, so that was okay.

MS. FALINO: So the last, say — you know, since the '80s to the present, you've had — you've had multiple relationships with dealers, with sort of a consistent one with Faber, it seems. They have been your core. And then you've also continued doing private commissions.

MS. ARENTZEN: Yes, with Internet they can find you, and they remember you.

MS. FALINO: And have you migrated on to a personal business website or —

MS. ARENTZEN: No, I haven't. And I've been interested to hearing all the stories — you know, hearing all the stories about it, and I — it's like buying a new piece of equipment. You figure out how much the equipment is going to cost —

MS. FALINO: Yes.

MS. ARENTZEN: And how long it will take you to pay for that.

MS. FALINO: Yes. It's an investment.

MS. ARENTZEN: And with — I think I could get a website that would at least direct people — like a billboard —

MS. FALINO: Yes.

MS. ARENTZEN: — that will at least direct people to it.

MS. FALINO: To it, yes.

MS. ARENTZEN: I figured out what the maintenance time would be dealing with inquires and everything else that follows from that. And I thought it wasn't worth the effort. I couldn't justify it.

MS. FALINO: Okay.

MS. ARENTZEN: My prices would have to take a great leap.

MS. FALINO: Well, that's — you know, that's a typical issue when you're one individual and you're really managing — you're the chief cook and bottle washer, as they say.

MS. ARENTZEN: Patricia Faber, who is really a good gallery runner, and she — she has her line — eyes on the

bottom line but she also loves being in contact with the work in New York and internationally — anyway, I think — I've seen her grow over the years in all aspects, and really loves doing what she's doing.

MS. FALINO: Yeah.

MS. ARENTZEN: A little bit frantic sometimes but really knows what she's doing.

MS. FALINO: Yeah, very energetic.

MS. ARENTZEN: Yes, she really is. And let's see; where were we?

MS. FALINO: So you think she — I mean, for what — for your needs at this point in your career, you feel she takes — she and what other galleries you participate with on occasion are enough.

MS. ARENTZEN: Yeah, I think they're — well, it's never enough but I think in these times it's enough. It's too scary trying to develop new contacts. And the Faber, by the way, they've been — she's the one that runs the website for the gallery, and she has tried all kinds of things — different Web designers, different aspects, different expectations — and she said she thinks it's beginning to happen, that people get online and then call the — contact the gallery and then call the gallery.

MS. FALINO: That's great.

MS. ARENTZEN: And I've done a trunk show with them I guess last year or the year before. I got to — the year before. I got to see them in action, the sales people in action. And Patricia confirmed it. She said, "It's really beginning to happen." She said, "We think" — she said, "Now, I think of our website with the gallery pieces as a billboard, not showing necessarily pieces that are available for sale" —

MS. FALINO: But presenting a —

MS. ARENTZEN: — "but presenting a feeling for it." And she said, "Then people call or get in touch." And I watched the salespersons, with a no-so-expensive electronic camera, going over and taking pictures of a few things. Even my own work, when I was there doing the trunk show, couldn't get into the trunk show. Somebody said, out in California, "Show me a few pieces." And so they just pick a few thumbnails —

MS. FALINO: Yep, and they send —

MS. ARENTZEN: — and send it off. So that's what they — and that's what's working.

MS. FALINO: Great. Well, that's very, very gratifying to hear.

So if we could turn just for a minute to a brief discussion of your educational activities, you have taught — you've done workshops, you've done a number of workshops — Oregon School of Arts and Crafts, Haystack, University of Washington, University of Alaska, University of Iowa, Dartmouth College, which is part of the old program in Artisanry. I guess that was — I guess it's no longer part of Boston University but part of U Mass., among others.

For you, the teaching experience, whether it was like at Pratt when you were teaching in the '70s or here, actually at the College of New Rochelle, those were — you enjoyed teaching but were you ever looking for a full-time teaching job?

MS. ARENTZEN: I never did. I thought I was going to, which is why I enrolled in the doctoral program at Columbia University Teachers College, which was just about the only game in town for a terminal degree —

MS. FALINO: Right.

MS. ARENTZEN: — at that time. And I didn't quite finish it. I didn't — I was in the middle of my dissertation when I went to New Hampshire. But it was fairly early on in that that I realized that while there were a lot of teaching jobs opening up, the idea of succeeding in a studio setting was an option that — more and more work sold — that if you had the right work at the right price, you could do it.

MS. FALINO: And that appealed to you more than teaching?

MS. ARENTZEN: Very much. Very much, again, because for me the process isn't complete until you're communicating with someone who's answering back by wearing it, by exhibiting it, by purchasing it.

MS. FALINO: Yeah.

MS. ARENTZEN: And that's very important to me. And I don't say that to everybody because it would alienate me

— [they laugh] — from a lot of my favorite friends.

MS. FALINO: But it's given you — what matters is that it's provided you with personal satisfaction and a great livelihood.

MS. ARENTZEN: Yes. And one thing I wanted to mention, that technically over the years — like, I tried to think of something — things that were important to me, in talking with you, and that might be different from what you're going to hear from other people. And the way I've been able to do it — because people ask questions — "Well, how did you do it?" — particularly younger people.

MS. FALINO: Technically, you mean?

MS. ARENTZEN: Well, "How do you support yourself?"

MS. FALINO: Oh, I see, how to make a career —

MS. ARENTZEN: How to go about it.

MS. FALINO: Yes.

MS. ARENTZEN: And, I mean, it's a problem we have to — everybody has to solve individually, and in many different ways, especially now. But when I started, I could make anything I wanted, and my customer base included an apprentice dairy farmer in New Jersey, who has paying the same price that multimillionaires were paying.

I mean — and I've always maintained that when people say they can't afford work — I'm not talking about the multiples of thousands but the gallery work that you see. When they say that they can't afford it, it means that it's not in their budget. It does not mean that they cannot afford it.

Their cars have air-conditioning. I mean, there are lots of ways that things that people have —

MS. FALINO: Yes.

MS. ARENTZEN: — and if they didn't have those, they could have a piece of craftwork.

MS. FALINO: Yes, it's all a matter of how you prioritize.

MS. ARENTZEN: How you prioritize.

And going back to the beginning, when I was doing different — I could pretty much do what I wanted, and put a price on it that was reasonable and then kind of move on. But the competition, it became more and more pronounced as the years went on. And you had to have a coherent collection, so you couldn't relax and do a lovely, lyrical, quiet Scandinavian modern, but you had to have something special about what you did.

But I was always attracted by this very gestural, when-the-creativity-hits-the-workbench kind of thing. And I love the textures. I love the way it — I was trained in painting in the fine arts in the era of abstract expressionism, so that all fits. You know, it makes sense. And so on and on I went, but how to participate in the market that way?

So I make things that cannot be molded and cast. I make sure that there are undercuts, and very fine wires sometimes. I use a texture on the waxes that would be obliterated by molding. I use one-of-a-kind cuts of stones —

MS. FALINO: Right.

MS. ARENTZEN: — whether they're inexpensive or expensive. I love them. They're appropriate for my work, my aesthetic.

MS. FALINO: Yes.

MS. ARENTZEN: And you can't duplicate it. And then I — as many craftspeople, I make things that have a very limited market —

MS. FALINO: Yes.

MS. ARENTZEN: — not because of price or materials but because they're so far out. And I think of myself as not very far out, but evidently they are. And so you have a limited market, and so it will be limited. Nobody who mass-produces jewelry is going to want to mass-produce yours because they won't be able to sell enough of it.

MS. FALINO: Yeah. Yeah. But, you know, when you find those people and they find you —

MS. ARENTZEN: That's right, it's wonderful.

MS. FALINO: — it's a wonderful thing. So much of art is like that. You know, it's a meeting of the minds, and not everybody has that, you know, particular taste. But that's okay because everyone has their own particular —

MS. FALINO: Sure.

MS. ARENTZEN: — it's really a matter of finding those like-minded people who appreciate you. But it's tough economically, you know, for somebody who is really far out, or somebody who, you know, just is uncompromising. You know, I don't know, like — if it's fair to bring up someone like Fred Woell, for instance, I mean, using appropriation as he does, and in ways that are not always intelligible to somebody who comes across his work.

MS. FALINO: That's right.

MS. ARENTZEN: You know, those are extremely idiosyncratic objects, and beautiful and wonderful, but I don't know whether he has had the same economic success. And you don't need to address that in particular; it's just I think — you know, everybody makes their choices aesthetically and you kind of — you know, you live, you prosper or you don't by the likes of that. Yeah, and you have to be lucky.

MS. FALINO: But I think — you know, you also, while following your own star, you've also been very wise, I think, in trying to meet other kinds of — not to say standards but to compete in competitions where your work would be a good match and you've got yourself a lot of visibility that way. And, really, I think, you know, through your participation it brought you into greater visibility even with the American Crafts Council.

MS. ARENTZEN: That's right.

MS. FALINO: So all of it — I think, you know, working with the system rather than outside the system is, as I think you could say perhaps Fred was more of an outsider — you know, to use him just as an example for those —

MS. ARENTZEN: Yeah, I think that is — yeah.

MS. FALINO: You really, I think, found a good balance there.

MS. ARENTZEN: Yeah. I mean, there are people who do Fred Woell-like work, and it was, you know, in the atmosphere when he started being visible. He was not the only one. And his voice was very particular to himself, as were the others. And you know, as far as I know — I mean, nobody was — you know, the other two people I think were — were not trying to copy Fred Woell —

MS. FALINO: No.

MS. ARENTZEN: — because I know them both as artists.

MS. FALINO: You're thinking of Bob Ebendorf?

MS. ARENTZEN: No. Okay, this other person — he was just finishing his doctorate at Columbia as I —

MS. FALINO: Oh, I know who you're talking about. He is from Seattle.

MS. ARENTZEN: That's right. And then the other one — isn't it awful, I can't remember names.

MS. FALINO: I've got it in some of my books.

MS. ARENTZEN: But then the other one — Donald somebody, I think — but anyway, the other one —

MS. FALINO: Tompkins, Donald Tompkins.

MS. ARENTZEN: Don Tompkins, that's right. And then the other one still does all the big trade shows from New Orleans.

MS. FALINO: Oh. Yes, and he lives in New Orleans.

MS. ARENTZEN: That's right.

MS. FALINO: Yeah. I'll come up with his name.

MS. ARENTZEN: And, you know, he mass-produces —

MS. FALINO: Right.

MS. ARENTZEN: — that look. But when he started at Rhinebeck, it was honest work and was very special. And in his deep past there is true artistry, in not just his jewelry but in sculpture. But it's way back.

MS. FALINO: Well, you know, he found a commercial model that took elements of craft and made it — made it — and he popularized it.

MS. ARENTZEN: Yes.

MS. FALINO: So let's talk — this takes us — this is a good trajectory. I would love to get your perspective on how the field has changed, for good or bad or whatever, just your own perspective on, you know, where you stand in relation to these kinds of developments, not necessarily from an economic standpoint at all but rather, you know, how do you see the field?

MS. ARENTZEN: Okay, I have to think —

MS. FALINO: Is that too broad a question?

MS. ARENTZEN: No, it isn't, because I did address that, in a way. I was really thinking about what I have seen and what — how I feel about it. I think the field is very self-referential, and, you know, I think to the way people digest objects; you know, how they bring something to it. And they — say they're buying a sweater or something like that, just a real — just a sweater, and they begin to make decisions about it, and they relate those decisions to what their needs are, their finances are, how they like it, the colors, aesthetic, that kind of thing, and then do that with art and so forth.

Well, where do those references come from? Where does that framework come from? And in the case of viewing work that's depicted in *Metalsmith*, even though they have a broad editorial policy it refers to a structure that's been put in place by mostly makers and sometimes critics that are familiar with the field. And then this is what newer makers are seeing to riff off of. I don't know whether I'm making it clear, but I think it was very self-referential.

MS. FALINO: Well, I mean, you can compare it to literature. Anybody who's writing today is generally aware of Homer and Flaubert and *Ulysses* and, you know, James Joyce. And what they write sometimes can reflect that awareness. So it's a — I think literature has that self-referential quality even as it moves forward. Is that — is that what you're saying?

MS. ARENTZEN: Yes, and it's — you can see it in the fine arts.

MS. FALINO: Sure.

MS. ARENTZEN: And I'm not necessarily talking about specifically derivative work. I just mean that if you take a bundle of *Metalsmith* magazines — a magazine which I adore; I think it's a miracle in every way — that if you take a bundle of that and show it to your friends who are in the fine arts —

MS. FALINO: Yes.

MS. ARENTZEN: — they don't know quite how to relate.

MS. FALINO: Oh, I see.

MS. ARENTZEN: They might look at some things and think, oh, gee, how would you wear that, if they're very — if they think of jewelry as functional. If they think of jewelry as sculpture, they don't relate to it because it doesn't look like any sculpture they've ever seen. They don't recognize it as a different and wonderful, different as interesting, different as provocative. They don't know where to put it.

MS. FALINO: So I see what you mean, sort of like a self-contained field.

MS. ARENTZEN: Exactly, and that may be the last stage of organizations before the split up and reconfigure.

MS. FALINO: Do you mean to say, then, that in the beginning it wasn't so self-referential?

MS. ARENTZEN: If I were to step back into the era when ACC was founded and American Craft had all media and craft stores had all media, and craftspeople knew each other and their works —

MS. FALINO: Cross-media.

MS. ARENTZEN: — cross-media, and especially because of the educational background of craftspeople in the '60s, the people who were members of the New Jersey Designer Craftsmen, for instance, as well as ACC. They were having conferences, they were having exhibitions, and — but they weren't — oh, and then I think let's put into the pot there the people who were jurists for Rhinebeck when they first started to have —

MS. FALINO: Right.

MS. ARENTZEN: — needed to have juries. Okay, the educational background of, say, that group would be probably college-educated, probably — maybe with an art background but maybe not, certainly no MFAs or BFAs or something. It just was not common, except occasionally a potter. Some had no art training whatsoever.

MS. FALINO: Somebody like Ed Weiner —

MS. ARENTZEN: Yeah.

MS. FALINO: — who just picked it up.

MS. ARENTZEN: And there were just lots of people like that. And so they had at least a broader view, perhaps, of the world of makers, because they had other strong core interests. And the New Jersey Designer Craftsmen, which was mostly, in those days, amateurs — there were dentists in particular making jewelry because they had the equipment, and that's how they got into it. But there were all kinds of other people.

MS. FALINO: Do you think that was a good thing? Do you think it made for a greater —

MS. ARENTZEN: Just different.

MS. FALINO: — exposure or mixture?

MS. ARENTZEN: Yeah, just different. I think that's why it kept the field open in a way, and now it's closed, you know.

MS. FALINO: Yeah. People go to take metals programs and they get their masters in metals, and they make just metal; they don't make a lot of other materials.

MS. ARENTZEN: Yeah, and think something's lost for the individual. But I think it's a very peculiar structure to have everybody swirling in. I mean, you can't be in these media groups and say the world must look at what we're doing if you're not going outside your own world.

MS. FALINO: Right.

MS. ARENTZEN: I think that's the basic —

MS. FALINO: Yeah. Well, I think that it's true there's just been such a decreased specialization since the '60s.

MS. ARENTZEN: It's so much — so many things.

MS. FALINO: Yes. At the same time we're a much more visual world, you know?

MS. ARENTZEN: I hadn't thought of that, and I think that's a very good thing to bring up.

MS. FALINO: But I think our associations — while you may see a lot of other things visually, our associations tend to be with people in our particular specialty.

MS. ARENTZEN: That's right.

MS. FALINO: And so that keeps the conversation kind of circular.

MS. ARENTZEN: That's true. That's very true. And — yes.

MS. FALINO: So now, you said that you had some other observations you wanted to share.

MS. ARENTZEN: Let's see if we've — yes, there's — a couple of things. This is — I mean, the content of contemporary metal work, for instance taking, let's say, the more commercial — the people who are at least if not supporting themselves at least involved with the galleries on a regular basis, and the fairs for sure. The spotlight is now on the design thing.

MS. FALINO: The spotlight has moved to design, yes —

MS. ARENTZEN: Yes. And —

MS. FALINO: — in the larger art world, or —

MS. ARENTZEN: In the larger craft world.

MS. FALINO: — in the just larger craft and design world.

MS. ARENTZEN: Yes. And I think — I may be wrong about this but I think they think they've discovered the "holy grail." And what I see is returning to the exact same aesthetics that I started out in, in Scandinavian design and function and — but with a sense of aesthetics that spoke to something else. So I think that's — to see this — to see this cycle being repeated I think is really remarkable for me.

MS. FALINO: And do you think that the name change of the American Craft Museum to the Museum of Arts and Design is a part — in part a reflection of that return to those origins, or an embrace of this new — this new trend, as you see it?

MS. ARENTZEN: No, I don't think it followed the trend, frankly. I will take the statement that I saw by Holly Hotchner in print where she said, "I would go into raise money and they would look at me when I said 'craft museum.'" She said, "They were only thinking of making little potholders." Then she'd have to educate them. But she said, "In New York, if you're going to raise money, it's got to have a different name." And then I think she — you know, I think she's right.

MS. FALINO: So you think it — so it was driven by —

MS. ARENTZEN: I think it was driven by that, and the craftspeople who were looking toward let's say more functional — or design, what that implies —

MS. FALINO: Okay.

MS. ARENTZEN: — even if it's one of a kind, but design is what's important.

MS. FALINO: Yes.

MS. ARENTZEN: The cleverness of it and not the texture of it, not the way it feels. I mean, they're all important. It's just the spotlight is going in a different place.

MS. FALINO: Yes.

MS. ARENTZEN: It's not different but I think it's interesting.

Something I was thinking about too, which is not really along this — is, you know, why craftspeople choose a certain medium. I mean, I know why I thought jewelry would be right for me, but it was a close — textiles was a close second — and I spoke to that another — you know, previously — and I'm very happy I did. And then I thought about the different collections that I've made through my career that were shown as a group, and I started to think about how those had changed and the priorities that I had in making those collections.

And then I thought of friends, and I'm wondering — I can see how people choose — [phone rings].

MS. FALINO: Go on. Just go on. Go on.

MS. ARENTZEN: I can see how people choose a particular medium. If you're ever in a craft organization and you're asked to be on a committee, choose a committee that a metalsmith is a head of, because it will be done precisely, it will be reasonable. [Phone rings.]

MS. FALINO: I'm sorry. I have to take this. I guess, go on. Go on.

MS. ARENTZEN: And, you know, I think a certain — it's not just opportunity; it's a certain personality that is attracted to a certain medium to begin with, that you really like the feel of it and you really — you're not — you're not upset with the messiness of it, you know?

MS. FALINO: Yeah.

MS. ARENTZEN: There are different characters.

MS. FALINO: There's a visceral attraction, isn't there —

MS. ARENTZEN: Yes, there is.

MS. FALINO: — to materials, but also —

MS. ARENTZEN: Or the thought process.

MS. FALINO: — thought process. And then also isn't there a certain, like, satisfaction, like when you first encounter it — [phone rings]. Excuse me. I guess I have to take this call.

[Side conversation.]

MS. FALINO: Very sorry. This will all be excised in the text. Go on.

MS. ARENTZEN: You were asking — you were in the middle of a question about the —

MS. FALINO: Well, when a person first encounters their chosen medium, before they really have the experience, and then they go in and they have that first experience and they feel — they get a — have a happy outcome. But there's a sense of excitement and also power and potential, isn't there, like, you say I can do something with this?

MS. ARENTZEN: That's right.

MS. FALINO: I've never had that. That's why I —

MS. ARENTZEN: Oh. [They laugh.]

MS. FALINO: — but I've heard —

[Cross talk.]

MS. ARENTZEN: A craftsperson.

MS. FALINO: I've tried, I've tried, but I think that's where — when you suddenly say, I'm going to go places.

MS. ARENTZEN: And when you do more of it and it gets better and better all the time.

MS. FALINO: Yeah.

MS. ARENTZEN: It's such a — I'm so grateful to have eyes and joints in my hands that still work, with pleasure, because I can do almost anything that I want to do. It may take me a long time, I may have to do it twice, but, yeah, I agree, and there's real pleasure in that. But then why do people, you know, continue — I started wondering — if your product, along the decades, the medium in which you work, begins to shape you in the other direction? That's still a question that I have not answered.

MS. FALINO: Yes.

MS. ARENTZEN: But I'm thinking about it both ways. You get into it, you get a certain satisfaction in every way, but then why do you stay? And maybe it's working on you, or maybe not. You know, I just think it's really interesting how your work becomes part of your environmental influence.

MS. FALINO: Sure. Well, to take that and to turn it back to you and your career, you're a suburban Jersey girl, sort of, you know.

MS. ARENTZEN: Semi-rural.

MS. FALINO: Semi-rural, but then you became a city girl. And your work has always referenced nature.

MS. ARENTZEN: Yes.

MS. FALINO: And it continues to do so. I mean, there's obviously a strong sense of extraction that guides you, I think. But you've made — you seem to have been pretty true to that —

MS. ARENTZEN: Definitely.

MS. FALINO: — through your career.

MS. ARENTZEN: I can't help it.

MS. FALINO: Yeah. And you see the work of other people but, like, you know, you have no desire to become an appropriation person like Fred Woell, for instance. That didn't attract you. But you — it's your — it's your guide. I think it's your — you know, your inner compass.

MS. ARENTZEN: I think it comes from, as a maker, being bored silly by repetition. And I tell the story in some way, but the only way I can manage to get a question mark at the end is by having some element saying, but, oh — setting the whole thing a little off balance, if not visually, conceptually. And I think I enjoy that. I enjoy looking — the works of art that I enjoy looking at are ones that set up the questions and involve me somehow.

Drawings really show the work of the hand in a linear way, because in drawing I always see the way something goes from the mind to a physical presence that can be shown to somebody else and really shown in a way that can be a communication.

MS. FALINO: Do you transfer a lot of your drawing to your jewelry? I mean, do you — does that — is that a way of thinking, or are you doing something totally different?

MS. ARENTZEN: Well, now, that's interesting. It is — it is different, but you can choose the word of what I'm about to describe. When I'm putting together more or less a major show, it will certainly be between 30 and 80 pieces.

MS. FALINO: Wow. That's a lot of work.

MS. ARENTZEN: Well, I usually carry an inventory of about 200 pieces.

MS. FALINO: Okay, that's very interesting.

MS. ARENTZEN: Because it's a one-of-a-kind collection I think I carry more than most people.

MS. FALINO: I see.

MS. ARENTZEN: But for a show you definitely have to have that. It's not worth it for me to do the show if you don't.

MS. FALINO: Right.

MS. ARENTZEN: And it gives you better opportunity for fuller expression.

But when I start a major show like that, I start with a group of drawings. And they're not about jewelry. They're generally black and white, and mixed media — some sloshy, some hard-edged — different ways of thinking. And I do it solely to break the clichés of what I've done before form-wise. It's too easy in a craft medium to do the same thing. You don't even know you're doing it. You're so used to doing something in a particular curve or — so you — I try to stop and do something different.

And so I have those drawings, and most times a gallery — craft gallery can't use them, so you never see them in a gallery — occasionally but not generally, no.

MS. FALINO: I see.

MS. ARENTZEN: The old Faber Gallery you could. So they would sell some of the drawings as well.

MS. FALINO: Oh, how nice.

MS. ARENTZEN: The Sheila Nussbaum Gallery did once.

MS. FALINO: Which gallery?

MS. ARENTZEN: Sheila Nussbaum.

MS. FALINO: Sheila Nussbaum.

MS. ARENTZEN: There's a review that I think I sent you from one of those shows. And the — the reviewer said that she was so happy the drawings were there because she never would have understood the jewelry if it hadn't been.

MS. FALINO: Ah. And your drawings, are they abstract or are they —

MS. ARENTZEN: Yes, definitely. Well, I sometimes do some botanical drawings. I like to collect mushrooms on our property in Maine and some in New Hampshire, and in some cases I make drawings. I enjoy that deep looking and understanding something.

MS. FALINO: Yes. Well, there's nothing like putting a pencil to paper.

MS. ARENTZEN: Yes. You really have to look. So anyway, I do those drawings before some of these shows.

MS. FALINO: So what else do you have on your list?

MS. ARENTZEN: See, a lot of these we've — we've touched.

Well, one of the — when you think of the broader issues — and I think anybody that has a longer career probably identifies with this, but — is you want to grow and try new things, new techniques and new everything, in a way, but again, the market is a more — encouraging what you've done before and they're familiar with.

MS. FALINO: Oh, yes. This is a classic issue.

MS. ARENTZEN: Classic issue. And the market also demands — and I would say I would expand the market to include people who teach at universities or — I mean —

MS. FALINO: Sure.

MS. ARENTZEN: — which I've — in whatever arena you have to have a look. And —

MS. FALINO: Do you find this is encouraged by the gallerists, that if you were to present them with something new they would say, "Well, this doesn't look like" —

MS. ARENTZEN: Yes.

MS. FALINO: Yes.

MS. ARENTZEN: Somewhat, but it's also true when I'm face-to-face with a purchaser because, after all, they've come to you because they are familiar with your older work.

MS. FALINO: Right.

MS. ARENTZEN: And that's what they really locked onto. And you're —

[End of disc.]

MR. FALINO: This is Jeannine Falino interviewing Glenda Arentzen for the Archives of American Art. This is our final session. And it is April 27, and we are sitting here at my home in New Rochelle, New York.

So Glenda, when we were talking during your last visit to New York, we were addressing some issues about your career, but today we're going to talk a lot about your advice — advice to up and coming metalsmiths, and then we're going to just get a little overview in terms of your own perspective on the work you've made during your career.

So why don't you begin.

MS. ARENTZEN: Well, when we were — as you said — when we did it last time, you suggested talking about advice and I mentioned that one objective which should be clear from the start is your income requirements. But certainly something else will be pushing you in this direction if you really like to design and make and connect with the client, perhaps you could have a career doing just that. You might, for instance, say, "I really enjoy the physical process or I really enjoy designing." But you must also say I can handle the loneliness of the studio. I can handle the uncertainty of being self-employed. And you can say I really enjoy problem solving. Most objectives can be fuzzy. Specificity is not necessarily better because it may narrow the possibilities later on.

The first thing after you've decided your income requirements, you should consider doing market research with the objective of compiling a list of objects — for example wedding rings, rings with stones, necklaces, pins, et cetera — with the retail prices, the date seen and where. And if you're thinking of relocating, go there. Try to determine the cost knowing the markup may be double — double plus five percent or more. Include department stores, mom and pop jewelry stores, boutiques, catalogues, galleries. And the result will be a price range in different categories. This is the market which is your competition, so this is what you need to know; even your design is really going to be a very different thing.

The second thing you should do is to test the market by picking low-hanging fruit, save the ACC shows until later, sell to friends, consign to fundraising events, suggest trunk shows, do things with low overhead and direct contact.

This is hands on research with a chance to network and build a mailing list. Develop an appropriate bookkeeping system, a timeline, get a handle on accounts receivable, carve out time on a regular basis for experimental work unrelated to sales.

And as things really started humming with my business, I would have a certain number of hours, no matter what, each week where I would play. I would just sit down and say, "I've never tried such and such." Or about this form, particular form — or just play. And I would do that no matter what. And it was much better for my sense of humor too.

MS. FALINO: It seems that your — you seem to exhibit a lot of discipline in your career, throughout your career in terms of billing, bookkeeping, networking. You have your different groups that you know and you work with, your Forge and Gorge people or your ACC people. And discipline also requires making that time to set aside, doesn't it? Just to have some creative time.

MS. ARENTZEN: Yeah, and it's an interesting feeling because you've been rigid in doing it. And yet, it's for time that it's just the opposite of that feeling.

MS. FALINO: And that gives you new ideas to —

MS. ARENTZEN: Absolutely.

MS. FALINO: — develop new lines.

MS. ARENTZEN: Absolutely.

MS. FALINO: And how do you feel about the change in terms of selling your work to places? These would be craft-based galleries or you're considering selling work with commercial jewelry, is that what you were saying before?

MS. ARENTZEN: I was — I was saying make what you want to make and then see where it will sell. At the same time, you've got to recognize that you are presenting work to people directly or through a gallery or store, department store — I mean, some people are just simply going through the department store route or they end up thinking, "I'll make things, you know, for myself and I will design for industry." There're a lot of different ways of doing it. So the idea is to test what — the market for what you're making. So you get a feeling for how you can communicate to the people who are wearing it.

MS. FALINO: Right.

MS. ARENTZEN: I don't think a lot of people who are in the academic end of it do that. And they're doing something else. They're commenting on artwork, body ornament that has a content of an esthetically pleasing or not — compelling, that's a better word, compelling nature that would be familiar in the fine arts world.

MS. FALINO: But they're not as interested in the marketplace because they have their own source of income through academics.

MS. ARENTZEN: It's not just income. They're not interested in, I believe, always connecting their ideas with people who are actually going to wear it. Or put it some place and look at it. And the money follows. The money could be the most important thing. But it's a way of looking at life and people and the objects, too, you know, and how much you want to connect with an individual, even if you're not sitting across the table from them.

And at the point where you're doing the research, I mentioned — I'd like to mention pricing is one issue that really comes up. Everybody wants — how do you price your work? Well, speaking again to somebody thinking of going into the field, your cost will include materials in the piece, you know, labor, overhead, office supplies, you know, such as studio supplies, interest on any borrowed money, rent, display packaging. Whatever your plan to purchase an item, ask how can you do it for less. You must do that.

I have seen example of the wrong way to do it is somebody sits down and the first task — design task they do is to design business cards, letterheads and they spend an enormous amount of time doing that.

MS. FALINO: And money.

MS. ARENTZEN: And money. Websites — you don't need to spend gazillion dollars. You can start simple and small and the benefit of that — of doing it that way or even with your letterheads and so forth — I'm not suggesting you just go in and write your name on a three-by-five card — but it's an area where you will grow and you'll always have something new to show people, as well as the work. You know, oh, this person must be really expanding. Oh, this is exciting. You know, it builds a momentum —

MS. FALINO: Uh huh.

MS. ARENTZEN: — of interest.

MS. FALINO: That's nice.

MS. ARENTZEN: So I think that's — I think that's a good thing to do.

Do not stint on images. That's something I wish I had done.

MS. FALINO: Essentially in this computer age.

MS. ARENTZEN: And when you think of the number of exhibitions and objects that you see where you can — you won't be able to touch the objects, but you'll be able to see them — it's a minuscule percentage. It's almost all through images. And I've even heard jurors — fellow jurors look at images and — on the screen and say, "I feel if they can't produce a good photograph, they won't produce good work." I don't get quite the strong connection there because now they get — people get their photography professionally done, which I think is a good thing; I do. But it would be so dramatic and so wonderful that you really are influenced by the aesthetic qualities of the photo. It's not a clear, clean cut object that you're looking at.

MS. FALINO: Well, it's often difficult that as a jeweler [ph] sometimes, to weigh the esthetic attributes of pieces and when one is so poorly shot that often — it doesn't often show itself — show the object to its best advantage —

MS. ARENTZEN: That's right.

MS. FALINO: — so that's another reason to get good quality photography.

MS. ARENTZEN: If only. [They laugh.]

MS. FALINO: I'm going to ask you to take off your bracelet.

MS. ARENTZEN: Oh, sure, of course. Another thing you should do is to consider your policy on adjustments, special orders, ring size changing. It's — I think it's wise to always say yes because there is always something you could do, always. And that leads you into some engineering solutions that are very interesting projects.

I can't tell you how interesting I think my career has been technically. [They laugh.]

MS. FALINO: And it's been —

MS. ARENTZEN: And how nerve wrecking sometimes. [Laughs.]

MS. FALINO: To scale those challenges has been —

MS. ARENTZEN: Oh, it has.

MS. FALINO: — has been worrisome and anxiety producing, but ultimately satisfying.

MS. ARENTZEN: Really fine. Really fine. I mean, I didn't know that when you soldered next — this is not using propane or oxy acetylene. This is using just acetylene, which doesn't give you the high temperature and fine point generally. That when you solder something right next to a carat and a half diamond, say, as an example, that the diamond will turn bright red.

MS. FALINO: Oh, my God. [They laugh.]

MS. ARENTZEN: Cherry red.

MS. FALINO: That's scary. And does it survive?

MS. ARENTZEN: Yes. [They laugh.]

MS. FALINO: Thank goodness.

MS. ARENTZEN: Yes. [They laugh.] I had a project and I talked to a setter, Mr. Carolla. And he said about how I should go about doing this, and he said, "Well first, heat it up in borax and water. That will clean things off." And he took a look at it and he louped it, and he said, "There're no significant flaws in this, so it's not going to explode on you." And he said, "Don't put the flame on the stone." What he didn't tell me was that it would turn bright red. And it took my breath away. [They laugh.]

I put that in a —

MS. FALINO: I'm not sure — are you glad you did that in retrospect or not? [Laughs.]

MS. ARENTZEN: Yes. And what I learned from that was don't ever do it again. [They laugh.]

MS. FALINO: Valuable lesson. But I agree, you know, trying new things that are maybe outside your comfort zone is hugely important in life as well as in art.

MS. ARENTZEN: Yeah. It — yes, I remember when I got together with Rick, a fellow craftsman who by that point had grandchildren — young grandchildren, as I was about to have — well no, I was a little behind her — Marjorie Simon. And she said, "It's an amazing process that your children and their — your children's children will take you places you would never have thought of going." And she didn't mean just geographically, it was in every way. And it's been absolutely true. It's been worth the ride.

I mentioned a few things about dealing with retail outlets, and I picked out some things that may be contra to the contemporary wisdom. First of all, keep it simple. An elaborate contract is worthless unless you're going to support it. And then you get into the weeds with time consuming discussions about vocabulary.

Never miss a deadline. If you have an outright sale, remember, you have to decide — negotiate the time for payment, how it is to be made, if there — if it's farther out, then you should be compensated for it. You can have a guaranteed sale and a group of things that are consigned. It's a wide range of things. It should be good for you and the store, and the idea is to have it really good for both of you. And if it gets too complicated or if you're worried about — particularly if you send things on memo, which of course must be insured and in writing —

MS. FALINO: What do you mean by that — send it on memo?

MS. ARENTZEN: Yes, consignment.

MS. FALINO: You mean sending it on consignment.

MS. ARENTZEN: Yeah.

MS. FALINO: Oh, okay.

MS. ARENTZEN: And stores do go bankrupt and other such things. And you should keep in mind that if you consign things and they do go bankrupt, you will not receive your work back —

MS. FALINO: Right.

MS. ARENTZEN: — necessarily. You'll be at the bottom. But there are within each state, I believe, a contract that is a universal contract for this situation and you can get them to sign that, so you will be put a little bit higher up the line, but —

MS. FALINO: Do you believe in spreading your eggs, so to speak, in more than one basket in terms of places where your — where your work is being sold? Is that one — to mitigate those kind of concerns?

MS. ARENTZEN: Well, up until the financial crisis, I never consigned.

MS. FALINO: Is that right?

MS. ARENTZEN: Yes, except for shows. Now, they might have a group show to which they will apply a public relations effort or a solo show —

MS. FALINO: Right, that's different.

MS. ARENTZEN: — or a trunk show.

MS. FALINO: Yeah.

MS. ARENTZEN: That's a very different situation.

MS. FALINO: Right, but for instance just a gallery that keeps stuff in stock, like, I don't know, Patina Gallery in Santa Fe or I don't know, where else do you —

MS. ARENTZEN: I don't deal with Patina.

MS. FALINO: Okay.

MS. ARENTZEN: I've tried, because I think once I get interested, you could do something experimental. Here, take 10 pieces and —

MS. FALINO: Right.

MS. ARENTZEN: — and in six months, let's see, and then we'll talk again. And they did come to Baltimore all the time. And I did make preparations for that.

MS. FALINO: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] Right. But my point is just if you would — you would ideally want to have your work in several galleries or in several venues —

MS. ARENTZEN: Absolutely.

MS. FALINO: — to get the most maximized exposure, but also if something goes wrong with one, you have the others to also help bring in income.

MS. ARENTZEN: Oh — if you're going to bring an income in, we're not talking several. We're talking — you know, I don't know how many. It depends on how big your business is and what kind it is. But you certainly wouldn't have fewer than, say, 10 active, another 20 semi-active, another 30 or 40 occasionally, plus private people.

MS. FALINO: Yeah. So it's really a lot of to and fro and keeping —

MS. ARENTZEN: That's a lot of to and fro.

MS. FALINO: — a lot of — a lot of record keeping to make sure that what goes out comes back in in the form of income or if it doesn't sell that it comes back and you can record it in your inventory.

MS. ARENTZEN: For instance, when I do consign even for a show, I add 10 percent to the wholesale price. And at first, I told the galleries that I did that. And I no longer do because they get very upset and say, "But we want the price to be the same that you would sell to other galleries." I said, "But you're not buying it." And to galleries who support me year-round —

MS. FALINO: Yeah.

MS. ARENTZEN: They don't get it, so I don't mention it.

MS. FALINO: Okay. Anyway, well, continue.

MS. ARENTZEN: Okay. Another issue with dealing with galleries is the exclusivity thing. There's a way — we touched on it briefly at some point in the past conversations, but you can get around that. First of all, a store, gallery cannot tell you that you cannot sell someplace else. That's restraint of trade. You can choose not to because you don't want it to affect your sales overall.

MS. FALINO: Right.

MS. ARENTZEN: My position has been to talk over the type of work or the type of price range or the type of something with each and see if we can do — divide it that way.

MS. FALINO: Yeah. To be reasonable.

MS. ARENTZEN: To be reasonable. And one gallery in the south gave me a pitch. She was going to represent me to the whole southeast section of the United States. A-ha, I — and I said, "Well, I" — I said, "Nearest to you" — I gave her the name of somebody that I dealt with for a long time. And she said, "That would be a conflict." And I said, "Well, let's see if it is. I will protect you. I will not send the same things to both places." And Martha Connell was wanting things on memo.

MS. FALINO: Martha Connell was Great American — what was it called?

MS. ARENTZEN: Yes. It was Great American — it was Great American something when it was quilts and then it became the Martha Connell gallery.

MS. FALINO: Okay.

MS. ARENTZEN: And the other place was Carol Saunders in Columbia, South Carolina.

MS. FALINO: And that was the name of her gallery, Carol Saunders.

MS. ARENTZEN: Yeah. Lovely relationship, lovely person. But anyway —

MS. FALINO: So it sounds like those things can be worked out if —

MS. ARENTZEN: Absolutely.

MS. FALINO: — you could be a good advocate for yourself.

MS. ARENTZEN: Yeah, if you try to be fair.

MS. FALINO: And to be fair. And to be fair, you know, the galleries want to have a certain unique appeal to their customer base, and so that's why they're striving for that.

MS. ARENTZEN: That's right.

MS. FALINO: And as long as you can help them achieve their goals —

MS. ARENTZEN: Absolutely.

MS. FALINO: — then everybody wins.

MS. ARENTZEN: Yeah. Another issue that you brought up was the importance of business courses concerning crafts specifically in art schools. I don't know because I have — I don't know enough about them. And I mentioned thinking that case studies as role modeling, such as they have at the Harvard Business School and things like that —

MS. FALINO: Right.

MS. ARENTZEN: — would be a very helpful thing. And I've never heard of any of them doing that. They come out with pricing structures that are so inflexible. I mean, students thing that they're going to take the piece that they spent, say, 10 hours on and charge, say, 25 [dollars], \$30, \$50 an hour and then take a third markup on the materials and then bundle all that and add 10 percent and have a wholesale price. It doesn't work that way. There're some things where you make very little and some you make a lot. It — I mean, you have to have enough structure you're not driving yourself crazy with paperwork.

MS. FALINO: Did you learn some of that when you were working with Adda?

MS. ARENTZEN: Oh, yeah. She never said so.

MS. FALINO: But she — but you saw the — did you see the books or you saw how she —

MS. ARENTZEN: I saw the prices and the work and I had a rough idea of how long it took to make them. I never saw the books.

MS. FALINO: Yeah. So that was one way you gained that. And that was very valuable knowledge.

MS. ARENTZEN: Very. It's also been true that you may be working at, you know, \$10 an hour, \$15 an hour quite by mistake, but the next time you make it it's really a lot. [They laugh.] And you know, I don't repeat things, but I learn from the first piece and I do something that's similar first cuts [ph] and do it —

MS. FALINO: Yes.

MS. ARENTZEN: — and move on from there. And it's a better piece, you know, the second time around usually.

Oh — this is related, but there used to be a lot of excitement about formal apprenticeships, either structuring one yourself. We call them internships now. But something that — the federal government took over at one point, wanted to have a federal apprenticeship program. And Ron Pearson, I think, got something like \$7,000 so that he could hire somebody to do work and so forth.

MS. FALINO: So this was back in the '60s maybe?

MS. ARENTZEN: Oh, I bet.

MS. FALINO: Yeah.

MS. ARENTZEN: Maybe early '70s, but a long time ago. And I have come to the conclusion that with making jewelry and metalwork that if you have an apprenticeship program, particularly something that is structured by the federal government or the state governments, they're going to put you in a shop that's going to teach you a, b, and c. And you'll be sprung from that. But the job you're going to find needs D, E, and F —

MS. FALINO: Yes.

MS. ARENTZEN: — in skills because they're making different products.

MS. FALINO: Right, right.

MS. ARENTZEN: If you're going to learn something, you certainly learn something in the beginning, but it's not as valuable as people think.

MS. FALINO: I see.

MS. ARENTZEN: I think.

MS. FALINO: But it depends on where you go. You learned a lot from working with Adda.

MS. ARENTZEN: Absolutely.

MS. FALINO: So I think a lot depends on the situation.

MS. ARENTZEN: The more formal the apprenticeship system is structured, the more they expect to give you a piece of paper at the end saying you're a qualified jeweler and you're really not.

MS. FALINO: I see — oh, I see what you're saying.

MS. ARENTZEN: Yeah.

MS. FALINO: Yes.

MS. ARENTZEN: It's an entry level.

MS. FALINO: It's a — I see them as more opportunities to learn aspects of the business.

MS. ARENTZEN: That's exactly.

MS. FALINO: You know, you can —

MS. ARENTZEN: Exactly.

MS. FALINO: Margret Craver famously apprenticed herself or attached herself to a number of institutions, while she was learning her career. She spent time with Arthur Stone. She went to Sweden and spent time with Flemming, who was the silversmith to the king of Sweden. She spent time with somebody who did the armory at — worked at Arms and Armor at the Met. And that she sort of cobbled her education together. And in her case, it was more educational and not business. I think you could still gain —

MS. ARENTZEN: It's the same thing.

MS. FALINO: Yeah.

MS. ARENTZEN: The same thing. With — the people that have worked for me — they've always been part time, but they have — could have take-homes for some units that I used a lot of or some such things because they were set up at home to do their own work, too. I paid all appropriate taxes, including workman's comp.

MS. FALINO: Right.

MS. ARENTZEN: And they were happy to do that because it meant their time was more flexible. And they're paid by the piece. So it had to be things where — not start to finish, but usually parts. And then I wasn't reporting that part of their income. They had to. But I had somebody three days a week full time. And usually that was — that worked right for me. And when one young lady that I had for 14 years, she came to me — she'd been working in a bank and she had taken one course and she really wanted to do more of this. I said, "Well, you're not going to meet guys."

MS. FALINO: [Laughs.] In your solitary studio.

MS. ARENTZEN: Yeah.

[Phone rings.]

MS. FALINO: Let me turn that sound off.

MS. ARENTZEN: And at the end of the discussion, I said, "I will pay — this is the deal. I will pay you minimum wage for two weeks." Because I knew she could go back to the bank after two weeks. And I said, "After that, I will give you a raise and I'll continue to do that —"

MS. FALINO: As you progress.

MS. ARENTZEN: And she said, "I'm worried that I won't be good enough." I said, "I have taught hundreds of people. If I can't do this, to teach you, I will be very unhappy with myself." [Laughs.] I said — and that's how we worked. And then —

MS. FALINO: Well, those turn out to be very fruitful arrangements, you think, for both sides.

MS. ARENTZEN: Yes. And then, what I did because the possibility for learning other things — other techniques that were important to a craftspeople — person — I — in New Hampshire, anyway, what I did was every now and then say, "Okay, this morning, I'd like to demonstrate etching or something like that and I will teach you." I'd be working on the business stuff and I — and I paid her, so that you have something extra.

MS. FALINO: Right, right. I think we need to move on —

MS. ARENTZEN: Okay.

MS. FALINO: — to your perspective on your career. That you would — we wanted you to take a little time to think about how you see your work, setting it in time, you know, against — amidst your contemporaries. You know, what you think — how you think future generations will see your work.

MS. ARENTZEN: I think they'll probably melt it. [They laugh.] I would say that I feel a wholeness in my life in designing and making and knowing for a recipient with each piece. And it's the whole process that really makes me feel whole.

And what is of continuing interest is, say, the immediacy of expression of the authentic first feeling that comes from someplace else in the brain than the rational, linear thought. And that comes out in my drawings. And it's what I'm interested — I taught drawing for a couple of years and it was so interesting. And when I taught jewelry, very often people would make sketches of what they wanted to do, not so specific, but you could see the idea was coming from someplace that they couldn't really talk about. And that there were these little lines or these little brush strokes. And then, in talking with them, they began to see how they could give three-dimensional form to what they're doing. And I think that brain process is really interesting. And —

MS. FALINO: Well, it's really part of the — that's the artistic impulse.

MS. ARENTZEN: It is.

MS. FALINO: Yeah.

MS. ARENTZEN: And how much is programmed from your experience and — or how much is really elemental, how it differs from day to day.

MS. FALINO: How you see the world and how you interpret it in your work.

MS. ARENTZEN: Fascinating. And it's a big jump to go from in here to something tangible, especially when you're going to be graded on it. [They laugh.]

Because of that interest, I think my own work, to many, seems unresolved. Scandinavian work I think of being resolved. There was a design system there, a lyrical form, a function or something. And you can see every line of it. There's nothing unresolved. I'm much more influenced perhaps by a course that I took with Earl Pardon, and he would use Cezanne, his painting. And he would tune us to Cezanne's painting, where, say, a line of a street that you go across doesn't —

MS. FALINO: It's irregular.

MS. ARENTZEN: It's irregular.

MS. FALINO: It's not a straight line.

MS. ARENTZEN: It's not a straight line. And that means your brain is — has to reconcile that. And that's one of the ways that I find work compelling and there is — I think it's a way that some of the people look at my work and like it, feel that's compelling because — people have always said to me, this isn't jewelry. This is sculpture. Well, I do think of it as jewelry, as body ornament. Sometimes, it's an accessory, but mostly it's not. You choose

the jewelry and then decide what you want to wear.

Now, technically, to make this happen in a market is that I use stones that aren't calibrated that —

MS. FALINO: What does that mean?

MS. ARENTZEN: Six millimeter by eight millimeter, but they're manufactured, and you can call a dealer and ask for a six by eight amethyst of a certain quality and get it. So this means every stone I have to pick individually. And this means that they're — you can't buy commercially made settings for them either. So 90 percent of the settings I use are handmade, I mean hand designed each time.

MS. FALINO: Yes.

MS. ARENTZEN: And that protects you a little bit from being ripped off.

I've also worked myself into a situation where I have quite a bit of artistic freedom. And this means I'm designing a collection that is — and making a collection that isn't particularly salable always, has a limited marketability and that means I'm also protected from people who want to rip me off.

And when I get to talk with them, sometimes at the fair, and they're taking photographs of my work, I know exactly what they're doing and give them my card and ask them to solve my technical problems and then I will buy the pieces from them. [They laugh.]

I guess, in the end, though — I did have to write this one down. I guess I'm glad to be able to give direct witness to the importance of handwork and unique body ornament in an age of mass production. That's my niche. That's my contribution here, which may be of interest to anybody.

MS. FALINO: That's wonderful.

MS. ARENTZEN: But you asked about the work. I think there's been a — I've always worked in the same way. And I have saved time by working with a group of things of varying levels of difficulty, but doing, say, the cutting out and then, you know, the pre-polishing and the soldering and then work down to the polishing, cleaning and then the setting of the stones and so forth. And I'll work a group together. So it's not mass production because these objects aren't all alike. But I —

MS. FALINO: But they're part of a series.

MS. ARENTZEN: No.

MS. FALINO: No? Oh, okay.

MS. ARENTZEN: No, not at all. Mix repairs with customer work, with all kinds of things —

MS. FALINO: Oh, okay.

MS. ARENTZEN: And — but I'm picking up the same tools to do each.

MS. FALINO: Yes.

MS. ARENTZEN: And I would encourage somebody who is trying to make a profession of this, no matter how, to do something like that because kids coming out of schools have no idea how fast they have to work.

MS. FALINO: To be — to be efficient and to make a decent living.

MS. ARENTZEN: They must be fast. I mean, you're working both hands at the same time. You know, pulling things, looking at the tool. And that's wonderful because it gives you a rhythm of work. Metalwork is slow. And this — sometimes you lose track of your concept because it is so slow. You do have to put things down once in a while, answer the phone and — but by this technique of working, you know, that — I think I've kept these immediate ideas, these gestural forms flowing.

I've always been interested in form when I — you talked about how I view my own work in the midst of the field or such. And I — it's hard for me to make any kind of statement about that other than what I've already said about the direction. And I think most craftspeople are — metalworkers are — have very different views. I think I'm very interested in inventing new — for myself new forms, fresh approach and just the formal content of it. And I see many who do the homage to such-and-such.

MS. FALINO: Yes.

MS. ARENTZEN: Or they — this — it's a way a lot of collections are put together for industry. You know, they'll look at some inspirational books from Art Deco and they'll actually take some of the forms, credited or not. And I think there's also a strong interest supported by the public of craftsmanship for craftsmanship's sake.

MS. FALINO: Yes.

MS. ARENTZEN: And I'm blown away by some of the things people do. And once I've seen it, I've seen it. It just doesn't work for me on another level.

MS. FALINO: It isn't an end in itself.

MS. ARENTZEN: Doesn't work for me.

MS. FALINO: Well, as we were talking earlier today, before we started this tape we were talking about enameling. And, you know, technique is one thing, but you have to have the artistry as well. And you have to be able to mix the two successfully.

MS. ARENTZEN: I think so, yes. And we were also talking about how craftspeople are very open with sharing techniques and so forth. So I think that's one of the reasons why the American craft movement metal has gone in a direction where some wonderful things have been made.

MS. FALINO: And you've — and you've gotten the knowledge of that through — also through the fellowship you've maintained with so many artists across the years.

MS. ARENTZEN: Yeah. Yeah, it's a family, you know.

MS. FALINO: Yeah.

MS. ARENTZEN: I've always paid attention to experimentation, to which I referred. And I think in one of our previous talks I mentioned developing a pallet of different colored metals through the alloys. So color's been interesting to me. Various Japanese techniques have been interesting to me because they paid attention to color of — stones interest me.

MS. FALINO: So it's like a pallet that you've been able to choose from.

MS. ARENTZEN: Yeah.

MS. FALINO: So do you feel we've covered your career? Is — any last famous words to share?

MS. ARENTZEN: I just hope I can keep going longer.

MS. FALINO: [Laughs.] I have a feeling you will. You're so engaged in your career. It's really admirable. And it's what — I think it's what keeps a lot — what makes a lot of artists so young.

MS. ARENTZEN: Yes. And don't underestimate the power of craft as therapy. [They laugh.] Just getting into the studio sometimes and relaxing and making something, even if, you know, something odd comes out of it — when colleagues have had really difficult times, really difficult times — Cosmopolitan listed the top 10 difficult times or something — [they laugh] — they've continued to work. And work very much helped them get out of it. It's a time when you don't think coherently in the same way as when you're solving a financial problem.

MS. FALINO: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] But you're able to work through things while you're —

MS. ARENTZEN: Yes, it's a meditative process.

MS. FALINO: Yes. That's a wonderful observation. Well, this has been a real pleasure.

MS. ARENTZEN: It's been really fun. I have a new friend. [Laughs.]

MS. FALINO: I feel the same way. And it's been a real delight to listen to you, to share your — all these facets of your career, your great advice and we're in your debt.

MS. ARENTZEN: Likewise. I'm glad somebody's still keeping track of the good things that happen in this world.

[End of Disc.]