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JACK LEVINE

and

RUTH WEISBERG

Douglas Krantz

Thesis submitted in partial

fulfillment of

the requirements for Ordination

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Dr. Stanley F. Chyet
Ms. Nancy Berman

DIGEST

This thesis is a presentation of biographical portraits of two American-born Jews who became artists. Its aim is seeing them as they see themselves. Therefore, the bulk of the material is based on interviews with each artist.

Jack Levine was born in Boston to immigrant parents in 1915. He has pursued his chosen career of painting from childhood. He studied art in Boston and received recognition in the art world at an early age. After World War II he married and settled in New York, where he is currently living. Levine's family background, his education, art training and perspective on life and art are the major areas on which our discussion focuses.

Ruth Weisberg, born in Chicago in 1942, is currently living in Los Angeles. She teaches, and is the Acting Associate Dean of the Department of Fine Arts, at the University of Southern California, and continues to pursue her art at the same time. Weisberg's family background, her art training, her education, her experiences in Europe, her two marriages, and her views on art comprise the areas emphasized in her biography.

This paper is an effort to isolate a specific kind of Jewish life in the United States, that of the artist of Jewish background, and to understand what their lives as artists have been like so far. Many of the questions

raised by each artist are to be answered only at a later time, by later generations.

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INTRODUCTION

Jack Levine and Ruth Weisberg are two curiously similar artists and yet each is quite distinct in work and in their background.

It is interesting to note that Levine and Weisberg are of different generations. Levine grew up in the Depression and lived through World War II. Weisberg grew up in the 1950's. Yet both have developed a similar understanding of art. Both are artists who concentrate their efforts on what they see as human concerns. Levine, for instance, has painted about his concept of justice and Weisberg has made prints about loneliness. Their art is representational--it is not form, it is content that is emphasized. Form for Levine and Weisberg is the tool by which they reveal their content. Form is not the end, only the means. By and large, then, both artists have rejected the twentieth-century concept that art is good art only when content does not stand in the way of revealing pure form. Both Weisberg and Levine look to artists of the past, those sometimes called the masters, like Giotto, Rembrandt, Goya, and Daumier among others. Both artists strive to make vital representational art as it passes through their minds and is expressed in their work.

Even these categories fail to capture Levine and Weisberg because they are both original artists and necessarily cross between the rather artificial boundaries created by art critics.

Levine and Weisberg have never met, but there is an interesting point in common. When Weisberg was about thirteen years old, she used to spend time looking at the collection of the Art Institute of Chicago. What--among other works--she was looking at in 1955, as an aspiring young artist, was Levine's The Trial.

Levine's life is reflected in his work. He grew up in hard times, in the midst of the Depression. His paintings all tend to distortion. Enlarged and sometimes cruelly shaped heads are part of his trade mark. The bucolic is not a major element in his works, which tend to reflect a hardened city approach to the world. At the same time they exhibit a concern with people, especially the little person. Perhaps this tension is the drama of Levine and what makes him an artist worthy of study.

Weisberg's life has been very different from Levine's. Weisberg grew to maturity in the post-World War II era, and her art reflects a different ambience than does Levine's. Weisberg passed through some rough stages in her life. One struggle she had was coming to terms with her Jewishness, which is reflected in her work. Weisberg felt she needed to search her roots for a better understanding of her Jewish identity. One also sees in Weisberg's current work a reflection of happiness. She has come to understand her roots and herself well enough to be free from the encumberances of the past. She is free--free enough to picture herself

flying. Her work is reflective of her emotional states and she confronts her personal problems on paper, be it loneliness or freedom. Unlike Levine, Weisberg's career is just beginning, but she has already shared many insights into human problems.

Both Levine and Weisberg consider themselves to be Jewish, though neither could be called observant in any traditional sense. Both artists have worked with Jewish themes, but with others as well.

Since the principal aim of this presentation is to allow Levine and Weisberg to present themselves, analysis and discussion of questions raised has been held to a minimum. Each of their respective works could be taken as an autobiographical statement and added to the picture they give of their lives, but, such analysis remains beyond the scope of this paper.

JACK LEVINE

Jack Levine's parents emigrated from Lithuania.[1] Levine's parents arrived in the United States bringing with them their brand of Judaism, a Judaism somewhere in the spectrum between Conservative and Orthodox. Judaism for the Levine family was viewed as a man's religion, and not the concern of the women. Jack Levine's father had a few non-Orthodox ideas, but no assimilative drive. He was content to remain what he was when he arrived in the United States. Levine does not describe his parents as complex people; they were not intelligentsia; they were not Zionists; they were not socialists; they were not stupid either. In fact Levine feels that though they lacked a certain cosmopolitian experience, they were in fact very bright. They were immigrant Jews from Russia. They kept a kosher home and raised a family of eight children as best they could. They belonged only to a burial society and a loan organization. The last of their eight children was born in 1915 in the South End of Boston, he was named Jack.[2]

It was not an easy life for the Levine family. When times got tough, Jack Levine's mother would borrow some money from the loan organization. It was difficult just managing to feed eight children. Poverty for the Levines was real, but at the same time not irremediable; they did not starve. As Levine describes it: "My mother always managed

and outwitted the situation. If I didn't eat well, I didn't know it." Levine's mother was in charge of making do and holding the household together for the children. Levine describes his mother as cunning, sagacious, crafty, witty and very, very intelligent; she was a person who coped with a difficult situation.

Levine describes his father as being more aloof and remote. He was a shoemaker with a small, simple shop, not even a sewing machine. Life was not pleasant for the father. It was not easy to bring in enough money to make ends meet. And also from a craft standpoint, life was not what it might have been. In Lithuania he had been apprenticed to make a fine Russian boot, but he never made those boots once he arrived in the United States. "He just took the dirty worn shoes off people's feet and fixed them." He did not have a small shoe factory in Massachusetts. He worked alone without any of the technological developments; "it was simple and desperate." When he came home at night from his shop, he would "sit with his head in his hands" and read the Yiddish newspaper. Levine remembers his father with affection.

When the last of the Levine children was born, the family lived in the South End. Then, along with the other members of their congregation, Anshe Poland, and the rest of the Jews from the South End, the Levines moved to Roxbury.

(The old congregation is together once again in the old cemetary in Woburn.) Roxbury had been a well-to-do Jewish neighborhood, but it was already falling off as the Levines arrived. Relative to the community, it was not a move up on the economic ladder. In the new home everybody shared beds, Jack with his brother Joe. Around the house one would, of course, find Hebrew prayer books, but few novels, little serious reading. The walls contained some of Levine's childhood works and some of the reproductions that from time to time he would purchase from the Boston Museum.

The home was run by Jack Levine's mother and his older brothers and sisters, his father was good at delegating authority. Levine's mother tended to indulge and spoil her youngest child. Discipline came from his older brothers. Since the last two children born before Jack were girls, his brothers were very much his senior. They had more of a disciplinary function in his life than did his father. "And we might say that I had one mother, but five fathers." One of the Levine sons became a boxer, another a salesman. Jack Levine was to become a painter.

Early memories are perhaps the conscious beginning of one's personal biography. Jack Levine, though he was only four years old at the time, swears that he remembers the Boston Police strike, with the national guard patrolling the streets in full battle dress. He remembers it under the el,

at Washington and Grover Streets. As a boy he sketched the soldiers, who by their action brought Calvin Coolidge to the Vice-Presidency.[3] Levine drew from the beginning of his conscious memory. When he was young, an Italian family lived upstairs and the boys encouraged Levine to draw. Levine would go upstairs and they would draw together. They would draw wars, soldiers, cannons, airplanes, you name it and they would try to draw it. Levine has no memory of a time when he was not engaged in drawing.

The public school Levine attended up until the third grade sent him to a class at the South Bay Union. As a third grader he found himself in a class with teenagers, an experience he recalls as being pleasant. The teacher of that class set up wooden forms, a cone, a cube and a cylinder, all painted white. These three forms, what Cezanne called the bones of art, were set up in light and shade for the students to draw. Levine found that he was too young to draw them, so instead he did a large charcoal drawing of a battleship with all of its guns blazing. Looking back on that experience, Levine sees the battleship as a more primal experience. He feels that it is an imposition on the part of adults to make children draw forms.

There was another class for children at the Boston Museum where they were to make copies of Oriental textiles. The first step in the process was to lay down a smooth wash

which would approximate the texture of raw silk; it had to be smooth. "I must tell you that I think all of one winter, I was trying to put down a smooth wash and this is all I ever did. I just don't know how to do these things." Levine wanted to draw what came to his mind. A friend of his had a copy of a picture of Felix the cat, which they analyzed thoroughly and drew from various points of view. Drawing the cat was a more natural experience for a young person than attempting a cone, a cube, and a cylinder.

When Levine was nine years old he met his first teacher, Harold Zimmerman. When Levine met Zimmerman, he had the temerity to ask if Zimmerman was going to make him copy things, or if Zimmerman was going to let Levine draw what he wanted to draw. Zimmerman assured the defiant young Levine that he would be free to draw whatever pleased him. So, for about twenty-five cents a lesson, Levine began to study with Zimmerman on Sunday mornings at the Jewish Welfare Center in Roxbury. Zimmerman was a young art student at the Boston Museum School and was able to make a few dollars on a Sunday morning by teaching art. This was Levine's first meaningful study of art and though he was only nine years old at the time, he claims that from that time on he seriously began to consider painting as a career.

An experience from his grammar school days stands out

in Levine's mind as being important. While he was taking art at the Jewish Welfare Center on Sundays and another class at the Boston Museum on Saturday mornings, he had a book of facsimile drawings of Pablo Picasso's early memories of Barcelona. Levine had been looking at magazine illustrations and was drawing jokes and situations as well. Then his class at school took a trip to the museum and Levine walked the corridors lined with Daumier lithographs and as he puts it, he "related." It was obviously better than looking at magazine illustrations. Levine feels that this experience was very important.[4]

In 1929, with economic doom still in the future, Levine came to the attention of his second important teacher, Denman Ross. Levine was fourteen years old when Denman Ross, the founder of the Department of Fine Arts at Harvard, took him and put him on an allowance of twelve dollars a week.[5] Levine would go out to Cambridge to paint under Ross' guidance. He brought home some money, so that he encountered little family resistance to his pursuit of art. Levine's association with Ross worked out well. By the time he was in his second year of high school, he had already exhibited thirty-five or forty drawings at the Fogg Museum. While Levine's career as a painter looked promising, it took its toll in other areas of his life.

Though Levine sardonically attributes his social maladjustment to being left handed, clearly it was his early success at painting that led to his failure in school. Most high school students associate with friends their own age; Levine did not follow this rule. In the third grade he was with teenagers in an art class; by high school, his association was with Ross, an emeritus professor at Harvard. Levine was convinced that older people really had it, not just knowledge, but everything. This was probably true of his older brothers, though Levine does not mention them in this context. School was an obstacle to the pursuit of his art. It led nowhere. Even his father had made it clear that he could not put his youngest son through college. School was a dead end. Levine recounts a question put to Isaac Stern. Stern was asked how he could become a violin virtuoso and go through the American educational system. Stern replied that he played hookey a lot, or something to that effect. Though he feels that he was a bright student, school was not for an aspiring painter, so at age seventeen, Levine dropped out.

Also at about the time Levine dropped out of school, and for unexplained reasons, his associations with Zimmerman and Ross came to an uncomfortable end. His formal art training ended at age seventeen[6] and Levine was

in for a rough period. It was 1932, the Depression was to bring hard times and Franklin Roosevelt would soon institute Public Works Programs, in which Levine would participate.

When Levine was about eighteen years old, he became involved in the PWPA, the Public Works of Art Program. There was a kind of sporadic rush into the early government projects before the WPA. Then it became consolidated as the well known WPA art program. When Levine was twenty years old, he became involved in that too. Then he discovered a problem. When Levine signed up for the WPA art program he was a minor and put himself down as living at home. He thougnt that would make him eligible for relief. He was mistaken. When his file was checked, it was determined that ne was not eligible, because he was a minor living at home. So, he dropped from the program, even though it was looking good as far as the project itself was concerned. Levine was off the program for a year or two and then for a short time he was put on a small percentage, as part of the non-relief personnel. And that lasted for a year or so, though the precise details are lost to Levine.

Levine's view of the time he spent in the WPA is ambivalent. What artist could sell any work in those days? The WPA was the only way a person could earn twenty-three dollars a week and paint at the same time.[7]

On the other hand it was not the glorious period some make it out to be.[8] The WPA was omnipresent in the arts. "It was almost all the action going on in the art world." While being in and out of the WPA, Levine had been with the Downtown Gallery in New York, even though he was living in Boston. It was one of the leading galleries of American Art. Yet if his average yearly earnings up to the time he went into the army were more than two hundred dollars a year, he would be surprised. He was a well-known artist, but could not think of supporting himself on his earnings as a painter. The WPA was all there was for most artists, especially young artists like Jack Levine.

Levine was committed to living at home in Boston. He remained at home, with his parents, until he was drafted in 1942 at the age of twenty-seven. When Levine entered the army, he opted for ordinary military service because he did not want to end up painting portraits of generals. He sweated out his time on Ascension Island, a lonely South Atlantic island used as a fueling stop by the air force. The military experience was not marked by any danger, only by sheer boredom.[9] Levine returned to New York on rotation; he was a technical sergeant, a five striper at that point. He did not have enough points to be mustered out, so he went around New York looking for someone to take

him on so that he would not have to end up in some camp somewhere. He was allocated to an educational program and was then picked up by the North Atlantic Division of Engineers of the public relations office to do some paintings about Ascension Island. Then he was eligible to be mustered out. During the time in New York, a friend took him to Ruth Gikow's house. They kept company for a while and were married in 1946.

Ruth Gikow is an artist of note in her own right. Both the husband and wife work independently; they do not share studios nor do they visit each other's studios. She works in her studio which is above their home in Greenwich Village. She does not visit her husband's studio more than once a year. They do talk about art, but not generally about specific works. They agree on premises of art. They also agree that each works independently. That is very important to them. She does not derive any vicarious gratification from his art and he does not derive any vicarious gratification from her art. They both are artists in their own right.

They have one daughter, born in 1949. They gave their daughter no formal religious education; however, her parents are both very real as Jews, not as religionists or practicing Jews, but as denominational

Jews. This did not escape their daughter who, though she knows very little about Judaism as a religion, is a "pro-semite"-- that much anyway, according to her father.

Life was an economic struggle for Jack Levine from his childhood until 1960. At about that time he no longer had to moonlight as an art teacher to supplement his income. Since about that time he has been able to paint full-time. Painting for Jack Levine is a full-time job. His works are major works and each stroke is consciously thought about before the brush touches the canvas. Jack Levine is a master painter. That is what he has always wanted to be. He continues to draw and paint, which is what he has been doing for as long as he can remember.

A person's development may be traced in a chronological sense, beginning with birth, including some of the highlights of his training and his personal life-- but there is another side of a person, a side that develops non-chronologically: his worldview. The personal outlook attained, in this case after sixty years of living, develops randomly in stages. Jack Levine became a painter and an art major in life. He sees the world through the discerning eye of an artist born in Boston to immigrant parents, raised in a poor neighborhood after World

War I, growing up in the Great Depression. These events shaped Levine's outlook; they molded Levine's worldview. To understand Jack Levine, one must look through his eyes as he looks at himself, the world, the world of the artist, of art and of human beings.

When Levine was a young boy, his mother used to say in Yiddish: "He's making little people." Levine has always enjoyed making people. He seems never to have had an interest in sketching things, no interest in making a record of anything in front of him. He had every desire to try to express an attitude, which had nothing to do necessarily with the subject as it was. He has illustrated this feeling with an example: if a child wants to draw daddy, the child takes a piece of paper and a pencil and draws daddy. There is no need to choose an object for the child to draw, no need to place it in front of the child and help the child photographically recreate the object on the paper. Levine is convinced that reproducing objects is not natural. As a young boy, apparently Levine showed an interest in drawing people as he saw them through the medium of his mind. A childhood experience Levine remembers was trying to draw something he had once seen about Tarzan coming home from the hunt with a carcass on his shoulder. He sat down with a sheet of Manila paper on a table and a pencil in his hand. He

was not trying to reproduce the picture that he had seen with its waterfalls and rocks and trees and mountains. Sketching photographically was beyind him and beyond his need. Levine understands that it is a matter of approach to art. He sees drawing as an expression of an attitude, a state of mind, or an idea about the world. Levine's point of view on art obviates the necessity of drawing from nature, from objects--in short, it obviates what he calls the whole academic approach.

From childhood he has continued to paint from his mind. He rarely works with pictorial material in front of him. He offers by way of example: "I painted Hindenburg once in a picture and it went almost all the way without resorting to any material, but I couldn't get the moustache right. I didn't know when it went down or up. The kind of Prussian waxed moustaches, like Wilhelm II, and whatever I did, it looked wrong and I wasn't at an early stage of the painting either, and I just couldn't remember." So, he went to the picture section of the New York Public Library and looked up Hindenburg and found that his moustache turned down and then up. He was finally satisfied. It was an exercise in painting somebody specific, but still painting him as his mind saw him. Levine made a real person as his mind reconstructed

the images he had seen in photographs.

Having nobody particular in mind, Levine can paint people; he can invent a plausable person. "In a way I think the most enjoyable thing I have in painting is the business of inventing people". The eyes will suggest a certain nose, which suggests a certain placement of the ears and suddenly it looks like somebody--maybe somebody he knows and maybe somebody he does not know. ". . . here's this damn thing suddenly with an independent existance; this is a delight . . . the dream of every realist [is] that it will actually stand in front of the canvas and be alive, not just look real, but live." Working from a model would destroy this dream. It must come from the artist's mind if it is to have the full impact of making something come alive. Levine concedes that not many artists share his dream. But for him it is a strong drive and precludes any substantial reliance on outside phenomena. Levine still loves making little people.

Taking some substance from a tube and fashioning little people on a canvas is not something which the Jewish community has invariably encouraged throughout the ages, and Levine is sensitive to the problems of being a Jew who became an artist. Levine thinks that there is no such thing as a Jewish artist. In his

father's congregation, Anshe Poland, there were wall decorations of fruit and flowers; they were done by Italian housepainters. Levine notes that historically, in the Duro-Europos Synagogue there were Frescos, with scenes like the priesthood of Aaron which he suggested were possibly painted by Greeks. While one can find traces of "Jewish Art" throughout all of Jewish history, the community tended to inhibit its practice to the point that one could not help but feel like a rebel by practicing art. The immigrant Jewish community, at least of Levine's generation, was not sympathetic to the idea of becoming an artist. For Levine, the act of becoming a painter tended to assimilate him with the non-Jewish community. Even as a child, the one thing Levine wanted to do most was draw. Saturday was the one full day that was free for him to draw; there was no school, but his mother would not let him draw because it was the Sabbath. Levine could not honor the traditionalist Sabbath; he had to transgress to become an artist. He did not suffer the same kinds of pains as did Chiam Soutine, but it was not easy for him to be Jewish and aspire to be an artist at the same time. Levine is not sure whether or not he considers himself a Jewish artist. He does not know what that term means: according to Levine, an artist who embodies so many of the warm human

things with which Jews are supposed to reflect is Rembrandt, who was not Jewish and yet who, as Levine sees him, could be a Jewish artist, even a Jewish saint. Levine sees himself as a Jewish painter, a painting Jew, but the question of the existence or the non-existence of an artist called a "Jewish artist," remains open for Levine.

If Levine sees both sides of the Jewish artist issue and equivocates, he does not equivocate on being a Jew. He claims to have only a smattering of Judaism, but a real smattering. Indeed it is real. He speaks freely about biblical characters which he has painted and about elements of Jewish lore. He can talk about David and about the legend of the thirty-six righteous men. Levine claims that his heritage provides him with a direct line to antiquity,[10] a line apparently different from that available to non-Jews. To use his own terminology, he is not a religionist, he is not a practicing Jew, he is a "denominational" Jew. Though he is not the kind of Jew his father was, he is authentic as a Jew in his own eyes. Levine once said, "I'm a Jew of the American Seaboard, looking east. I've never managed to feel fully indigenous. I've been part of a tolerated minority. That has affected the subject matter as well as the content of my painting."[11] He

says that this statement is less true now than it once was. Yet he still feels the sense of being an outsider, a feeling he does not think is good. Still, for him, being an outsider is a nuance, rather than a drastic condition of life.

Levine was casual when Israel was established. His understanding of the ramifications of Israel came by degrees. Since then, Levine has become enamored of Israel. His first trip there was around 1959, and his second visit was in 1972. The combination of the positive aspects of Israel, coupled with the constant threat of wars, creates in Levine the feeling that if he were to let himself dream about it, there would be no sleep. The fact that Israel could be lost or the image of Jerusalem under siege--this frightens him. "I have a feeling that there aren't too many things I care about like that, [it is] very close to me." For Levine, Hillel's question, if I am not for myself, seems very apposite now. Being Jewish and being aware of his Jewishness now is more than important for Levine; it is necessary. Though he is not certain, and despite his dislike of the idea, that with greater age comes greater Jewishness, he sees something like that happening to himself.

On his second visit to Israel, when he could walk in the Old City of Jerusalem, he found it moving, beautiful,

and meaningful. Levine fell in love with Jerusalem and is haunted by the city. In the past, whenever he did a painting involving a Jewish theme, it was always small in scale, eight by ten inches; these works were all miniatures and were assured of a certain quaintness because of their very size. The mid-1970's, however, found Levine working on a huge canvas of Jerusalem, perhaps five feet by eight feet. Pointing to the charcoal outlines on the canvas, Levine noted that there must be some significance to his Jewishness coming front and center in scale.

Levine is also a universalist, a humanist (though he feels that the term humanist can properly be applied only to someone who read Greek and Latin in the sixteenth century). But what has been described as his credo clearly marks Levine as a humanist of the twentieth century: "To delineate the finer features of human nature and of the mass of mankind, to penetrate resolutely into unexplored regions and to conquer them, that is the vision of the genuine artist."[12] Elsewhere, Levine has stated that man is the legitimate and prior concern of man.[13] People and Jewish people are Levine's concerns: he is always concerned with people.

Levine looks for people to paint. Sometimes he needs to look for material. In 1968, the Democratic National Convention in Chicago appeared to be an event rich in

potential material. There was no way to get in as a private citizen, so Levine agreed to go as an artist correspondent for Time magazine. It was the first time he had ever been an artist correspondent and it marked an aberration from his usual practice of working alone in his studio. However, he worked in his hotel room away from the convention floor. He sat in his hotel room, in his pajamas, trying to transcribe some sketches of the convention into something more plausible, something more visible than he had managed to create on the floor. He was in his room working, so he missed the action on the streets, when so many demonstrators were beaten up by the Chicago Police. Levine does not view Abby Hoffman and the other leaders of what he calls the hippie movement as champions of anything or anybody, nor as representative of any sound philosophy. Levine sees himself as too old, too mature, for that type of movement. Yet, in the showdown that took place in Chicago, he was naturally for the demonstrators. He came away from the Chicago Convention with one new image, something he calls the "Daley Gesture." He did a painting and a print of Mayor Richard Daley drawing his forefinger across his throat. The original Daley Gesture took place when Senator Ribicoff was saying that the police outside on the streets were acting like storm troopers and Daley wanted the microphone back so the senator's

comments would not be heard across the nation. Levine left Chicago with that tableau, for him it was the quintessence of the Chicago Convention.

Long before Chicago, Levine had been a witness to political activity. The WPA involved considerable political action. Levine, in explaining why political action was a necessary concomitant of the WPA, reveals part of his understanding of politics. Roosevelt had conceived of the works programs as pump-priming. There were people in this country who felt that pump-priming did not help. The Republicans were always trying to cut the program. So, from the outset there was a built-in kind of militancy. The New Deal itself and its sub-divisions like the offices of the art projects felt the need for public action as a demonstration of public support for the projects. There had to be picket lines and some kind of sit-ins in order to fight the constant attempts to strangle the projects. If there was quiescence, then quota cuts would always follow. The New Deal required activism in order to keep it going. This was as true for artists as it was for any other group involved in the many New Deal projects.

There were some painters who could get up and speak like corporation lawyers, who could go up to the federal administrators as though they were labor lawyers. "I'd just look on with amazement as they did that." Levine

claims no capacity for leadership. "A leader I never was. I don't have it in me. I was what they called a Jimmie Higgins, a foot soldier." Levine went to meetings, passed out leaflets, and collected names on petitions. He did his part, and that was all he felt he could do.

Levine does not have the enthusiasm for politics now that he had then, back in the WPA days, nor has he the same sense of involvement. However he is not a nihilist. He votes regularly, sometimes for the lesser of two evils, but he votes. "I do my thing as a citizen." Levine feels that moral or social responsibility is not limited to the exclusive domain of people like rabbis. As an artist, he is not automatically excused from social responsibility. However, he contends that social conscience or social responsibility is a voluntary matter. There are times when he has volunteered and other times when he has not volunteered. It is his right, to abstain or not to abstain. He has even made speeches where he has explained social responsibility as a voluntary exercise. Levine does not read newspapers, the Nation, the New Republic and does not feel guilty. On the other hand he does paint things about courtrooms, conflicts, and the situation in Israel: he has painted about Birmingham, Hitler and other political and social themes. These he considers to be voluntary preachments. He does not see

PLATE 1. The Feast of Pure Reason 1937

42 x 48"

himself as a political intellectual. He does not read political literature. His political utterances tend to be more visceral. After all, he is an "art major."

The fact that he does not read political literature, does not mean that he does not read. When I asked what he does read, his immediate response was, "I read junk." He reads handbooks about art; he reads about attempted reconstructions of old master techniques. There is a body of literature that has to do with conservation of the old masters and processes of their craft--about the materials that they used; literature of that kind interests him. On a recent trip to Washington, he bought five copies of technical studies on the cleaning and x-raying of various paintings. This is part of his continuing attempt to learn as much as he can about how painting was once done, something not too well-known today. That accounts for much of his reading. Sometimes he will read a classic, or a murder mystery. He is especially attracted to British cross-word puzzles. He finds disjointed words in strange patterns more relaxing than poetry.

He says he used to read more When he was twenty-two, he painted one of his best known paintings and entitled it The Feast of Pure Reason. The title comes from Joyce's Ulysses, whereupon momentarily regaining consciousness, Stephen takes in his surroundings of utter degradation and

mutters: "This feast of pure reason."[14] Ulysses was an experience for Levine. It seemed to be the advance guard of literature at that time--the cubism of its day. Concerning his reading habits, Levine points out: "Well perhaps I give the impression of myself about not reading, that I'm anti-intellectual about the written word . . . I wouldn't want to give the impression that I'm a burly oil painter who swigs beer and is a roisterer. I'm more rabbinical than that myself."

Levine is more "rabbinical" in one way and something of a "drop out" in another way. Levine's brand of rabbinism grew from his roots in an Irish Boston, in a period when many Jews were given to assimilationism. Two of Levine's brothers married Catholic girls; the youngest, the rebel, is the only one of the Levine brothers to marry a Jewish girl. It is weird because Levine was given up for lost because of his radical ideas and his bohemian style. He was the one given up for lost, but he is the one who married a Jewish girl and to whom being Jewish is important.

Levine is traditional not in a Jewish sense, but in an art sense. In painting he is not a modernist nor an academician; as he says, "I by God, am orthodox. I only want the real word. With me it's true, I mean it's not the book of Daniel and it's not Deuteronomy, it's Rembrandt or it's Titian." Rembrandt and Titian and what their art represents by its content and its form are for Levine the

sources of truth in art and, in a particular sense, in life. Levine lives in the world of the art masters, the orthodoxy of art is what he hopes to achieve in his work. One might say it is his life's task. In this respect Levine is a drop out from the mainstream of art today. Levine is disturbed about the current content of art. His involvement with the past forms of art is tied to what he considers to be the kind of work he does best. It is not that he seeks attention. He sees himself as marching in step when everyone else is marching out of step.

It is part of a drop out's ideology to see dropping out as really being in step. But that is where the dropping out ends for Levine. Levine is his own person, part of an individual solar system in the universe of art. As he sees it, the choice was to paint in the orthodox European manner or to be hail-fellow-well-met with all the gangs of abstract painters in the 1950's and to booze with them in their bars and talk nonsense about some metaphysics which never existed on this earth and to commit the gravest error of all: to know as little as possible about painting and its history. That sense in which Levine is a drop out from the community of his peers--his fellow painters.

By not participating in the world of abstract art, Levine finds himself in a small pocket of the art community

of his time. He is not an abstract artist and his art is not a public art; it is not shared by a large audience; it has little mass circulation. It would seem that Levine does not really have any interest in reaching the vast public. His art is not on mass public display because he paints relatively few paintings, preferring to do fewer major works. Levine's manner of working increases the cost of his paintings which further removes them from the larger public eye. Levine remembers when Orozco and Siqueiros were painting great frescos commissioned by the Mexican government and the peasants would come down from the hills to look at them: they were public matter. But that does not interest Levine; he has come close to being an artist in the public eye only with the reproduction of some of his works in color by Time magazine. Levine is pleased with the public viewing of his pictures, but he appears willing to accept the limits of his craft. Levine does what is in his mind, and that is what he cares about most. He concedes, "my sermons are not directed to the congregation."

Even if Levine has not reached the public in a mass way, he has captured the eye of the critics. He has been categorized with artists like Hyman Bloom, Ben Shahn, Rico Lebrun and others who tend to be less abstract. He has an interesting understanding of critics: "You know what's kind of funny? The career of a critic has a lot to do with making categories. And the career of an artist

seems to have a lot to do with staying out of them, and this is the contention between us." There is a tension between artists and critics, but Levine does not seem concerned with what critics say; he does not paint for them. He does not need to paint for critics, or for anybody. He paints what he wants and can be independant because he is so successful at his craft.

Once when President Eisenhower denounced the generals in Levine's painting Welcome Home as a lampoon, and Levine responded: "When you get denounced by the President of the United States, you've hit the top."[15] Levine admits success and sees it as a mixed blessing. When he was younger, he received an extended press, if not a good press. Yet it did not enhance his ability to make a living. Now he is finally free to paint and live off his income from painting. "I'm not a rich man, but I'm damn well not a poor one." That is the good part of his success. The bad part is that his work is now so expensive that it is a good investment. Success means not worrying about the bills and having to put up with seeing one's art become an investment.

When asked about his success, he shrugged: "After all these years I find myself completely out of style." However, it is vital to know that Levine has become the person he wanted to be. "I think I am what I meant to be; I think I do what I meant to do."

It is not possible to separate Jack Levine from his paintings. They spring from deep within him. To try to understand Levine without a discussion of his paintings would be like looking at a rainbow in black and white: there would be no point. There is almost a symbiotic relationship between Levine and his work. When he talks about art, or when he talks about one of his paintings, his tone changes, his enthusiasm grows, he becomes less shy and borders on prolixity. Levine's paintings are drawn from his life experience as it is refracted through the labyrinths of his mind.

Levine draws his characters, sometimes from nowhere, sometimes from people he has experienced. In his painting The Trial, the face of the courtroom reporter is that of an old school teacher from his earlier days as a student. Since Levine works without models, when he creates a face, sometimes the face will remind him of a person he has known. Levine worked on The Trial for two years, in 1953 and 1954, so when the face of his former high school teacher, "Father" Tom McCabe turned up as the stenographer, it was based on a twenty year-old memory. The placement of the desk was problematic and inadvertently resembles Levine's memories of a picture he had once seen of an old synagogue in Newport, Rhode Island.[16] When he was painting the Gangster Funeral, he tried to remember specific character actors from the gangster movies of the 1930's. Sometimes,

then he takes faces from the past and casts them in new roles. Working without models affords Levine the opportunity to watch people he recognizes play out parts that they would not necessarily envision for themselves.

Levine has painted religious paintings, here one must understand religious in a broad sense. He came to this area of painting from a variety of motives. It is difficult for Levine to pin down the precise course of events which led him to this area of painting. His interest as a painter has been with the European tradition from the time he first systematically studied the history of art with Zimmerman at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts.[17] Levine points out that the bulk of European painting is religious. Levine gained much of his religion from the art and some from his upbringing. At the time he moved into the area of Hebraica, he was as far from religion as he could have been; he was involved with leftist politics, trade unionism, "and very very much involved with Marx." According to Levine, being involved in leftist thought and activities is probably the best escape from Judaism yet devised, and that was his situation as he began to paint Jewish themes. At this same period of his life he had become interested in early Flemish painting and Persian miniatures. Though he cannot explain exactly how, he feels that a reverence for artifacts, the visual documents left by man, like the Dead Sea

PLATE 2. King David 1941

8 x 10"

Scrolls, even though Levine cannot understand them, are perhaps related in some way to his entry into religious paintings. Then too, there was the death of his father in 1939. Levine failed to mention the rise of Hitler during those years; perhaps that too was a factor. None of these factors constitute a pure motivating force for Levine's entry into the area of religious painting.

The death of Levine's father had much to do with his painting of Solomon. His father's Hebrew name was Solomon. Levine feels that in his own mind he did his first religious painting as a kind of memorial to his father.

He also painted a David. David is holding a harp and has red paint on his hands. When asked about the red paint, Levine is at a loss to explain exactly why the red is there at all. "I could say the red is a spill-over from my own left-wing involvements." Or it could be that at the time, in his more violent days, he had a proclivity for red. Levine does not think that the red reflects the rabbinic understanding of David as being a man of the sword as well as a man of the arts although it might. When Levine painted David, he painted the David he remembered from his youth, when he was more heavily involved in Judaism, and the David he knew from Rembrandt, Rubens and Michelangelo.

Levine's Adam and Eve is truly his own conception of

the pair. He discusses its elements as honestly as he can. So many levels go into the creation of a work that takes place over the course of many months that Levine himself is not able to explain all of them. There are overtones of El Greco in the elongated hands and feet. There are elements of the late Gothic art of Hugo Van der Goes. There are many quotations from the past in this particular work as in all of Levine's paintings, because he does a lot of imitation of the earlier European masters. There may be something reminiscent of a past painting in the turn of the hand, or in the relation of light and shadow, the color, the degree of black. All of these take shape over the period of time he works on a painting.

Curiously Levine's Adam and Eve shows no pubic hair, and Levine is not sure how to understand that aspect of the painting. It may be due to an inhibition, a Puritanism of some sort, on his part. Adam's hand covers his genitalia. Levine notes that in the last ten years or so there has been an obsession with male genitalia, but that he has no great involvement with them and does not want them in his work. Eve has no pubic hair either; that however, gives her a certain quality not too far removed from a sculpture: there is no pubic hair on statues of Aphrodite. By contrast he once did a Cain and Able where Cain has a thicket of pubic hair so as to obscure the genitilia.

PLATE 3. Adam and Eve 1959

48 x 42"

In the Adam and Eve the use of Hebrew is extraneous in terms of identifying the pair. Whenever there is a nude man and woman standing by a tree holding a piece of fruit, it is hardly necessary to identify them by name on the painting. The Hebrew tends to bear out the existence of many quotations. According to Levine, Flemish painting arose out of manuscript illuminations. Levine sees the word as having been incorporated because it gives a decorative, mysterious, manuscript flavor. Levine has admired many paintings with Persian, Coptic script across them; he has admired Japanese prints with cartouche. The Hebrew letters in the Adam and Eve, add a very strange and mysterious quality, expecially for a Protestant from Kansas: Levine can dazzle those who do not know Hebrew with its strange letters. He can show his calligraphic dexterity. The letters also provide a flat surface and have to do with depth control; the degree of recession and advance is suddenly broken with the letters. The use of Hebrew adds a nice tang. In addition and importantly the Hebrew shows what Levine wants known, that he has a long tradition behind him. Why should he not show that he has had "the dubious favor of being born Jewish"? He is not an American regionalist. He does not want to paint as though painting began only five years ago. There is history and time in Levine's Adam and Eve. It makes this work interesting as well as his other works.

Jack Levine just recently turned sixty. There is always more to say when discussing an artist and his work. There are all of the details, the individual brush strokes in the life of an artist and the myriad of canvasses--the studies and the major works. When one begins a study of Levine, the venerable adage, a picture is worth a thousand words, pales. Levine and his pictures are worth many thousands of words. Levine is not easily summed up as a man nor as an artist. Recently he was the subject of a tribute, Jack Levine: Social Realist, by Alfred Werner. In part Werner tried to capture Levine: he is in love with humanity; he is a fighter, though he fights with poetry rather than prose. "We are pleased to pay a tribute to the work of this quiet, industrious and most sensitive man, who is endowed with a spontaneous brush, an unerring color sense, and the ability to envelop the subject in a persuasively flickering glow of light that absorbs all, that provided a never ceasing movement."[18] Clearly Werner has been touched by Levine.

That is what Levine can do to those who come into contact with his work and into contact with him. For Levine as the subject may be said to possess a persuasive flickering glow of light that absorbs all who come into contact with that very special subject. Levine is not a beacon, so much as a flickering light; he is too enigmatic

to be a single beam of light. Jack Levine said, in support of his constant practice of filling his canvasses with many comments, that he does not find one history in the history of art where there is the slightest conflict between artists having a comment about life and a grasp of aesthetics. There is not one history to Levine and there is tension, perhaps, but no conflict. There is the Levine who was born to poor immigrant parents. There is the deeply concerned Jewish Levine, the Levine who can fill a canvas with real Jewish pathos. This is the Levine who is an American of the Eastern Seaboard looking east and back to the time and place of his Jewish roots. Then, at the same time there is the humanist, the artist, the American Jew of the Eastern Seaboard looking east to Rembrandt, Rubens, Titian, Daumier, Goya, to all the masters of European painting. This is Jack Levine, the synthesis of the particular and the universal: the painting Jew and the humanist.

Levine is small, slight, gentle, soft-spoken--a mumbler even. His work is large in scale, bold, hard hitting and expressive of a loud clear message. It is as though there is no relationship between Levine and his paintings. In appearance Jack Levine is the antithesis of his work.

Levine claims that he has no capacity for leadership.

Yet by the nature of his work, he has led many a protacted struggle. He struggles to keep alive the craft once known in European painting. He is biting, sometimes sardonic, but always commenting on the society he lives in and wants changed in favor of the little guy, the real person. He is an artist with a message in an age of art without messages, and he is successful in sharing his message. He says of art that it is the antithesis of minimal. Levine's art is the antithesis of minimal. Yet Levine is a modest man, but one ought not be deceived because he too is the antithesis of minimal.

If Jack Levine appears as a bundle of contradictions, then he has succeeded in showing exactly who he is. Jack Levine is a person who struggles with his identity, with his work, with his world.

RUTH WEISBERG

Ruth Weisberg was born in Chicago in 1942.[1] The family, her older sister and her parents lived in an apartment in West Rodgers Park, a Jewish section of Chicago. The family history began in Europe and its story is an integral part of Weisberg's identity; so it must be delineated if Weisberg and her life and her work are to be set in a proper light.

Ruth Weisberg's paternal family came to the United States from White Russia at the turn of the century. The exact origin of the paternal side of the family is lost in the blur of the past. What is known is that they were Orthodox Jews who had worked in the woods of White Russia and were innkeepers. In Russia, Weisberg's paternal grandmother had a pushcart, which was indicative of their economic level, a subsistence level. When her paternal grandparents arrived in the United States, her grandfather wanted to go as far west as his money would take the family, reasoning that his chances of success were better if he moved as far away as he could from the population centers of the East Coast. The family ended up in Chicago where Ruth Weisberg's father, his parent's only child, was born in 1905.

Weisberg's maternal grandparents were quite different from her paternal grandparents; they "have a very different background." Weisberg was closer to the maternal side of

her family because, as she explains, her father, in marrying her mother, had rejected many of the values with which he was raised. His parents were Orthodox Jews, but his wife's family was very political and anti-clerical.

Weisberg's maternal grandmother came from a shtetl just outside of Lodz in Poland. She was one of a family of thirteen girls and one boy. Her family had been in the dry goods business and was one of the wealthier families in the shtetl. According to the family stories, all thirteen girls had been "beauties." Weisberg's maternal grandfather had wooed himself a wife, and they ran away to get married; it was a romance, which Weisberg explains as being unusual in those days. He was from a long line of rabbis and was supposed to pursue the rabbinate. However, instead, he studied engineering and ended up teaching engineering at the University of Berlin. In Berlin, about 1903 or 1904, there was a mini-wave of anti-Semitism--there were to be no Jewish faculty members at the University of Berlin. He was fired.

At that same time there was a world-wide call for engineers to go to San Francisco, because of the earthquake. Leaving his wife behind, Weisberg's maternal grandfather headed for San Francisco. He had enough money to avoid coming to the United States by steerage (which had not been true of the other side of the Weisberg family and

which was somewhat of a bone of contention). He never made it to San Francisco; he worked on engineering projects in Philadelphia and finally in Chicago. Early on, he sent for his family. Ruth Weisberg's mother was born in Philadelphia in 1911.

However, the story of Weisberg's maternal grandparents does not end with the birth of Weisberg's mother. It is a story that Weisberg tells with pride and a sense of fascination. Her maternal grandparents were very Zionistic, devoted to a brand of Marxist-Zionism. At some point, after 1911 and probably after World War I, the dates are not clear, the family, along with about twenty-five other families, moved to Utah to start a Zionist commune. Utah was chosen because they thought it would be like Palestine; there they tried to learn to farm. The project lasted for about three years and was a failure. The group encountered prejudice and hostility, finally the Mormons cut off their water. To this day, Weisberg's mother "hates the Mormons"; she has unpleasant memories of eating pigeons. There was no water--only failure. So, the family moved back to Chicago, where Weisberg's maternal grandfather went to work for a large firm where he was involved with structural steel work. Soon he discovered that he would not be given a promotion because he was Jewish.

Weisberg related that her maternal grandfather was always a source of family pride because "he was one of the

first Jewish engineers in the whole world." Finding that he could not advance in the United States because he was a Jew, and being at the same time a radical, he decided to go to the Soviet Union to work for the Bolsheviks. "He in some sense deserted my grandmother, but it was all for a good cause, right?" In the Soviet Union he helped found Biro-Bidjan, an experimental Jewish national district in Siberia. Then, in the early 1930's, he returned to the United States to lecture and raise money for Biro-Bidjan; he came back to the United States with the intention of going back to the Soviet Union, but he was dying of cancer and never made it back to the Soviet Union.

Weisberg's maternal grandmother was not a typical Jewish woman in her day, or even in any day. She was a "curious personality." She adored her husband and at the same time felt some resentment because she had been deserted. She had been left with very little money and five children. She managed to make ends meet. Her husband was a well-respected member of the community and there were hundreds of people at his funeral.

Weisberg's mother did not get along with her mother. She adored her father. Later, however, she realized that her mother's traits were not of her own doing. Ruth Weisberg never knew either of her grandfathers, but she remembers her maternal grandmother with clarity, and sees her as an

important influence. She has vivid memories of her grandmother's visits. She was a feisty, mischievious woman who would always be involved in altercations. She was involved in all sorts of things: she would purposely fall off a streetcar in order to sue the company; she was a campaigner and would propogandize her granddaughter, be it against smoking, or for socialism. Weisberg remembers, when she was in her early adolescence, her grandmother brought over some pamphlets on syphilis which "frightened me to death." In her second year of high school, Weisberg had a boyfriend who was from an Orthodox family. Weisberg's grandmother was opposed to organized religion, especially Orthodox Judaism. One day they were all at the Weisberg home, and Weisberg's grandmother did not have carefare. So, Weisberg's steady offered her the carefare: "And she looked at him and in this thick yiddish accent, she said, 'I wouldn't take your kosher money.'" She may have been a difficult woman, but her granddaughter remembers her with a lot of love.

There were other anecdotes of a different character which Weisberg recounts. Her grandmother spoke of the life and world she knew as a child in the shetl just outside of Lodz. She told her granddaughter about the dry goods store her family ran, and what a warm and wonderful place it was for a child to play in. She told about the dancing and the songs. She also told about the oppression and prejudice,

she was too politically aware not to share the rough side with her granddaughter. Weisberg's grandmother shared an understanding of the shtetl world that was not just a fiddler on the roof fairyland.

Jewishness in the Weisberg family was not limited to the perspective of a grandmother alone. Weisberg was always aware that she was Jewish, even though her family did not belong to a temple. Her family tended to look down a little at Reform Judaism because it was not Jewish enough--it felt too Protestant. The whole idea of an organ and stained glass windows just did not seem comfortable. On the other hand, Orthodox Judaism was too filled with rules and superstitions--it was after all what they had been rebelling against. If they were going to be anything, or belong to any temple, Conservative Judaism would have been more comfortable.

Weisberg's parents were politically oriented people. "I think they started out as Socialists . . ." Their lifestyle and that of their friends, had a kind of bohemian flavor. Ir the eyes of their daughter, to be a grown-up was to be intellectual and a little bit on the wild side. As an exmaple, Weisberg explains that every New Year's Eve, her father would do an adagio dance with one of her parent's friends. At their parties they did skits and acted out a lot of things. They had costume parties. But there was the

intellectual side as well. Weisberg's mother had a book club, a group of friends would come together, social workers, even some lawyers--all Jewish--and they would review books. Weisberg's parents circulated among some of the artists of Chicago. The family would go to visit these artists in their studios. Weisberg grew up accustomed to being around artists, many of whom were Jewish and had been associated with the WPA.

Weisberg describes her parents and the difference in their personalities. Weisberg's mother was a good story-teller, her two daughters anxiously awaited the stories their mother would tell them about the parties they had attended. "My mother was a talker, and an organizer, and a doer, and a mover. She became president of every organization she joined." Weisberg's mother has been an active member of ORT for years and recently, at a fund raising for Israel Bonds, approximately $160,000 was raised in her honor. The example she set was one of taking a lot of responsibility, of being a leader in any activity in which she participated.

Weisberg's parents have different personalities, her father is quieter, less changeable than her mother; her mother was a joke-teller, her father was not a clown. He was always quiet and gentle; his physical presence was always important--it added a stability to Weisberg's life.

He was more of a shoulder-shrugger than his wife, but he possessed strongly-held opinions. He worked in the rather exotic world of restaurateurs, because, as an architect, he was involved in restaurant designing. His world was one that he would have wanted to share with a son, only there were no sons, so he shared his rather masculine world with his daughter: "I was used to going down to meet the sheet metal man and the carpenters . . . there was this whole masculine world that intrigued me and was very fascinating." Weisberg's experiences with her father allowed her to develop a feeling of comfort when she is in shops and around working men.

If the family was to go into a restaurant which her father had designed, they would be able to go into the kitchen and they would receive special dishes. It was exciting to do things with the family. Her parents knew many people; they were Chicagoans. Growing up in that ambience of feeling that there were always interesting things to do and fascinating people to meet made Chicago a good place. "Chicago was my oyster, my walnut."

Though Weisberg's parents had, at least at one time, strong socialist leanings, they had in mind a rather bourgeois model of what they wanted their daughter to become. Their model demonstrates not so much of a dichotomy in their thought, but a change that they have made consistently as

they matured and moved from being socialists to Democrats, as they became more bourgeois in their life style and outlook. They had a complex model ideal in mind for their daughter, a model that revealed itself only over the years. What Weisberg found confusing was that they somehow wanted her to do everything. Weisberg had a talent for art, but in addition to her art lessons, she also took dance and clarinet lessons. She never wanted to quit art, but she did give up dance and clarinet; her parents talked the matter over with their daughter and acquiesced. Weisberg was raised with the idea that because she was a special person, she was going to do something special with her life. On the other hand, there was also the hope that their daughter would grow up. get married and have children. She was to be an everything kind of person which made Weisberg a deeply engrained need-achiever. The model her parents had in mind was partly due to their vision of what a person, in the egalitarian sense, ought to be and what a son could have become. Ruth Weisberg was supposed to become a female, Jewish Leonardo da Vinci.

The model was not only true for their younger daughter, but for their older daughter as well. Weisberg has a sister four years her senior. There is a distinct difference in the personalities of the two sisters, according to the younger sister. The reason for the difference can partly

be explained with a bit of background. Their father, being an only child, desired to have a large family. The first infant born died of pneumonia after living only three months. Two years later their oldest daughter was born and then only after a miscarriage. Fearing that they might lose another child, Weisberg's parents were more protective of their child than would be normally true of a first child; she was dressed warmly and was overprotected. Four years later when Ruth Weisberg was born, her parents had relaxed, which is normal in the raising of a second child. There were two models in the Weisberg family, a quiet father and a more talkative mother. The older daughter was more in the mold of her father, tending to create her own world. Ruth, the younger daughter, competed with her mother and was more loquacious than her sister. "Occasionally I retreated, but mostly I tried to outtalk her, or I tried to meet her on her own terms. And I'm very close to my mother and I'm identified with my mother." People still talk to her about what an exuberant child she was; she laughed and did funny things, but not wild things.

Weisberg saw her older sister's quietness as a sign of maturity, the maturity of an older sister. She looked up to her older sister and for years put her on a pedestal, hoping to grow up just like her. Weisberg's tastes were influenced by those of her older sister; the books she read

and the poets and pictures she enjoyed were partly due to her sister's tastes. There was one special summer, when they were in California together, while their parents were celebrating their twenty-fifth wedding anniversary in Europe. The sisters were eighteen and fourteen years old. The older sister attended classes at UCLA. During that summer they talked and Weisberg discovered her older sister's dreams and hopes for the future. Among other things her older sister hoped to go off to Europe. The reality was different and Ruth Weisberg ended up fulfilling some of her sister's dreams. Her sister entered the University of Michigan that next fall and met her future husband, a future doctor. That is not to say that she gave up all of her aspirations and became just a doctor's wife. On the contrary, the Weisberg daughters were not raised to be housewives, their goals were broader. Weisberg's sister followed her father, whose personality she in some ways shared, and became an architect. Though she is now the mother of three children, she still manages to do free-lance work designing homes. In a way, the older sister fulfilled part of each aspect of her parent's model ideal--she became an architect and she is married to a doctor.

Ruth Weisberg grew up in West Rodgers Park. The street they lived on consisted of apartment buildings which were built before the stock market crash of 1929. After the

crash, building was stopped, which left numerous empty lots which were used as playgrounds by the young people in the neighborhood, since the nearest playground was over a mile away. The Weisberg family apartment was a beautiful place. The living room was paneled in honey-colored Philippine mahogany, which Weisberg noted has aged beautifully. There were book shelves on two sides and a large bay of windows. The walls were filled with art "and it was always originals " There were some sculpture and ceramic as well. Weisberg's parents were collectors and today their walls hold the works of their daughter, in addition to what has been collected over the years. With the passage of time the home has become more and more bourgeois with more art and more appliances added. They are constantly changing things around, they even put a stained glass window in the dining room. It remains, however, a beautiful and aesthetic place.

In the apartment each daughter had her own room. Weisberg's room was blue and white checked, but since the household was democratic, when she was seven or eight years old, she was allowed to pick all the material and have her room redecorated. The young Weisberg picked out a contemporary turquoise and brown print, presumably wallpaper, with brown for the bed. Looking back Weisberg muses over the colors she chose feeling that they were rather "decoratorish."

PLATE 4. Wendy in the Dunes 1968

The home in West Rodgers Park was not the only home. There was a home at the Indiana Dunes; both homes were very important, but the Dunes, "other than maybe my immediate family . . . was the most formative influence [in my early life]." The Dunes was founded by a group of socialists, who originally shared summer cabins, as communes. These cabins were more like shacks, without electricity and without indoor plumbing. The Dunes attracted a crowd which was not limited to the intimately close friends of any one family. There were people from the University of Chicago, from the Chicago Symphony, many teachers. It was not an entirely Jewish crowd, although it was mostly Jewish. The group was not homogeneous but what they had in common was a desire for a sort of bohemian setting and life-style.

For Weisberg, the Dunes represented both an escape from the city and a place to grow at the same time. The life at the Dunes was simple and different from the normal city life. It was more relaxed. Weisberg explained that if you were not home for lunch, you ate where you were and did not have to call your mother--that was impossible because there were no telephones. There was swimming and hiking. It was a carefree place where a young person could go of to think and confront the crises of growing up. Weisberg would go off by herself and, as she put it, think about all of the things one thinks about: eternity, death and the stars. It

was a place to sketch and read poetry. The Dunes became a place to explore, both territorially and internally. It is a piece of earth with which Weisberg feels totally identified. When Weisberg was sixteen years old, the steel company that owned the land took up its leases and the Dunes was lost. Weisberg mourned its loss as one would mourn the loss of a close friend. To this day she still feels a longing for the Dunes, for happy summers; the Dunes "was paradise, it was heaven on earth."

With summer came another experience, the Chicago Hebrew Institute camp. As a child, Weisberg's mother had attended the same camp. Camp CHI was not the wealthy children's camp. Weisberg describes the wealthy children's camp as having eight week sessions and horses. By contrast Camp CHI had only three week sessions, but "was a pretty fantastic place." The children in the camp came not only from West Rodgers Park, they were also drawn from the West Side and the South Side and there were poor children sent by the Jewish agencies. The program tended toward emphasizing socialist Jewish ideas and was not at its best in the outdoor and arts and crafts programs. A member of the kitchen staff was later to become one of the founders of Students for a Democratic Society. The staff was involved with Negro spiritual music and the early folk music, which fit into the value system

of the camp. Camp CHI was the place where Weisberg learned Jewish dances and Jewish songs, there was no other opportunity, since her family did not belong to a temple. Camp was where Weisberg had some of the experiences she might otherwise have had in a religious school. Her temple experiences were limited to the times she went with friends. Even on the Jewish holidays, she went to school. From camp, during the summers she was twelve, thirteen and fourteen years old, she went to the Dunes. Summers were a wonderful time.

Just as there were two homes, one a tar paper shack in the country and the other a beautifully appointed apartment in the city, there was a kind of double message given at home. At the dinner table an effort was made to talk about ideas. Values were transmitted. Apparently, two sets of values, but really the values and struggles of liberals who had once been more radical. Weisberg's parents talked about Black people being good people. Brotherhood was a value for the two girls to learn and to strive for in their lives. Then, there was the other side. Weisberg's father had a story about selling Black people five-cent cigars for a dollar, which was all right, so long as you were not the person paying a dollar for a five-cent cigar. Weisberg's mother made a concerted effort to be with the cleaning women, to sit with them and eat with them, to show that they were not second class people. But, the cleaning woman

was still a cleaning woman. The Black people the family knew were cleaning women. There was a struggle between the ideal of brotherhood and the reality of having a cleaning woman. It was the tension between a socialistic egaliterian ideal and a bourgeois capitalist reality. The bourgeois tendency to be concerned with furs and jewelry angered Weisberg when she was younger. "There was kind of a double message that material things were not important and then later, that you should not be a fool about money."

Interestingly, the tension or conflict between an equalitarian ideal and the less equalitarian reality is mirrored in part today in Weisberg's position as Acting Associate Dean of the Department of Fine Arts at the University of Southern California. As an administrator, she must deal with other administrators and she has contacts with a support group of bourgeois society women. On the other hand, her classroom situation is in a dilapidated old World War II building and her life-style at home is far less bourgeois. Today Weisberg can exist comfortably and work productively whether she is talking to Black people on the street or society people amid opulence. Her current life is, in this one way, a reflection of the value system with which she was raised.

As a child, Weisberg was not "babied," either in the area of responsibility or intellectually. Weisberg's mother

was an active person with many meetings to attend, which left Weisberg in a position to grow up quickly by taking on a lot of personal responsibilities at an early age. She was allowed to stay home without a baby sitter. When she was eight years old, she was permitted to go into downtown Chicago by herself. Weisberg's parents respected their daughter and did not overprotect her intellectually, "in fact, if anything they erred on the other side." Weisberg was a precocious young girl, she was independent and read books which were far too advanced for her age. When she was nine or ten years old she was already reading D.H. Lawrence. "I wanted to read all those sexy books." She was always a voracious reader. In high school she would read in bed at night; she read James Joyce, Gide, Dostoevsky, and others. Today, looking back, Weisberg is not sure what she made of all that she read at such an early age. Nonetheless, it is clear that Weisberg grew up quickly, not only in terms of the independence she earned, or by what she read, but physically as well: Weisberg was almost her present height when she was eleven years old, and she became a woman before most of her friends.

School formed the backdrop of Weisberg's formative years. High scholastic achievement was emphasized in the home and in the school. The grammar school Weisberg attended was almost ninety-percent Jewish. Weisberg started school

in 1947 at the age of five. A particular grammar school experience stands out in Weisberg's mind. It was Miss Lawson's fourth grade class. As it turned out, Weisberg had Miss Lawson as a teacher for two and one half years, even though that was illegal in Chicago. Miss Lawson was a spinster lady with rimless glasses, tight little gray curls in her hair: an "uptight lady." Miss Lawson is remembered by her former pupil as being a very Protestant woman, Protestant in the pejorative, narrow sense. Miss Lawson was from the old school of thought; according to Weisberg, her favorite little girls all wore ragged, fluffy pinafores and were sweet little things. The chairs in the classroom were bolted down and the students were required to sit still and raise their hands, even to go to the toilet. Weisberg was a big girl, already independant in many ways, and she could not sit still. She even made up a song, "I hate Lawson in the springtime, I hate Lawson." Weisberg did not do well in Miss Lawson's class. Then, a whole group of her friends were skipped and she was not. Weisberg's mother was not happy about seeing her daughter passed over and so the school psychologist was called in to test Weisberg; she tested high with a very high IQ. So, it was decided to put her in another class provisionally. In the end Weisberg was skipped, but the experience was not an easy one.

The high school Weisberg attended, Nicholas Senn High

School, was about eighty percent Jewish, which Weisberg later came to understand as being good. It was good because she could understand American Judaism in an urban setting. The competition in high school still sends a chill down Weisberg's spine. High school was a mix of values. On the one hand, it was important to be smart, intellectual and articulate, and on the other, a lot of social climbing and back-biting went on. Weisberg carried some of the scars for a long time. She has not experienced such intense competition since leaving high school.

In the end, high school was a successful experience for Weisberg, academically and socially. She did well in the difficult classes like chemistry and ended up with mixed grades, grades that placed her about one-hundredth in a class of about five hundred. Weisberg did not make the National Honor Society, as did her older sister, nor was she a National Merit Scholarship winner. There was a special class to prep the brightest students for the exam and Weisberg did not make that class. She took the exam and made it to the semi-finals with a 99.8. In almost any other state she would have been a scholarship winner, but there were so many unusually bright students that she was only a semi-finalist. Weisberg was in some sense alienated in high school and her energies were not all devoted to her academic life. Weisberg's parents were disappointed when

she did not sit on the stage at graduation with the rest of the brightest students. Nonetheless, Weisberg's achievements must not be judged in the shadow of parental expectations, nor should it be seen in the light of her school standing. She did well enough to get into the University of Michigan. Also she managed to graduate a year ahead of herself by going to summer school twice. Weisberg had graduated high school at age sixteen.

In addition to academic pressures from home and school, there were social pressures which played upon Weisberg. There was peer pressure to be popular. Weisberg's early social life should be characterized as precocious. The first time Weisberg was called by a boy to go to the movies was when she was in the fifth grade. But there was a period that followed when all of the girls hated the boys. By the eighth grade, people were coupled off and there was some dating. Weisberg had a boyfriend at that time. "He was a real quiet, nice little boy, except he was tall, which was one of the main things." The relationship was terminated because the boy's older brother advised against him entering high school encumbered with a girlfriend, so he dropped Weisberg.

Weisberg was without a boyfriend for her first semester of high school which meant that she could not attend the noontime dances. There was a change that took place between

grammar school and high school. In grammar school Weisberg had been a leader and she seems to have enjoyed her popularity. There was a marked change in her popular status between eighth and ninth grade. Weisberg failed to get into one of the social sororities. Though her sister had advised her that the social sororities were not important, Weisberg tried to get into one and was met with failure. Weisberg wanted to do everything. In her last two years the social life picked up and there were other involvements. In her senior year Weisberg was editor of the high school yearbook, active on the newspaper and a participant in other extra-curricular activities. By her senior year, Weisberg and her friends were becoming beatniks. They read the beat poetry, listened to jazz and became "sophisticated." The girls wore black stockings, black skirts, black sweaters and white lipstick.

From the time Weisberg was six years old, she attended classes at the Art Institute of Chicago--a world apart from school and home, with which she strongly identified. The classes contained some serious students who came back year after year and there were students from all over town, Black students, Catholics, a real cross-section of the community. She would go downtown every Saturday morning with her portfolio under her arm. The instruction at the Institute was on a very high level, the quality of instruction

became apparent when Weisberg got to college. In addition to the classes offered, the Institute was a marvelous museum. When Weisberg was in high school, she would go downtown early with her father and wander around the Institute for hours. She would see every exhibit thirteen or fourteen times; in 1953, there was a very important exhibit of Matisse and another of Picasso. She litterally memorized the placement of each picture. She knew the Institute's entire collection and loved it. "So, in becoming familiar with their whole collection, I was really giving myself a whole kind of museum in my head, which I still have. I can still go in and out of the rooms as they were arranged in 1955." The Art Institute was a private world.

Weisberg, unlike many of her friends, wanted to leave West Rodgers Park. She wanted to leave because leaving seems to have represented really doing something special with her life. She left West Rodgers Park and began her odyssey to becoming a somebody special when she moved to Ann Arbor, to the University of Michigan. At Michigan Weisberg roomed with a childhood friend from the Dunes. Weisberg did very well her first year, receiving straight A's. In a sense her mother was vindicated, her success made up for the fact that at her high school graduation she did not sit on the stage. Her mother could say, "Ruthie really was as bright as we've always been saying." Weisberg

enjoyed the academic life at college, both the art classes and the humanities courses, but collegelife was not all that it could have been. Weisberg was not happy.

Though Weisberg missed her mother and wrote often, that was not the main cause of her unhappiness. There were two factors, one had to do with Weisberg's expectations about college life, which were different than the reality she found, the other had to do with her boyfriend at the time. As a high school student Weisberg visited her sister at Michigan and saw college life through the eyes of a high school student; it seemed more romantic than it turned out to be. In terms of men, her sister's living situation was apparently better than the one in which Weisberg found herself. Weisberg did not date much, she was in art classes all day, she lived in an isolated dormitory situation, and she considered herself lavaliered, or at some stage of engagement, to a boyfriend who was at that time in the military service in Germany.

Weisberg met her intended when she was still in high school. He was a Hungarian refugee who had come to the United States when he was eleven. He was older than Weisberg and appeared to be very sophisticated; she fell in love with him and they planned to marry when she turned eighteen. He was stationed in Europe and Weisberg was in Ann Arbor.

Weisberg was determined to do things differently, she planned to go to art school in England. She had applied and been accepted at the Central School of Art. The summer after her first year of college, she was to go to London. Her father wanted her to spend the summer in Florence, which she did. While in Florence, she visited Perugia where there was a school for foreigners. She started to study Italian and loved it. Weisberg never made it to school in London, instead she had decided to study in Italy, where she remained for two and one half years. Within six months of her arrival in Europe, her relationship with her intended had come to an end; he was not as sophisticated, not as worldly, as he had first appeared to be. One year of exposure to college men had changed Weisberg's opinion. She described it as a rather traumatic experience, because he was not what she had thought he was.

Life in Italy was an important experience for Weisberg. She received a degree in painting and printmaking at the end of her two and one half year stay in Italy. Weisberg found Italian social customs quite different from the American pattern of relationships. While in Italy, Weisberg was engaged about five times. She became engaged, not because she was so intent on finding an Italian husband, but rather to be, in the Italian sense, a nice girl, one who is engaged to the man she is seeing. Weisberg was a nice girl who wanted

to date in the American way, but could not, so she became engaged to the men she was seeing. It was exceedingly unusual for Italian girls to befriend an American girl. American girls had much more freedom than Italian girls, which led to feelings of resentment on the part of the Italian girls. Weisberg adjusted to Italian ways, at least in part. Her Italian girlfriends could not go to the movies without their fathers or brothers, that was too much for Weisberg. Somehow she did manage to befriend a number of Italians and still has friends in Italy.

Weisberg never could become fully integrated into Italian life. She was too serious about her work, too serious that is for a woman. Italian women had a more subordinate role in their society than Weisberg's dreams would allow for her. She could not become like an Italian woman and at the same time become the kind of person she strove to be. Ultimately she did not fit into Italian culture. When she finished her degree, it was time to return to the United States. Even though she was ready to leave, it was still not easy to part with Italy. Weisberg had adopted an older woman as a kind of mother substitute. Weisberg explained that she has always had a tendency to be close to older women and to be attracted to older men who were quiet like her father. Weisberg had to leave her printmaking teacher and other people to whom she had grown

very close. Weisberg had applied to the University of Michigan, the Illinois Institute of Technology, and the Art Institute of Chicago and was accepted at all three places. Even though it was not her best offer, Weisberg chose Michigan because she was not prepared to return home to live in Chicago, so close to her parents and her old world.

After two and one half years in Italy, Weisberg returned to Michigan with a degree. She went right into the graduate program in printmaking; however, she had a few undergraduate units to take because they were not sure she was ready for graduate level work in all areas. One of her other classes was in the English department and was on poetry. There was another classmate, who, like Weisberg, became more involved in the class than the other students. Weisberg began to date him and became rapidly involved; within three months they were married. He was a poet, the son of a wealthy Washington, D.C. attorney. The marriage was to end in failure and pain.

The marriage was not good from the beginning. Weisberg, reflecting on that period of her life, now sees that she was fulfilling a need to be loved. She feels that her husband was immature, but she concedes that it is difficult to see her first marriage with detached clarity. The marriage was not working out so they decided to move to Paris in the hope that a change of atmosphere would afford a better opportunity for working out their problems. They

chose Paris specifically because there was a printmaking cooperative, Atelier 17, where Weisberg could work and continue to learn. They lived in Paris for about five or six months. Unbeknownst to Weisberg, her husband had become involved with another woman. Weisberg went to visit her friends in Italy, with the thought that she would return to Paris and find that her marriage was working out or that her marriage was at an end--either way it would be resolved. She returned and her husband admitted that he had been having an affair. He informed Weisberg that he was happy with the other woman and was going to run away with her.

He went away with the other woman and Weisberg went to the hospital. She had lost a lot of weight and been plagued with stomachaches; it was an unhappy experience, filled with pain and defeat. She was committed to the hospital by a psychiatrist and stayed about a week. As she remembers the experience: she was sedated; she neither wanted to die nor to confront reality. One day she woke up and wanted to comb her hair and make a new life. She stayed on in Paris. Her mother was very supportive and came to Europe and they traveled together. Weisberg began to work again at Atelier 17 and was beginning to enjoy her work, when her husband returned. He wanted her back and she knew intellectually that the marriage had ended, but still

there were emotional bonds that would take more time to untangle. She told him that she was going to Atelier 17 and instead she got onto a plane with only her purse and returned to the United States.

Weisberg flew back to Ann Arbor instead of Chicago. Chicago meant more confronting than she was ready to handle. Ann Arbor represented more neutral territory than did Chicago. Weisberg needed to sort out her thoughts and spent about a year in psychotherapy, which helped her understand her relationship. Weisberg notes one of her greatest difficulties during her marriage was accepting failure. She had always been able to make things work; the word failure was not part of her emotional or intellectual vocabulary. She went back to her maiden name and decided that she would never take a married name again. It was not that she would never marry again, rather that she wanted to keep her name and the identity associated with it.

Ann Arbor seems to have struck Weisberg as the breath of fresh air she needed. The year 1964 was a good time to be in Ann Arbor, especially in the summer. It was a place where one could meet people with relative ease. It was like rediscovering Ann Arbor because she had been back there only a short while before her marriage and she, and her former husband, had a limited circle of friends. Weisberg met a student and they double-dated for awhile with another

student named Kelyn Roberts. Weisberg and her friends were supposed to go to Roberts' house to hear some poetry, but there was a difference of opinion between Weisberg's friend and Roberts, so they did not go. The next day Weisberg sought out Roberts in the Library to express her disappointment for having gone elsewhere. Roberts invited Weisberg over to dinner. She went and it was the beginning of a good friendship. The friendship quickly became much more, and Weisberg eventually married Kelyn Roberts.

Roberts had been in Ann Arbor since 1959, and he must have seemed to know everybody. He took Weisberg into his world. He was exactly whom she needed. Still uncertain about herself, she had decided to try to be a happy, healthy person. She could be that person with Roberts because he was sweet and centered, balanced in his life. Their relationship was good from the beginning. Weisberg kept thinking, "my God, how could I have decided to fall in love with such a good person.

In the meantime, while falling in love with Roberts, Weisberg had gone back to school to finish the Master's Degree she had started before her first marriage. Wiesberg realized that she had to go back to Paris to finish learning a printing technique they were teaching at Atelier 17. There was a special viscosity technique of color printing that she felt she needed to learn. So, she returned

to Paris for five or six months. It was difficult for her to be separated from Roberts, yet it was good for her to be on her own. They did not set it up as a kind of trial separation, but that is what it came to be. Weisberg finished her work at Atelier 17, purchased a press and returned to Roberts. After about a year they were married. "But the real commitment was bringing the press back."

The relationship with Roberts worked out to be a beautiful one, but it has not been a fairytale romance. It involved certain adjustments, some of which were difficult. Weisberg's background is urban and Jewish. Roberts' background is rural and Protestant--though his family is atheistic. The Roberts family is very intellectual; they read a lot and they hike. They are "Duners" in their life style and values, which made the adjustments easier. They are people who love to argue for the sheer joy of an exciting intellectual exercise. It was not easy for Weisberg to adjust to Roberts' argumentative style. She, on the other hand, is more affectionate than were the Robertses. They, too, have changed and adjusted to her warm style. After they were married, there was a brief period of separation, after which they went into a modified form of Gestalt therapy together. The therapy was excellent and according to Weisberg, helpful to her as a person as well as in her relationship with Roberts.

In Ann Arbor Weisberg and Roberts led what she calls a very 1960's kind of life. They lived in a large apartment and people were always dropping in and eating with them and spending the night. It was not a commune, but their life was in some ways shared with many friends. They lived out an ethic where one gave everything free and did everything possible for people, which was expected in return. It was a style of life that they lived with comfort and ease. It was difficult to leave Ann Arbor, but Roberts had finished his doctorate and Weisberg's teaching situation at Eastern Michigan University was not what it should have been. They would not allow her to teach advanced drawing and only had come to let her teach printing. They did not let women teach the truly interesting courses. It was time for Weisberg and Roberts to leave. So, they applied many places together. Roberts got an offer at UCLA and Weisberg received a grant from the near Eastern Center at UCLA to work on a book on the shtetl. So, they moved to Los Angeles in the fall of 1969.

Los Angeles is a comfortable place for Weisberg to live the life she has wanted to create for herself. Today she is an artist, teacher and mother. From the time Weisberg was six years old and began to carry her portfolio downtown to the Art Institute every Saturday morning for what would be the next ten years, being an artist has been a primary

PLATE 5. The Children 1970

16 x 12"

identification in her life. Weisberg contends that the role of an artist carries with it a powerful identification in our culture. There are certain expectations which people have about artists that are in reality artificial. As an artist and as a person who has grown up knowing artists, Weisberg understands that artists are many kinds of people--they fill the human spectrum of philosophies and life styles. Weisberg sees the art world of today as a corrupting influence on artists. Success for her cannot be measured in terms of achieving fame within the art world. The mainstream of today's art world, as represented in periodicals like Art Forum, is non-representational art and Weisberg sees herself apart from the mainstream. Her art is representational. So, career success for Weisberg necessarily must be measured inwardly as opposed to being achieved through recognition by the mainstream of the art world. There was a time when Weisberg felt a hostility toward the art world, but now she has grown to realize that it is a waste of energy. Weisberg the woman and Weisberg the artist are mostly the same person, so being happy and satisfied as a person is career success and is being a good artist.

As an artist and a professor, Weisberg teaches art history, printmaking and drawing and understands non-representational art, but she is not moved by a geometric work, even one that is successful by its own standards. She does

not gain any real deep-seated aesthetic pleasure from a non-representational work: "I don't get that little shiver down my spine like looking at Goya." She speculates that her taste in art is partly due to the influence of her parents. Her father felt strong ties to the Renaissance and her mother believed that art should be an expression of human feeling. Weisberg, unlike many other artists, has not cut herself off from the history of art; in fact, "I have done just the opposite." Art history is valued by Weisberg. Goya, Velazquez, Giotto, Collot, Durer, are all important as sources of aesthetic pleasure and as influences on Weisberg's art.

The artist in Weisberg is as much a necessity as it is a choice of career. The artist is how she sees the world and the compelling necessity of putting it down on paper. When Weisberg does not work, she tends to become restless, grouchy and irritable "because all these images are pushing on me and I'm not doing anything with my hands; I'm not touching things, and the real visceral need to be an artist is not being satisfied." As an artist, she feels that she must believe in the worth of her vision. Yet, she must at the same time be critical of her vision. Gaining the balance between belief in the value of her vision and being critical of her vision is an area in which Weisberg feels she has gained a balance.

Weisberg explains her feelings about her own art as follows: "What I love is taking that real visual reality and making it a vision, making it a metaphor or making it transcend and transform itself." She, in her own work, seems to strive for the metaphor. What Weisberg likes in other artists is what she searches for in her own work. Weisberg looks for the poetic, the magical and mystical in art, the attempt to expand the human spirit, the mind. Art devoid of human content is of little value to her.

Weisberg offers some insight as to what she sees as areas of influence in her work. Poetry is important as an influence. Specifically, the aesthetics of poetry, the idea of metaphor and simile, rather than the symbol. Weisberg relies on her visual memory, her childhood as remembered in certain visual equivalents. Weisberg dreams often and remembers her dreams which are an important source for her work. For example, there are some visual images that recur in a variety of ways in her work. Specific faces, including her own, appear cast in different situations. The same animals crop up over an extended period, a particular landscape from her childhood, the single figure on the rocks, all are repeated in different ways. Flying is a recurrent motif in Weisberg's works as seen over a period of time. "I used to have a lot of fantasies about flying: it has a tremendous emotional meaning for me, this being so free that you're

not touching the ground." People who are not grounded, who are floating or flying, convey infinite space. In one way or another, flying or floating has appeared in Weisberg's work since about 1971.

Choosing a subject for Weisberg involves a complex of interests involving a formal problem and content. There is rarely a single reason. She usually chooses those images which are both most urgent and also that have the most compelling formal problems attached to them.

The concomitant of subject matter is the choice of medium. Weisberg's early training was not an exploration of a variety of mediums. It was primarily drawing, aimed at helping the students see better and learn to put down lines which would create a form. When Weisberg was a freshman at Michigan, she walked into the print studio. "I knew that I was going to be a printmaker. I had this tremendous leap inside me, I was just so excited by the smells and how it must feel to touch" the materials. Weisberg is primarily a printmaker because she sees printmaking as having an appealing ethic. She has lectured on the subject of social responsibility as part of the printmaking ethic and how artists have chosen prints for their most personal, political or experimental statements: "like Rembrandt and Goya who both went to prints whenever they wanted to push at the

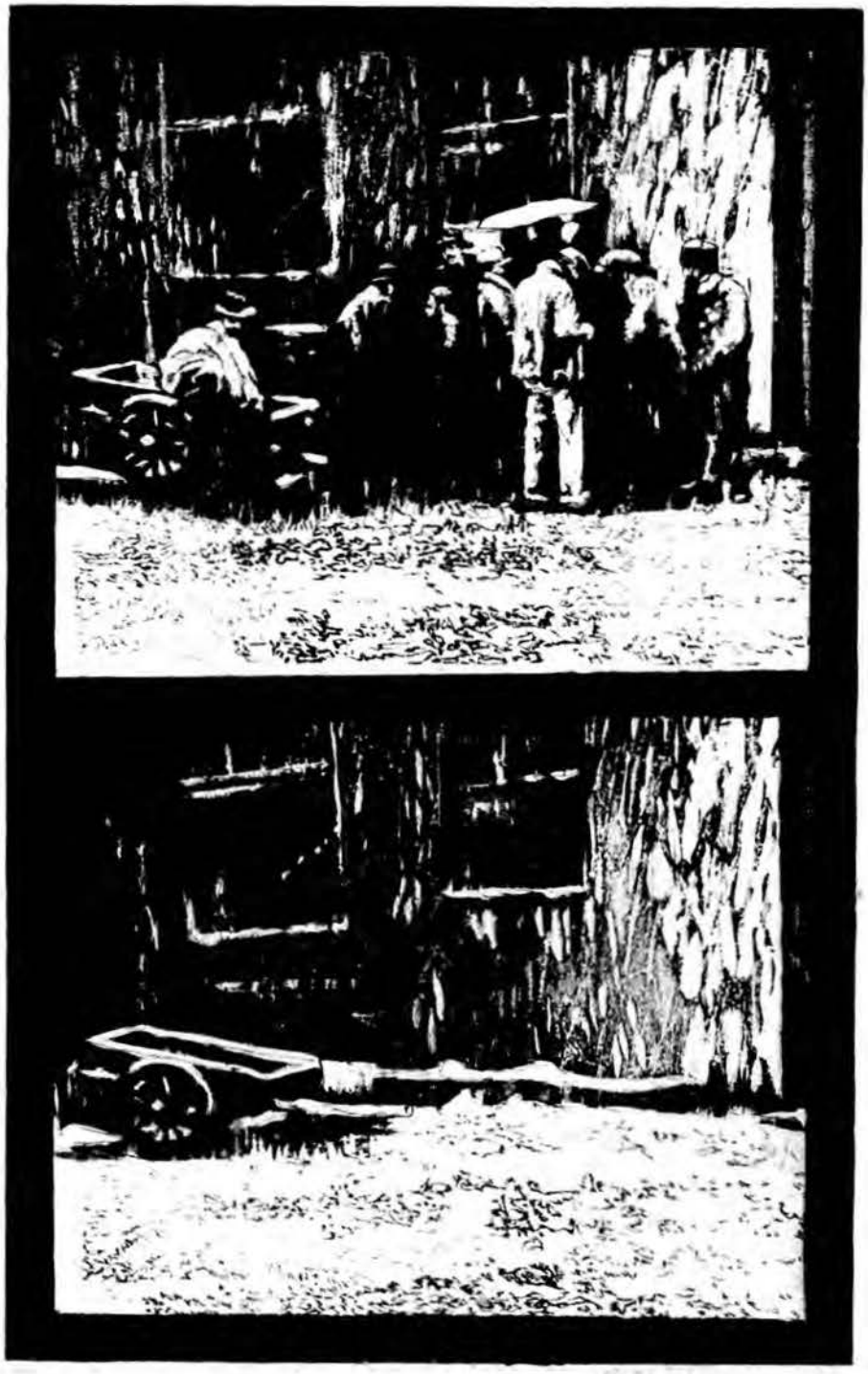

PLATE 6. In The End 1971

9 x 15"

definition of their art." Printmaking provides an interesting history from which Weisberg enjoys working. Weisberg is happy working in graphics, but if she needs to paint or work with clay, she will do a painting or make a sculpture. She will use any medium necessary to convey the vision she has in her mind.

It is not possible to discuss all of Weisberg's works, but to fail to mention them would be to create an artificial dichotomy of separating Weisberg from her work. Weisberg has published two books, Tom O'Bedlam's Song and The Shtetl, A Journey and a Memorial, both under the imprint of the Kelyn Press. Each book was printed in a limited edition of forty books. Tom O'Bedlam's Song contains five prints and The Shtetl, A Journey and a Memorial contains nine prints. The imprint is named for Kelyn Roberts, Weisberg's husband who she felt deserved to be so honored for many reasons.

Tom O'Bedlam's Song was published in 1969. The book began as a suggestion. Once at the Roberts' home it was suggested that Weisberg do a book. Since she has a deep passion for books, the idea took hold. The project took a year to complete. It took time just sorting out the versions of the anonymous sixteenth century Jacobin verse. Then there was the making of the plates which took months. Even after the plates were made, it took about six days to get a good print, about sixty prints had to be made to get forty

PLATE 7. The Three of Us 1974

good copies.[2] The book was a learning experience after which Weisberg realized the need to know as much as she possibly could about bookmaking. She began a self-education program on the history of bookmaking from binding to illustration to typography. Then, she embarked on a second book.

The Shtetl, A Journey and a Memorial began, if the beginnings of such a project can really be traced, with the death of Weisberg's maternal grandmother--Weisberg's link with the shtetl world. The influence of Weisberg's grandmother cannot be measured precisely, yet one knows that it is there amid the darkness of the shtetl as it is revealed in the nine etching suite. Weisberg only notes that the impetus for the book was the discovery of her grandmother's yiskor book and her grandmother's death. Weisberg explained that her grandmother was too much of a realist to talk about her past, only in terms of the dancing and the singing: she depicts the shtetl without the Sabbath,[3] because the Sabbath in the shtetl is gone. Weisberg wanders the streets in the dark gray of memories gleaned from the recollections of her grandmother and from lifeless photographs.

The shtetl book is an interpretation of ther people's memories. The memories are of untouched roots. For Weisberg, the book was a way of coming to terms with her identity. She etched her own experiences into the metal of another, an alien, world of the dead. The book is a memorial to a world

destroyed. In one etching, The Children, Weisberg drew the faces of her sister, her childhood friend, her own face, and the faces of strangers, into the floating ghostly forms of the dead. She explains that she might have been one of the dead, were it not that she was born in Chicago in 1942.[4] The characters are Weisberg's, the setting belonged to her grandmother; the roots are not really graspable, barely within sight, they fade into the cold.

The book is a memorial journey taken by a traveler who cannot go back into time. The final etching, In The End, depicts the end of a world. Though not mentioned in the interview, the scene is taken from a photograph. There are two differences between the etching and the photograph. The etching is a mirror image of the photograph. It is of a world seen, but not seen. The other difference is the bottom part of the etching, which is the photograph with no people. Only the snow. Only death.

By contrast, Weisberg's more recent works reflect the opposite: life. They incorporate some of the same motifs of floating and flying, but they are exuberant with life, the life of a lover and a mother. Weisberg and Roberts wanted to have a child and so they arranged their lives in order to become parents. Being pregnant, and becoming Alicia's parent, have become dominant features in Weisberg's life and in her work.

Weisberg, after teaching at the University of Southern California since 1970,[5] was appointed Acting Associate Dean of the Department of Fine Arts in 1974. Today she is an administrator, a teacher, an artist, a wife and a mother.

Weisberg's story is really a beginning at this time. Conclusions are premature. One could point to important factors in her life, her grandmother, her parents and their values, age sixteen when she graduated high school and when the Dunes was lost, her experiences in Europe, Kelyn Roberts, Alicia Weisberg-Roberts. All are important. One could take her two books and her recent work and trace the development in Weisberg: Tom O'Bedlam's Song as Weisberg's intellectual self; The Shtetl, A Journey and a Memorial as Weisberg's Jewish self; The Three of Us as Weisberg the lover and mother. Weisberg explained that she feels good now about her work and her life. Conclusions are premature, perhaps poet-artist William Blake's words in Auguries of Innocence seem to state Weisberg's current station in life:

> It is right it should be so;
> Man was made for joy and woe;
> And when this we rightly know,
> Thro' the world we safely go.

APPENDIX I

INTERVIEW WITH JACK LEVINE

D.K. I thought about trying a chronological approach to things because I thought it would be helpful, and yet I feel at the same time that it is terribly unnatural. Yet, I think we should start with what is at the beginning, a little bit. Basically the information I have comes from wherever I could glean it and Frank Getlein's book plays a great role here and Selden Rodman. And there is a guy named Emery Grossman, who had an article about you.

J.L. Yes, he wrote with some denominational paper.

D.K. Right, and there were some interesting things that I wanted to clear up in terms of things that I didn't understand, but you talk about your earliest memory being the Boston Police Strike.

J.L. Ya, ya, Yes, they had Calvin Coolidge and Massachusetts, we had the National Guard out. I remember under the el, Washington and Grover street and that was a very early memory.

D.K. When you grew up. Now, you were born here--

J.L. In Boston,

D.K. right, I meant here in the United States. Your parents came from Russia, both of them?

J.L. Yes, Lithuania.

D.K. Lithuania, and your father was a shoemaker and your mother, did she have an occupation?

J.L. No, she was a housewife.

D.K. A housewife, ah, with eight children. Now I'm going to use my notes. Where were they both born in Russia?

J.L. Where they were born, I would say outside of Kovno, Kaunas it is called today.

D.K. Were they raised as traditional Jews?

J.L. Oh, yes.

D.K. Orthodox Jews?

J.L. I don't know if the denomination was so clear. I think that it's a man's religion anyway. You know, my father must have been in the spectrum somewhere between Orthodox and Conservative.

D.K. Did he bring that with him or did he leave that in Russia as so many did?

J.L. No, he brought it with him he was only a shoemaker. So, he had no assimilative drives. He remained a shoemaker much of his life. He had a shop in the neighborhood which was Cristian Scientist. It gave him an extreme Boston accent on top of the one he brought with him. And he was very devout in his own way; he could recite many things. He was a practicing Jew with perhaps one or two non-Orthodox ideas, but not too many.

D.K. Did you have a kosher home?

J.L. Oh, yea.

D.K. See, I'm of a different generation, but by the time.

J.L. Oh yes, you're of a much different generation. I mean this is nothing to be surprised about. It's the way things were early in the century. A Jew of a certain age who was not, say, a [several words not clear] who hadn't a history of trade unionism or anything like that, was simply a pious Jew.

D.K. You mentioned trade unionism. Was there, your parents, did they come out of that, there was a whole group of Europeans that were very socialist, strong socialist, that kind of group?

J.L. No, they were not intelligentsia; they were not stupid either. They were both, in fact, I think, very bright. But they did not have a certain cosmopolitan experience that many Jews brought here with them. No workman's circle, no stuff like that.

D.K. What kind of organizations did they belong to?

J.L. Burial society.

D.K. And that was it?

J.L. A loan organization. When it got tough, my mother would get a loan from the society and pay it back. These were the organizations.

D.K. In other words, it wasn't part of the Bund or Zionist group or the non-Zionist group, that sort of thing.

J.L. No, as I say, the synagogue/congregational and stuff but that has to do with the burial society.

D.K. And there was a neighborhood shul that they--?

J.L. Well, it was originally, but when everybody moved away, the whole congregation, the society remained. They had the burial plots in Montvale, which is around Woburn. And they met there finally, by the cemetery; they were all together. On the old South End and the congregation Anshe Poland, they all moved away but they all moved back together again, to the cemetery. They were all back together.

D.K. I want to come back to that as soon as I get an idea about some other things about the family. I'm not a polished interviewer. Are there any other things about your parents? Do you see yourself as a reflection of any part of your parents' character? In other words, some of your habits, thought patterns, and that kind of thing. I am asking this because it's kind of a personal thing, sometimes I see some of my parents in me, in other words, some of the things I do and I make the grand assumption that that might be true of you.

J.L. One doesn't know these things unless one is told. I think I have an aloofness and remoteness from my father, and a kind of cunning and sagacity and wit from my mother. This is what is suggested to me because my father was sort of a turned off, defeated sort of man, and my mother was crafty and very very intelligent, and coped. I suppose I sound very critical of my mother, I don't want to say. She's a very marvelous person.

D.K. Your father too, what about him, you said he was only a shoemaker, and I am curious about that in the sense that a shoemaker works with his hands and that kind of thing.

J.L. When I say he was only a shoemaker, it sort of points to the generation difference between us. Well, he had a little shop, and he did not even have a sewing machine. I mean it was all by hand. It was a very basic craft, without aid.

D.K. Did you ever help? Did any of your brothers?

J.L. No, never.

D.K. And he used to work, I assume, very hard?

J.L. Well, one sister used to bring him his lunch. She had a long walk. She'd get out of school at lunch-time and go home and pick up lunch in a satchel and bring it to him; it was her own march. He had that much help. Not anything from the rest of us.

D.K. Let's talk about your brothers and sisters a little bit. You have a family of eight, and you're not the oldest. I read that you're the youngest, and how many brothers and sisters? How many sisters and how many brothers is what I meant.

J.L. Four brothers and three sisters.

D.K. And they are all older than you. They are all older than you. Did they take part in raising you?

J.L. Oh, to a degree, yes. And we might say that I had one mother, but I must have had five fathers.

D.K. Yes, I understand that.

J.L. You see, the girls were all, except for one. [pause] The last two before me were girls, so the brothers were quite senior and I guess they had more of a disciplinary function in my life than my father did.

D.K. In what way?

J.L. Well, they were, as I suggested before, my father was sort of turned off and aloof anyway, and many things about me never came to his attention. I mean if I needed an excuse to get out of school, not to go or something like that, one of my brothers would write me a note. He really much delegated everything to everybody, and he would come home and he would sit with his head in his hands and read the paper.

D.K. He had the English paper?

J.L. No, he read the Tageblat, that's the paper he liked. I don't remember very much about it, policy or anything like that. As I say he's fairly turned off, all my feeling toward him is one of affection, possibly because I never did get much discipline. Well, if I ate badly, was finicky about food, or something like that, when my brothers came home and saw the junk I was eating, what I made my mother give me, because my mother never fought me, they would raise the roof: What kind of food are you giving this kid? And I would fear them.

D.K. When you talk about your father as being aloof and defeated, at the same time, I'm not sure I understand what that means, as I have a very slow mind.

J.L. Well it's a matter of economics really. I mean a man with eight children who can hardly manage to feed them is not very happy about this. And also from a craft standpoint, he once told me that he was trained, actually apprenticed, to make a very fine Russian boot. And he never made them once he got here. He said he just took the dirty worn shoes off of people's feet and fixed them. You know that's what progress has always done. When I say he was only

a shoemaker, I don't really mean that, anything pejorative: that's what Socrates did, isn't it? I don't mean that, I mean that, don't get the idea that they had a little shoe factory in Massachusetts, is what I mean. It was about what it has been throughout history without any of the technological developments, without any mercantile character, it was just simple and desperate like that. The genre has practically disappeared.

D.K. Talk about hunger, were you ever hungry in your family? What kinds of things did you have to eat?

J.L. I don't know, my mother always managed and outwitted the situation. If we didn't eat well, I didn't know it.

D.K. And what's this business that you read in New York today, hungry children eating paint off the walls, they know they're hungry. It wasn't that kind of poverty?

J.L. I suppose it wasn't, I suppose everybody ate a lot of potatoes and whatever. I don't want to get into these things.

D.K. You don't look like you ate a lot of potatoes.

J.L. Well, I was finicky, I used food as a weapon against my mother and she indulged me and I was quite spoiled. If I'd been painfully underweight as a child, I think

it was all my own unreasonableness.

D.K. I read that one of your borthers was a boxer. What did the others in the family end up doing?

J.L. Yes he was. Salesman. My eldest brother came to New York when he was about twenty, and established himself in a much higher economic level that we; and then he intermarried and this was a great problem. With him it was my family, I was so young that when I first heard about it, I must have heard about it before, and didn't remember; he suddenly showed up when I was fourteen years old and immediately took over as our father. There were certain things about my behavior and my table manners that he didn't care for, and he told me so, and I developed an animosity toward him which I keep saying is for that reason. But, my wife feels that I sensed that he was my mother's own true love, and that's what it was really. Well, I buy that; he was the oldest and I was the youngest, I smelled out a rival. I rather think that's wnat it was. Still it is a shock for a kid to suddenly realize that the one dangerous rival for his mother's affection he encounters when he is fourteen. You know it's terrible.

D.K. And you were, by the time you were fourteen, already involved in the world of art?

J.L. Perhaps I was some younger than that. Numbers aren't real to me. I try to remember correctly, no, I certainly wasn't fourteen.

D.K. I read a funny statement in Emery Grossman's book, or the little piece he had, and I wrote it down because I thought it was interesting: "Levine began to consider it," meaning art, "seriously at age nine." And I wondered what anybody considered seriously at age nine, I considered a number of things seriously, none of which I ended up doing.

J.L. He got it because I must have told him and I'd say it's true. I don't know why, I mean, I remember that's when I met my first teacher and we established a meaningful program of study continuously.

D.K. And this was at the Jewish center?

J.L. Yes, it was at the Jewish Welfare Center, which had a branch in Roxbury.

D.K. What is the Jewish Welfare Center? It's not like the Jewish Center today?

J.L. No, it isn't. I don't know as much about it as I suppose I should, especially since I'm sure that it's not in existence now. But there were in those days, you know the way Jews are anyway, kind of civic-minded sort of thing, they had branches, this was a two-family wooden house in Roxbury which they had

taken over and I suppose they raised funds, as our people do and they had art classes. They had all kinds of programs there. And my first teacher who was then only an art student at the Boston Museum school was able to make a couple of dollars on Sunday.

D.K. Harold Zimmerman?

J.L. Yes, he was able to make a couple of dollars on Sunday morning. We paid maybe twenty-five cents a piece which my father and mother gave me on a Sunday morning.

D.K. And you had moved from the South End of Boston to Roxbury? Was this a move up? So that business wasn't so bad, I mean, what prompted that move, the neighborhood changed, you mentioned that before?

J.L. Yes, I'm really not competent to say, it wasn't a move up, and our status may have improved but relative to the community I don't think it did improve. I mean we came to Roxbury which had been a very well-to-do community, it was already falling off.

D.K. And what kind of a house? A big house? Did you share beds?

J.L. Yes, we shared beds, I shared a bed with my brother, Joe, everybody doubled up, and you know.

D.K. Around your house did you have books, paintings?

J.L. No, I mean there were some books, it's not necessary

to say that there were Hebrew prayer books, not what you would call serious reading. And pictures, not at all, except what I put on the wall. And I'd buy reproductions of things at the Boston Museum. When I was in early grammar school, we'd taken a trip to the Boston Museum, and I guess that was a very important experience; I related to it. And then there were classes, as I said, at the Jewish Welfare Center on Sunday and there were Saturday morning classes for children at the Boston Museum, so I went there too.

D.K. When you say you related to it, I'm supposed to understand that, that's my generation's term, but the question I have about that is, I relate to going to a museum too, it's an experience that I find terribly interesting and I do it whenever I can, but you seem to have related to it. [pause] Were you already drawing at that time?

J.L. Yes, I was already drawing at that time. I suppose I have this in common with the late Pablo Picasso, I have a book, a facsimile book, of his earliest drawings, based on a magaz'ne illustrations of Barcelona at that time. That's the first and I think very wholesome sort of influence. So, drawings that I was doing had to do with jokes, situations, and I want to tell you that when I saw a whole long corridor full of Daumier lithographs--I related! It was just better than you could

find in magazines of that time, the Saturday Evening Post, Collier's, and then you see Daumier, he was obviously better.

D.K. You always had this style too. Your paintings and drawings are not, I'll tell you what I'm thinking, so you'll understand. I'm thinking, you see young people, I'm thinking especially of girls, I don't know why, but they draw these pictures when they're younger of fashion, of hair, eyes, that sort of thing. When, are, in a sense an ideal of what they would like to construct, be, and maybe what they would like to be, that kind of thing. When you started sketching, did you develop your own way of drawing things or did you find that you drew photographically? I don't know if that is the right question.

J.L. It's curious, you see, because it's the typical art bit. The assumption is you said sketch, sketch things. This was the first problem, I had no interest in sketching things; I had no interest in making a record of anything in front of me. I had every interest in trying to express an attitude without any object in front of me. The earlier drive of a child, if it begins to draw daddy, the child doesn't wait for the daddy to come. The child takes a piece of paper and a pencil and draws daddy. It's not a

matter of saying how nice those trees look in a group. Let's try to set it down and get the effect of it. That is absolutely something else. It's much more natural to a child to try to draw Felix the cat in the movies and not know how. Because these animated cartoons, they flash by too fast. I knew a kid that had a still of Felix the cat which we analyzed and studied but this drawing is an expression of attitude which happens before. And one of my difficulties in these children's classes in the Boston Museum was that they expected me to do water color copies of Oriental textiles. And the first thing was to lay down a smooth wash which would approximate the color of raw silk, and it had to be smooth. I must tell you that I think all of one winter, I was trying to put down a smooth wash and this is all I ever did. I just didn't know how to do these things. And when I met Zimmerman at the Settlement house for the first time I was kind of defiant and I said: "Are you going to make us copy things or are you going to let us do what we want?" He said: I want you to do exactly what you want. I still remember, I had seen something about Tarzan, coming home from the hunt with a carcass on his shoulder, and I tried to draw it. You know, with a sheet of Manila paper on an empty

table in front of me and a pencil, I tried to draw Tarzan. I wasn't trying to do a waterfall with rocks, and trees and mountains, or something else across the street. I probably was blind to it. The aestheticsof nature, objectively witnessed, recorded. It was quite a few years before I could see that as a decent involvement for an artist to have. So, in other words, it wasn't a question of sketching things photographically, [that] was beyond me and beyond my needs. In fact, when I was about twelve, I was set up to draw a cast of Greek sculpture, Greco-Roman copy and the like. And I couldn't do it. Couldn't do it simply because the development in my own drawing was still primitive. A couple of years later, when I was able to do things which were, you might say, more equivalent to something veristic, I was able to draw these things very easily, by doing that, not by constantly copying and improving my ability to emulate. This is a fine point about art anyway, maybe I shouldn't have gotten into it, but the whole thing has to do with expressing an attitude or a state of mind or an idea about the world, and if you go at it wrong or not. It obviates the necessity of drawing from nature, drawing from plastic casts, in other words, the whole academic training

which is taken at private schools, I think in my own case it's simply untrue.

D.K. I recall from my own experience in kindergarten, first, second and third grade, when you have painting and they would tell us to draw something, I would draw a tree. It didn't look like a tree, the lines were always wrong and I developed the notion that I couldn't draw therefore, because I couldn't reproduce and that notion was reinforced by me, by everybody, it was common to do that sort of thing. I remember one guy, named Peter, in my class in the fourth grade, who could reproduce a scene, a lake, anything; he could copy. He was the one that showed promise as an artist according to the standards that I was raised on. I assume that it must have been similar to that when you were younger, it couldn't have been much different. The question that I would have,therefore,is how did you manage to overcome that kind of thing and where did you get the notion that you could draw what you wanted to draw. You be ame so cocky and so confident, I don't know what the right word is. Strength?

J.L. No. I think it was experience. Where we lived in the South End there was an Italian family upstairs and the little boys encouraged me to draw and I would go upstairs and we would draw together. We'd

draw wars, soldiers, cannons, airplanes, battles; you name it, we tried to do it. And when it came to drawing at school, perhaps at that point there was just a thread of something recognizable because I would say that this boy who would draw these scenes so accurately, I would say there is no hope for him, that he probably would do very well as a mechanical draftsman when he grew up. I don't think that is where potential lies, in your ability to emulate.

D.K. I don't either, the question is you must have had somebody along the line. Was there anybody before Zimmerman?

J.L. Yes, the school I went to up to the third grade, before we moved, in the South End of Boston, sent me to some kind of class. It was called the South Bay Union and was near a cathedral and it was run by the Catholic Church. There were teenagers and I was little, I was still in the third grade. Actually the atmosphere was sort of pleasant, I liked it. What the teacher did was to set up these forms which were made out of wood and painted white. There was a cone; there was a cube and a cylinder. And these things were set up and they were set up in light and shade. I'm being interrupted. Creativity is based on the impulse of the child, or anything like that.

But I want to finish up with [pause] So having a cube, a cone, and a cylinder which Cezanne said are the very bones of art. I found I was too young to do it. And I couldn't do it and instead of that I did a large charcoal drawing of a battle ship with all its guns going. Which I think is a more primal experience than this kind of arrogance, sort of imposition, of what an adult thinks a child should do and these are all arrogant positions. Even if you want him to draw a pretty tree from nature, would come as someone else's suggestion to a child. The other thing is you talked about girls drawing hairdoes and so on. There is a boy's counterpart which is musculature. The athlete, the husky, the boxer, the Hercules, which at some parallel time, I was trying to do. Of course, this ties you right to Michelangelo.

D.K. The first thing that came to my mind was Da Vinci and the same things.

J.L. And that could take a small boy right into the Renaissance couldn't it? Be that as it may [pause] Enough of that.

D.K. What was your growing up outside of art? What else is going on in your life? I'm not to pressure, just suggest things. Aside from something you recall like the Boston Police Strike which didn't involve you,

what were you doing as a young man in school, was school boring, good, bad? Did you have discipline problems, academic problems?

J.L. Yes, I have always been a little maladjusted socially. Maybe it starts with being left handed, I don't know. I had a terrible time learning to tell time, learning to tie my shoe. I wrote after all, with the wrong hand as far as school was concerned. I think I was very bright. My tendency was to get a fast gloss of whatever it was and then tune out, and invariably find myself far behind in class. And my school work failed and I am a high school drop out. It's kind of weird, because I already had an exhibition of thirty-five or forty drawings in the Fogg Museum, when I entered my second year of high school and my associations were in a way distinguished, one of them was an emeritus professor at Harvard who had founded the art department. So, I dropped out of school.

D.K. It's so hard for me to anticipate these things, which I spent days doing. Being the youngest in a family, I don't know if there is a connection, you eem to be saying that you were associated with people older. That by the time you got into your second year of high school, you are talking about a professor of art at

Harvard who was not a contemporary. Was it easy for you, hard for you, were your friends your own age?

J.L. I got along all right with kids my age but I suppose I had a patriarchal fixation, a very Jewish thing. Even so, I don't think we ever had a peer group. I suppose I was convinced that the older people have it, really have it, not just the means for all the knowledge, and everything. We thought very much of our own group. There was sinfullness or whatever, but there was no question of who was in charge.

D.K. I'm trying to make a picture, of you, say, until you were seventeen, when did you drop out of school. If you were trying to figure what was important at the time. You met Mr. Zimmerman when you were nine and Mr. Ross when you were fourteen and when you were seventeen you dropped out of school. Was there anything else about this time?

J.L. No, you see I have this excuse about neglecting my school work, which led nowhere anyway. You see, my father made it very clear that he wouldn't put me into college, nor did I have any idea of going. I had been completely saturated with the art business, perhaps to a degree that militated against my school. I think someone asked, Isaac Stern, how he could be this violin virtuoso and go through the American educational

system. I think he said something like, I played hookey a lot. I mean we are not geared to specialists in the arts, our system is not, it militates against. Even though we have now huge art departments in the universities, I think they're made to hand fire too long. You're already too old, by the time you get to college. I mean they would have been too old to play the fiddle. I don't think there's that much difference actually. I mean it's true that artists take longer to take shape than violinists do. I think that the old apprenticeship system for little kids, I think that by and large has been conceeded that it's much more effective. So the educational system in my life was sort of negated. Then you have to remember that I was precocious so that when I was a youngster, a young man, and I was trying to get my work into exhibitions. I was perhaps still younger than kids entering Oxford, so that there was maladjustment in every direction. Except for Hyman Bloom and myself who were parallel, there really wasn't anybody of our age in the field. There were contemporary, if in age, not in prowess

D.K. You know when the printer came in here, I had a thought. It was that when you were younger you didn't have people coming to you to help you.

J.L. No, this is also why I didn't do prints, because I'm not very handy.

D.K. You don't do your own prints?

J.L. No, I make the plates at home. I have a workroom at home that I work on [lost words]. I don't do much in the way of close work in the studio, for some reason it's not conducive.

D.K. Okay. Let's move one. In my notes and what I've read a blank spot has occurred between the time you left school and the time you joined to work with the Artists Project of the WPA.

J.L. Well, let's say there was a kind of sporadic kind of rush to government projects before I got in the WPA. There were kind of embryonic projects. At first it was a gentry thing whereby there was a project with its office, if you please, in the Gardner Museum. And it was very kind of refined. And I got in that too. Then I was in my late teens. By the time I was eighteen, perhaps younger, it was then called the PWPA, the Public W rks of Art Program. These were sort of early shoots of the government art program. Then finally, it got all consolidated and famous, as the WPA art program. And I got on that; I was twenty. And you see there's another difficulty since when I got on I was a minor and I put myself down as living

with my family as I thought that would make me eligible as one of the requirements. And I was quite mistaken--nothing of the kind. (A) I was not eligible. (B) I was committed to living at home. So that the problem was that in the recheck of the file, it was discovered that I was not eligible. So I dropped. Although I was looking good as far as the project was concerned. And I was canned because I was not eligible for relief requirements. I was off I'd say for a year or two and then for a short time I was put on a small percentage, as non-relief personnel. And that may have lasted a year. I don't really know.

D.K. When did you leave home? When did you finally move out of the house?

J.L. I never did. I was drafted in 1942 at 27, and that was about three and one-half years. And that was it, I settled in New York, when I got out.

D.K. Let's go back to the WPA thing. There were two comments that I don't think are necessarily mutually exclusive, but they did confuse me a bit. In one place you say, where else could you paint and get twenty-three dollars a week, or whatever it was. And another place you say that it's not all the glory we make it out to be, or something like that. I wasn't sure what your feelings were in your experiences in that.

J.L. I don't really remember. As far as that goes where else could you paint and get twenty-three dollars a week? Here you have to have experienced the Depression. There was practically no theater except the WPA theater. There were concerts everywhere for WPA orchestras. It was almost all the action that was going on in the art world. If I say where else, well actually where else? Who would sell anything? Before I got into the army in '42, let's say, for a period of some years I would be in the Downtown Gallery in New York and I was living out of Boston. And I had a one-man show. It was one of the leading galleries of American Art in America. And if my average earnings up to the time I went into the Army were more than $200 a year, I'd be very much surprised. I was suddenly a very well-known artist, but I couldn't think of supporting myself.

D.K. You helped out with the family?

J.L. When I had it, I kicked in; when I didn't have it, I got help.

D.K. Was your family supportive of your artistic bent, or did they ever try to discourage you and say that you should get into a trade, or business. That's silly, or would they?

J.L. Oh, there was a little of that. Except that when I studied with Denman Ross, who was a wealthy man, in

spite of [lost words]. He put us all on salary. So, let's say, when I was fourteen, I was kicking in at home. I did that like for two years. And during the summer, because I was in school, once a week, I'd go out to Cambridge to a place and paint under his guidance and I'd get paid for that. I think he said that if our families see that we're making some money off of it we won't encounter resistance. It was as simple as that. But as far as the family was concerned, I wasn't a little bum, I would bring in a dollar, once in a while. My relations with Ross and Zimmerman sort of exploded which I don't want to go into. I had some kind of lean times. But, then I got into this glimmering of a project and kicked in and then I'd get off and be floundering around and go onto the WPA for a period of time and kicked in.

D.K. Someone once suggested to me that the WPA had a large portion of Jewish artists involved in the project, and thought perhaps that was significant. And that there was other si_nificance in that the program as well, in that there was some kind of, that whole business, a socialist kind of ideology that was well suited to people who were already liberal and it was important for those reasons as well.

J.L. I would never react defensively to that. But up in

Massachusetts where I was, I did not detect a preponderance of Jews. There was a great deal of political action in New York, much less in other places; quite a bit in Chicago, I understand. There were the WPA Unions formed and there was a great deal of militancy which reflected other aspects of the New Deal situation and you also have to remember that the project itself was in favor of a certain amount of militancy because whereas the Republicans were constantly trying to cut down the program, maybe I should start earlier. Roosevelt conceived of these works programs of what you call pump-priming, where you water the top and then the water comes up. There were people in this country always felt that the pump-priming didn't help. But the New Deal itself, and subdivisions of the New Deal, even like the offices of the art project, in the state capitol felt that there had to be some action because there was public support. There had to be some kind of picket line, some kind of sit-in or something like that, to fight the constant attempt to strangle this project. Because if [there] was quiescence, there would be quota cuts; and they'd have to lose a large percentage of their workers; and they'd have to lose their job. If it was a spoils system, it worked like that. The New Deal needed activism and all that.

Perhaps I'm side-stepping the Jewish business, but I don't know where it fits in. While I wasn't in New York, I have in my mind a rough kind of roster of the leadership of the Artists Union of New York. There were plenty of Jews and plenty of non-Jews. I would say that that is not true. [i.e., the original question is not true.]

D.K. Were you much of an activist? What were your reactions to those things? It sounds like a silly question, I'm thinking if somebody asked me the same thing I'd wonder what he meant by that.

J.L. No, I know what you mean. I went to meetings; I passed out the leaflets; I got names on petitions. A leader I never was. I don't have it in me. I was what they call a Jimmie Higgins, a foot soldier. I have no capacity for leadership like some people I know. Some painters who could get up and speak like corporation lawyers, who could go up to the federal administrators and talk to them as though they were labor lawyers. I have none. I'd just look on with amazement as they did that. If I could have done it, maybe I would have done it, but, that was somebody else.

D.K. Did you always, from the time you could, vote in elections and that kind of thing?

J.L. The first time I voted it was Roosevelt versus Landon

and I was going to vote for Roosevelt.

D.K. And you continue that pattern up until now? I mean voting?

J.L. I'm not a nihilist and maybe I don't have the enthusiasm now that I had then, or the same sense of involvement, but I do my thing as a citizen. Sometimes I vote for the lesser of two evils. Sometimes I vote for what I think is recognition or has no chance. I rarely do that. [pause] unless. [pause] In a country where we have two parties and they both embody the same ideas.

D.K. When did you get married?

J.L. I got married in 1946. I met Ruth Gikow in New York City and I met her before I got out of the army.

D.K. Was that before you went to Ascension Island?

J.L. No, I was back, but I didn't have enough points to be mustered out. After my recuperative furlough, I went around New York trying to find somebody that would take me on in an Army office so that I wouldn't be in a camp somewhere. It was already late in the war and I'd come back on rotation and they had also established the policy that anybody who'd been overseas didn't have to go back overseas. My job then, on a thirty-day post overseas service furlough, was to find the most congenial work I could find while I was

still in the army. I did get onto an educational program which had its offices on East Forty-Second Street, called information and education. And I had overseas ribbons and things and although I was a technical sergeant, a five striper at that point, heavy in the table of organization, for an office job, they hired me, which is to say, I was allocated to them. And I was there for a while and then I was picked out by the North Atlantic Division of Engineers, by the public relations office to do some painting about Ascension Island. And I got just so far in there and then I was eligible to be mustered out. But I was living in New York at that point in uniform, and a mutual friend, Leonard Bokour [spelling uncertain], brought me over to Ruth's house and we kept company for quite a while. In December of '42 [sic] I went up to Fort Devens in Massachusetts and got my discharge and lived in New York ever since.

D.K. Your wife is Jewish? I can't tell by the name.

J.L. Oh, yes. It's a strange name, Gikow. It would be Gikov, which would still be Russian.

D.K. It took me years until I found out Levi Strauss is a Jewish name.

J.L. I have an idea about these things, but Gikow is an odd one. Wherever we travel, I look up Gikow in the

telephone book and I never see it.

D.K. Do you both work? Does she have her own studio? In addition to your home?

J.L. Yes, we have a little house and she has the top floor which is her studio, very nice. It's nicer than this one. It has plants and a very warm atmosphere, and this is a very cold atmosphere.

D.K. I just can't picture myself married to another rabbi, someone in the same line of work; it just never occurred to me. Are you your best critics? I am sure that there is a great deal of mutual admiration for each other's work, an assumption not grounded really on any kind of fact.

J.L. Well, I think we both know a lot. We are both not constantly exchanging specific material about our work. I think we do discuss premises about art and wnat's going on; we talk about that a lot. We don't talk about specific work and I don't imagine she's here more than once a year as a matter of fact. And I don't go up to her studio. I think we are in agreement about many things. We do get together [lost in the turn of the tape.]

There's a game in privacy. I never like the specter years ago, for example, during the war, of wives, saying, when we were in the army, because sne

wasn't; unless she were and that's a long shot because girl soldiers were rare. When we were this and we were that, I always have a feeling that I do my work and that it's mine. I'm not going to just marry somebody and have it our work. So she has her own and the privacy is greater because she is not doing something vicariously. Let's say she's not cooking for me so I will be all of this and she will consequently have some claim on it. She's got her own, and here there's a validity in it.

D.K. A tremendous validity; that's rather modern notion. I misused the word, that's a rather vogue notion about how marriages should be structured and about how people should live together in their own world.

J.L. I just feel that we don't have to share her work or mine on a false basis which is what it usually is. I don't think the problem exists for us.

D.K. No, you have a daughter who according to my calculations should be around forty?

J.L. No, she's twenty-five.

D.K. Where did I go wrong? That's why my bank balance never works.

J.L. I can see that, I mean, poor kid, forty!

D.K. What does she do?

J.L. Well, she went to art school and the last couple of

years she has been the managing editor of some movie magazine.

D.K. And that's here in New York?

J.L. She's easing out of it; she really feels that she should do something for spiritual satisfaction, do something with whatever training she's had. So I think she's trying to get back to art.

D.K. You don't have any other children?

J.L. No.

D.K. I'm sitting here trying to figure what's important to ask you in terms of data about one's life that is significant, numbers of brothers and sisters, the kind of family background and the events. See, in a sense, I going to try to stick with this notion of an oral history, as I understand it. It should be some of the things that you think are significant about your life that may explain some of the whys. You can't separate it. I don't know how to separate it, I can't explain all of these things.

J.L. If you're interested nd have the time, the oral history section at Columbia has a thing I made and a certain amount of the cut and dried could be passed over.

D.K. In Getlein's book, he starts out with something about Michael Harrington's book, The Other America, about

how in the 1960's, he was pointing out pockets of poverty which was something you had been doing since you grew up. I was wondering if he had chosen that book because you had mentioned it to him or anything like that.

J.L. No, he chose that book because he's interested. I don't read that sort of literature. I think that my political utterances have always been sort of visceral; I'm not a political intellectual. I'm an art major.

D.K. You are, and you wrote a book about that. Didn't you write a book, about artists of the past, Artists on Artists of the Past?

J.L. Oh, that's a misunderstanding; that's not a book. That's a folio with six color reproductions, which I don't have here, with a foreword by Paul J. Saxon.

D.K. I've written so many letters trying to get ahold of that book.

J.L. These are six reproductions that were put out by the New York Graphic Society and very little writing by me, if any. I don't think there's a word in there written by me except the signatures.

D.K. What do you read when you read? Magazines?

J.L. I read junk. I read a great many handbooks; I read a lot of attempted reconstructions of old master techniques. There is a body of literature that has to do

with conservation of old masters and any processes of craft and anything they know about the materials that the old masters used. I'm an insidious reader of that sort of material. Last time I was in Washington, I bought five copies of technical studies about the cleaning of this painting and the x-raying of that, in an effort to learn what I can about the way painting used to be done; which is something that is not very well understood today. But it's something I mean to understand. Well, that takes care of a good deal of my reading. And then sometimes I will read a classic and sometimes I will read a murder mystery, and in these years I don't consider myself much of a reader.

D.K. Had you read Ulysses, when you took the title?

J.L. Yes I did. Ulysses was an experience at that age, 21 or 22. It seemed to be the advanced guard of literature at that time of my life. That was like the Cubism of its day or something like that. I'm also from Boston which is another Irish town and I felt very much at home with Joyce's Dublin. People in those days were even talking with a bit more of the accent of Ireland. I find looking at old films its remarkable how that brogue in the 1930's was still very strong. And I suppose one changes. I think when I was younger that I was more literary than I

am now. I have a peculiar split because I do these British crossword puzzles which demand a degree of literacy which, however, I do not use with literature. Apparently I prefer words disjointed and put in strange patterns; I find that more restful to me than I do find poetry for example. I'd rather have a crossword puzzle than a poem in these days.

D.K. I feel funny because since last Spring, I've been writing letters to museums, what can you tell me about you, and then finally meeting you. Somebody from Chicago sent me a copy about what you had written about, what you had written about your work on The Trial. You used the word essay in trying to describe a painting and how you do it. I found that to be very interesting and to be literary. I was wondering if you could explain a little bit about what you mean by the term. If. And I don't want to pin you down on this, if it's important or not you'll tell me. That's another thing I'm trying to determine is certain things that are important. Here is the quote: "My first essay on the theme was a 30 x 36 canvas remotely on a painting by Daumier." And there is where you used the term essay.

J.L. Well that obviously is not in the literary sense. Essay, also means an effort. It's, instead of essay,

my first tentative bid; to essay a remark, to try it out. That's a sense of the word. I didn't mean it in the sense of a literary essay.

D.K. In the same sense, I read it in an interesting way. You know pictures all say something. I don't know if I am finding the right word. Pictures are editorials in addition to being other things. And they are not like [what] I saw yesterday at the Whitney. I went to one of the exhibits and I don't even remember the artist's name. To sit in the studio and look around and see what's going on. A certain quality, that little girl over there is not an abstract, not part of an 'x' like I saw in the Whitney. Your pictures, your paintings are different than that. I'm not sure that this is a legitimate question or even a fair one, but do you try to say things? This business about delineating pockets of poverty, you delineate things in such an incredible way. I looked at pictures of The Trial and yes, there was something you were saying about all of the, yet it had all kinds of other things too.

J.L. Well, let me put it to you this way. You're about to be a rabbi, am I not entitled to some kind of moral responsibility for society too? I mean, am I excused because I'm an artist? If the waves of art

style, one and another thing, go on that make it seem as though this is not the area of an artist, I can't help that. Not only is it hardly ever done, I have been frequently told to stop doing it. Somehow people think, very often, that it is in conflict with the other things that art has. I don't find one history in the history of art where there is the slightest conflict between artists having a comment about life and let's say their grasp of aesthetics. I see no contradiction, I never have and I have been told that there is such a thing by people who feel they have seen a vision of a burning bush, or something like that, something more purified; and my work they feel is total slag and dross, impure material. Let's say unintegrated would be pure reaches; it's like being a Lamed'vavnik (Thirty-six righteous men) that wouldn't spit on the best part of some beggar that asks him for money; it's a little like that to me, but I don't want to seem that pious either. I just feel that I'm doing the most rewarding thing to me. I feel the modern art picture is filled with such narrowness and bigotry. After all, I'm only doing what most artists have been doing throughout most of European history and I don't see why I still can't do it and I also feel that, let's say, social conscience or social responsibility is a

voluntary matter. And I have volunteered and I volunteered sometimes more than I do other times. I think that it's my right and I think to abstain or turn aside is someone else's job. I have made speeches on which I've even put it on the basis of a volunteer exercise. I mean, I don't read the newspapers, the Nation, the New Republic; I don't read Harrington. I don't read any of those things; I don't feel guilty. It's not my shtik, on the other hand I do paint things about courtrooms or about conflicts or about a situation in Israel or about Birmingham, Hitler, one thing or another. I consider that a voluntary preachment, which is. [pause] And I do it because at some point it becomes obsessive to do it. I do it when the need to do it is stronger than the need not to do it. I require this of myself and nobody else. I don't preach social consciousness in art. I may personally, privately, prefer Renoir, I don't know. But it's a thing I do. It's a thing which has given me satisfaction, so I do it. I don't always find a theme. You might know about that, when you have a sermon and you can't think of anything. The difference between you and me is that I don't have that kind of schedule. But I very often can think of nothing and I very often reach for what seems like trivia, because I have to do something.

D.K. I started reading about you and about this whole business of art at the same time I started writing sermons on a regular basis. And what it meant, this whole business of form and content. The Clive Bell school, you know content gets in the way of art. And when I, from time to time, I take a break, especially during the past holidays, in terms of our meeting and I looked at The Trial, trying to determine. [pause] And I realized that my own sermons also have technical devices to get the point across and hopefully they are a work of art in a written sense. If they have flow and a point, you strike a balance between using whatever tools to grab attention; there are a lot of things involved. And I related to it, your painting, in a personal way, in the sense that there was a kind of sermon. It wasn't just, it was The Trial that I had in mind, but there are others too, oh, a lot of others. I guess that's what has prompted my question about this literary business because you seem deliberate as a painter, cognizant of what you're trying to do, in a sense I saw that perhaps indirectly and I read too much into this word essay. That's where I was looking at it from and that's why I raised the whole point.

J.L. As I said, the word essay, in that sense, means a

tentative bid, an effort, and now you see this kind of thinking is very literary. There is more than one meaning to words and I'm happy to say I'm well-educated enough to be aware of this, that's all. Well perhaps I give the impression of myself about not reading that I'm anti-intellectual about the written word, I was kidding about that. I wouldn't want to give the impression that I'm a burly oil painter who swigs beer and who is a roisterer. I'm more rabbinical than that myself.

D.K. You even drink Scotch, like all the rabbis I know.

J.L. Well, I drink Scotch, but that happens to be full of linseed oil. I can tilt it for you, and you can see how slow it moves.

D.K. No, I believe you. I just noticed the bottle.

J.L. I'd never drink here, it's bad enough without being soused. No, that's full of linseed oil.

D.K. It just happens to be the same color.

J.L. Well, it is originally Johnnie Walker Red Label, I probably would have some of it. There's nothing intoxicating in here. It has the same stuff as the Lavoris bottle right next to it. No, it's stupid, let me explain. It came to me in tin cans and no linseed oil product should be in the dark. I had to decant it from these tin cans into bottles so the

light could get to it. It should be in the light.

D.K. What do you use it for?

J.L. To paint.

D.K. You dilute it or mix it or . . .

J.L. Yes, you add it to give you an enamel.

D.K. It is also very good for leather. I'll have to put some on my briefcase one of these days.

J.L. Well, it would take a little longer to dry.

D.K. Now you know why it takes me so long in sermons, I have trouble phrasing questions. You mentioned that when you were writing your notes on The Trial, the picture of the recorder you had in mind of your high school teacher. And in another place I read, somebody said that, Getlein, or somebody, that you're a sober person, sobriety, you gained that out of coming out of the 1930's and the Depression. What you saw, you lived. And then there was a comment that was in quotes, so I assume that you said it, that "there is a lot of frivolity in me." I guess that leads me to the question who are some of the faces, are any of them you, aside from the one that you're in, what does it mean that there is a lot of frivolity?

J.L. I don't know what that means, I don't remember saying that.

D.K. And I don't want to pin you on that either.

J.L. I couldn't be either for it or against it. I don't even know why I said it. But who the people are in my paintings is something that maybe I could say something about. I don't work from life much and there's no way, let's say, that you could work without models, without arriving at something that reminds you of something or somebody. When I was doing the painting of The Gangster Funeral, I did at that time remember specifically or try to remember specifically certain character actors in the gangster movies of the '30's. I have said this, written this or something like that. Somebody is even writing some chapters on the movies of the '30's as shown in my work. So, I mean you're not far off about this so that there were character actors whom I admired and whose names I still know and in that painting specifically, I had a couple of people that I've seen. I rarely work with any sort of pictorial material in front of me. I painted Hindenburg once in a picture and it went almost all the way without resorting to any material, but I couldn't get his moustache right. I didn't know when it went down or up. The kind of Prussian waxed moustaches, like Wilhelm II, and whatever I did it looked wrong and I wasn't at the early stage of the painting either,

and I just couldn't remember. I went to the picture section of the New York Public Library and looked up Hindenburg and I found his moustache turned down and then up. So that was a release. I got it and I was satisfied, I got it. And this is an exercise in painting somebody specific that I have in mind. I think I can invent somebody plausible with nobody in mind. In a way I think the most enjoyable thing I have in painting is the business of inventing people. As my mother used to say: Er macht menshelach.

D.K. What does that mean, I don't know Yiddish.

J.L. "He's making little people." Without models and not being portraits in my day. It's not quite the same thing, a certain kind of eyes suggest a certain kind of nose suggest a certain kind of placement to the ears and mouth and suddenly it looks like somebody. Maybe it looks like somebody you know, maybe it looks like somebody you don't know. But here's this damn thing suddenly with an independant existence; this is a delight. I mean how are you going to have a Pygmalion with a model, obviously it had to be out of his mind and she came alive which accord'ng to the story of Gambridge [?] which is the dream of every realist that it will actually stand in front of the canvas and be alive, not just look real, but live.

This is the frustrated dream of every realist. But obviously in the situation where you have a model the reality of the model will destroy any real conviction you have of what the reality ultimately is. It has to come out of your mind to get the full blast of the drive to make something live. I don't know if this is all. This is not a syndrome that many artists have. It sort of precludes any heavy leaning on outside phenomena.

D.K. I have another series of questions, I hope. If you want a break.

J.L. No, it's all right, this is a break.

D.K. You started painting biblical themes in the 1940's and your father died in 1941.

J.L. No, 1939.

D.K. Oh, 1939, I'm not very good with numbers. Is there any connection between that, between your father's dying and biblical themes? When you do your biblical painting, do you read the stories from the Bible, do you remember the stories? Had you learned them, do you remember the midrash, or anything like that? Is that what comes into play here? Rabbinic commentary, any kind of stories, little stories like that of Abraham was the [pause] Like when I looked at this now [an etching of the Sacrifice of Isaac] I see

Abraham and Isaac, and it's very different than Rembrandt.

J.L. I'm sorry, I'd hoped that it would be just like it.

D.K. Where do you, how do you, what made you do that, the reasons, or do you do them so interestingly.

J.L. Well, it's a little bit like the business of making up people, I mean I told you I just had a smattering of Judaism, but it's a real smattering. If it comes to the sacrifice of Isaac, I think I know the story, but then I don't know if it's a ram or a male goat. I take it a ram is a sheep, and then I'll look it up to find which it is at some point: I don't know which it is. Maybe it matters which it is, I don't know, do you? Why wasn't it a he-goat? Not only that but you see I just recently painted a picture of the too; it went out of my studio this Monday. I'm not sure that I can paint the difference between a ram and a he-goat, and maybe by mistake I have painted a goat, I don't know because there I didn't look it up. I did satisfy myself it was a ram, it doesn't appear in the etching you just saw. And I don't know which it is. But I do know the words anyway. But I wouldn't of known that without checking. I do know the story, I think that for some reason it's important to me, why I can't explain, because it

has to do with human sacrifice. And it has some strange relationship to my feelings and I don't know how to express it right exactly where the symbolism is important to me. It also may not be true because I'm kind of a humanist, I guess, and I think very involved with the Renaissance condition. And it's a chance to do Isaac, as it were, as a Renaissance mood to show off my knowledge of human anatomy and the situation of light and shade and color and so on, which is not a thing everybody can do, and maybe I'm very ambitious about showing that mood. So it may be in that sense impure, but that isn't impure either because I was saying to somebody, just a week ago, I began to feel more and more that art is not communication, that art is reverence for ancient documents, that has to with human history, and a reverence for humanity and tradition. I have gravitated more and more to thinking that, rather than the McLuhan sense, that art has anything to do with the two elements of the Morse Code. To me art is the antithesis of minimal. But, I see art as an effort to grasp human history in its visual terms. Well that's enough about that.

You asked me about the relationship between my father's death and painting these biblical themes

because I never had before. Well, it has everything to do with it. My first painting was Shlomo (Solomon), which was his name. Samuel here. I think I did the first one as a little memorial to him, in my own mind. Believe me that was his religion, not mine. I was an assimilationist Jew from Boston, where the culture was Irish, and the dominant sub-culture was Irish. And I had no particular tug. I have been involved. [pause] The thing that interested me, I suppose, about my temerity, in going into a situation of Hebraica, is that at that time I was way over on the other side, involved with left politics, with some kind of trade unionism, and very very much involved with Marx. And this is probably the best escape from Judaism that anybody has ever come up with. And I was strongly in it. So that it was a, when I did it, you might say I was moving away from it. I must have been very shocked by my father's passing to be provoked to do this. No that's impure too, because I was painting these little Kings as they're called and was also involved in curiosity about early Flemish painting, about Persian miniatures, and in a funny way the historical reverence about the artifacts left by man, the visual documents are perhaps related in some way to

a reverence one has for the Dead Sea Scrolls, even if you can't read them. I think this is relevant in some way, I can't quite say.

D.K. Let me pin you down on the specifics. You painted David. You captured a tension there that exists throughout the Rabbinic Literature, in understanding David and what I'm curious to know, he's got a little bit of red on his hands, and you know the story of David, that he wasn't allowed to build the Temple because he was a man of the sword. He had blood on his hands and yet he was also the Psalmist and also had Bathsheba's husband killed. And you also mentioned Lamed'vavniks (the Thirty-six Righteous men) which is not something that my father knows about. You're not just painting, now, knowing what I know about the way you paint, the red didn't just spill on the canvas and at that point you said, the hell with it, I've got a deadline, I've got to get this thing in; and so there's something going on here.

J.L. I didn't know about it I could say that red was a spill-over from my own left-wing involvements. I was painting more loosely in those days and got a proclivity for red. No, I didn't know that, but I do know that. Well, there's a thing I mentioned, most European painting, as a bulk of it, is religious. And if I know something about David it isn't

necessarily based on the Old Testament, but it is based on paintings by Rembrandt, by Rubens, sculptures by Michelangelo, this is a great range of information. I've been trained, you might say, on the arts side. But, I realized a long time ago that I'm really surrounded by Christian artifacts. I did once paint a crucifixion for a chapel when I was in the army, because I thought they ought to have something better than they had. We don't need that sort of thing. Although I wasn't a practicing Jew, I thought I would do this for them. I had the time; I had the materials and they were very pleased with it. It's in the office of chaplains in Washington. I did it for that reason, but I certainly [pause]. I had a dealer who once said why don't you paint the Prodigal Son? I said it's out of the New Testament and I'm not going to do it.

D.K. Are you. One of the statements that you made that I first read and marked and remarked and have come to it from time to time in Seldon Rodman's book, that you were talking about Edward Hopper, I think I have it in my notes, I don't know who you were talking about, and you said, I should give the exact quote, I have it down. Something about not being able to turn your back on the old world. "I'm a Jew

of the American seaboard looking east, I've never managed to feel fully indigenous. I've been part of a tolerated minority. That has affected the subject matter as well as the style of my painting."

J.L. That was true, that was true to a greater degree then than it is now. I met somebody at a party one time who was just back from California and got a teaching job in Massachusetts. He said I have to learn all over again that I am a Jew. Apparently, the sense of malaise that a Jew has is stronger in New England than it is in California, and it's been stronger at one period than another. And it's not to say that in Boston [pause] Well, at that time the Irish community, we sometimes were in love with each other, but we were not fond of each other. That doesn't quite say it. My wife was born in the Ukraine and has very early childhood memories of pogroms of some sort. And I don't know about that, but I do have a feeling; I have a feeling of being an outsider, which to a degree, I'm sure, my daughter certainly doesn't have, fortunately. I mean, it's not a good thing. But there is a trace of it. I'd rather have a [pause] I was talking about a nuance, rather than a drastic condition of life.

D.K. Good, that's what I want to clear up.

J.L. And incidentally, the artists don't like national labels either. I became better acquainted with Edward Hopper after saying that and he wanted to know why everybody kept saying that he was such an American painter. He said, I never thought I was. I said, were you influenced by American artists at all? He said no: the only artist that ever really influenced me was the French etcher, I can't think of his name, early in the last century, did cathedrals and things like that. Not only that but he became acquainted with some Dutch people, who found his work very Dutch. And incidentally, Hopper is a Dutch name. So, there's America for you.

D.K. This brings me to a question that, well, I don't want to give my understanding of the question of the answer that way. Well, do you look upon the, do you look upon yourself as a Jewish artist?

J.L. It would take some temerity to do that when so many people say there's no such character. I'm supposed to appear at the Herzl Institute sometime in January with Alfred Werner who's absolutely conditioned to lay down his life on the point. I think, he said there is no such thing. I may become a Jewish artist and I don't know if I want to. In my father's congregation, in the South End of Boston, there

were wall decorations of fruit and flowers. They were done by Italian house painters, and in Dura Europos there were frescos, things like the priesthood of Aaron. They were quite possibly painted by Greeks. There have not been Jewish artists and the Jewish Community has not been very sympathetic to the idea ever anyway. I don't think that Jews have taken readily to the plastic arts until the last hundred years. Part of it is inhibition from our elders, definitely. Consequently, I don't know how it is at this moment with the youngsters, but it's practically like transgressing one of the commandments. While we find traces of Jewish art in all of our history, nevertheless there is this inhibition, prohibition about it and you can't help but feel like a rebel by the practice of it. So that the very act of being of painter I repeat, it may be different now, was to assimilate me with the non-Jewish community. It's a place, for instance, to me the most eloquent thing is that I always had to be in school and what I wanted to do as a little kid is I wanted to draw. I had one full day when I didn't have to go to school and that was Saturday and my mother wouldn't let me draw. I had to transgress. I was not going to honor the Sabbath. I had read that Chaim Soutine

was beaten nearly to death by his father because he wanted to be an artist. Which sounds like how I stand about pogroms. I mean my experiences have always been second rate here. My father wouldn't have done it. But a Jewish artist is something the Jewish community has not wanted historically. I could say I am nevertheless, but I don't know that I am. I don't know that there is such a thing as a label.

Is there such a thing, would you say, as Jewish ethics as distinct from Christian ethics? Is there? Might their ethic be derived from ours and if so then there's just ethics. I am sure that any art I have has been derived from one or another Christian and an occasional Moslem, and an occasional Confucian, Shinto, but precious little, I can't say from my co-religionists, because I am not a religionist, but it is universal.

D.K. Now I want to approach this from a slightly different angle because I'm in the business and there's something about your art, now I'll give you my, I don't know if there is any such thing as a Jewish artist. I don't know if that's even a proper point to discuss. I wouldn't certainly hang one way, I could care less in reality about the question, I'm not sure it's an

important question. There is however something that I think is important and that's that your paintings deal with things that I would consider to be in a sense very Jewish. My Jewish concerns, okay, I'm sure I'm considered heretical in many circles, are more with humanity. There is a large and I think profound part of Judaism that is universal and that is human.

J.L. Well, why not the ethical culture concern?

D.K. Well, yes and no. Perhaps this springs from, there are people who would say that Jewish ethics, the difference between Jewish ethics and Christian ethics is that Jewish ethics can be derived from so many places, such as our history which is so very anti-human and this business of pogroms and World War II, the destruction of a community is a very anti-human kind of thing and Jews were never treated in a sense as human beings. You know, no dogs and no Jews, that kind of thing. Do you see any place and maybe I'm pressing something that isn't here in your work, a rebellion against that, and an affirmation for humanity? Would you when you talk about man as the most important thing, does that spring from anything that you can point to, or is there more than just a reverential?

J.L. Well, I can't say that this Alfred Werner, I mentioned I attended a lecture he gave, I think at some institute. And his first remark was "I am sorry to tell you ladies and gentlemen, Rembrandt was not Jewish." Rembrandt should be a Jewish Saint, and he's not even Jewish, but embodying so many of the things that, so many of the warm human things we are supposed to be involved with. And he more than anybody seemed to embody these things. I really can't answer it; I think it's open, I think that there are so many things to be said about it. And for some reason . I understand that when the first Jews got to China, the emperor said, you people respect learning and you respect your fathers, welcome, so do we. And they completely assimilated immediately. Maybe it takes these terrible reversals to make the Jews survive, I don't know. I don't want to go into that.

D.K. (Could we stop for a second, I want to change the tape.) When you do something, have something in mind, you have a canvas to finish and you take it to the dealer and somebody gets it or you read a review of it, and it's totally different than what you had in mind, do you ever feel a loss of control? A kind of concern, how does that, ah .

J.L. Oh, yes that is like being misquoted. You do a

thing where you try to make it very clear and sometimes you feel I suppose, perhaps you haven't made it clear. I mean. You look at a painting you did some years ago and you see something wrong with them any way, you always do. And perhaps it isn't explicit. So you beat your breasts and think, I guess I missed.

The thing I would like to bring up is that I'm getting older and maybe with greater age comes greater Jewishness, I don't know, I don't believe it. But the precariousness of the position of Israel is, it seems to me, you know it has always involved [a few words are not clear]. And the sort of thing that I would move away from, I'm moving towards. I was thinking I'm looking at this rather huge canvas, that any essays I ever (there's that word again) into Judaica of the past have always been very small in scale, eight by ten inches, miniatures, where I always made certain that they had a certain quaintness because of their very scale; they were miniatures. And now this is a huge canvas and I think in a way, I don't know it's not importance, you know, and self-dramatizing, but I suppose there is significant. That this Jewishness has come front and center in scale. I fell in love with Jerusalem and am haunted

by Jerusalem. I tremble when I think of this fat Russian metropolitan coming like a crusader. And since I'm very apt to, there is a strong streak of satirist in me, so I take it from that end. But this is an obsession of mine that has to do with so many of us. I mean I suppose at this point I wouldn't have any involvement with Judaism if it weren't this kind of image I have of Jerusalem and the fact that it might go. And I have a feeling that there aren't too many other things I care about like that, very close to me. I was very casual when Israel was established. I didn't understand all the ramifications that it had for me; and it came on me by degrees and so there you have it. Whether there is such a thing as a Jewish artist or not. There's that business of Hillel, if I'm not for me who? And for some reason it seems very apposite now. I can't say any more than that, I don't know if there is such a thing, it may be that at this time in history I want to be, which I never did want to be, as I have explained. The atmosphere was not very conducive to being an artist anyway, and I d n't want to go into whether it's better now, I only know that I'm a Jewish painter; I'm a painting Jew. It's very necessary for me to be aware of that.

D.K. When was your first trip to Israel?

J.L. My first trip to Israel was about fifteen years ago. And my second was two summers ago. The first time I went I had a view of the old city from the King David Hotel and the Mandelbaum Gate and all of that and no possibility of seeing that, the old city. And the second time, I detest the word mystical. It was very moving, very beautiful and very meaningful. So I mean if you combine the positive aspects of that with the sort of constant worry, impending wars and what not, it's very hard to hold the Jewish thing down to that.

D.K. How do you feel about what's going on there now? Or let me put it to you another way, what's your impression just as a person looking at the world, Arafat, and the United Nations and that kind of thing.

J.L. You would say it's horrendous, it's sickening, and that goes for the U.N. and certainly for the Soviet Union and Red China for whom I have had some warmth, in the distant past. It's very simplified for me, in other words, Arafat is too much. I mean Arafat is beyond sense. There's no way to satirize the wretched business. Maybe if I sounded like Goya, I'm sorry maybe if you could paint something, monstrosities, but, I can't even face them. If one

were to dream about that kind of thing there would be no sleep. It's not for me.

D.K. There was something that, maybe there's a connection, I don't know why. I read that you attended the Democratic Convention in Chicago, in 1968. Why did you go, I mean did you just go to see the convention, or were you asked to go or what?

J.L. Well we'll get back to the old business about not being able to think of a topic for a sermon. I thought, and Ruth thought, that it might be a shot in the arm, and it might be rich in material. And there was no getting in if you were a private citizen. And Time magazine asked me if I'd go as an artist correspondent. I agreed to go and this was the first time I'd ever done anything like that. I received my fee and [pause] So it was a very enjoyable. They beat up a lot of kids. I missed all of that, I was sitting in my hotel room in my pajamas trying to transcribe some sketches at the convention into something more plausible, into something visible. One thing that came out of it for me was a something I call the Daley Gesture. I did a painting and a print of Mayor Richard Daley drawing his forefinger across his throat, just a throat gesture. This is when Ribicoff was saying that he has police out there

and they are acting like storm troopers and Daley wanted the microphone back so he wouldn't be heard saying these things. So that's the tableau I came up with and I call it the Daley Gesture. And for me that was what I got out of it, the quintessence of the Chicago Convention. I mean, I'm not very strong about Abby Hoffman and the other kids. I don't think of them as champions of anything or anybody or representing any sound philosophy, why should I? I'm many years older. But I know Daley is a villain and the traditional villains, and that I could handle. I may be myself, well I was naturally in this case for the hippies and in a showdown like this I'd rather be for them. Normally I have my grievances, it's not the same, for me. I guess, well that's what it boils down to.

D.K. Aren't you, or are you, aren't you sort of a drop out? Drop out in terms that artists must be. The things you do for someone of your generation at your age, in the sense that you've also chosen to be an artist of another time. Your art is, bucks the trend of this time successfully. When you began, did you e er look upon yourself that way as sort of a hippie, or do you see yourself in those terms as sort of. Your studio is a garret .

J.L. I really don't know. I could always explain to myself that all I wanted to do is what I did very well which is not a hippie decision. I don't know what they want to do very well, but as for dropping out, it's possible that what I really wanted to do was to drop out and I used this as a lever. But I think that in this case I use a highly developed ability as an extenuating circumstance. I would say similarly about art, about much current content, my involvement with the past is because it seems that nobody has any memory anymore. I mean one is provoked into doing that thing, not to drop out but to be one of the few people, let's say, marching in step when everyone is out of step. I don't want to be a hero, to be eccentric to attract notice or anything; I want to go my own way, by doing what I think I'm qualified to do. But every now and then you're sort of entailed in a situation where you have no choice. The alternative, let's say, for me as an artist was to be hail-fellow-well-met with all these gangs of abstract painters in the 50's and to booze with them and in their bars and talk nonsense about some metaphysics that never existed on this earth and to know as little as possible about what painting ever was. If you call that a drop out, okay.

D.K. You are not a Mailer?

J.L. No, definitely not. I have very little in common with Norman Mailer. No, we are not protegees.

D.K. I have another question. I never really knew what, I never had an art course. I didn't really know what to read about all of this.

J.L. It's just as well, because if you'd had, then, I'd have to tell you you had wasted a lot of time. We'd have, have wasted a lot of time explaining to you how wrong your teachers were, and how art is really something else.

D.K. That is what, I think here, there's an essay on the Dehumanization of Art by Jose Ortega y Gasset and somehow I read it. I wrote your name a couple of places in the book because it reminded me of stuff that you do. It talks about an art for the majority in a sense. In other words, people's artist not, frankly I don't understand yet, and I've had teachers try to help me see what a cubist painting is from various points of view, you know what the method is. And when I look at your art I can begin to decipher things and I can begin to see things of beauty; I can see lines; I can see color and I can see people. I can talk about, you know. The question I have is, your art is, in a sense a people's art, not art aimed

at hoipolloi, but at a regular guy who is not in that closed circle and that fraternity, who doesn't know the handshake and can appreciate it. At least, at the very least and yet your art is also out of reach. Does that ever disturb you? In other words, your painting, you have to make a living, paintings are exceedingly expensive and if someone buys it and hangs it in their homes.

J.L. Well, it has to be out of reach because I'm doing one original. Prints are more easily obtainable, they're multiples and are cheaper. But they could be reproduced.

D.K. Why did you start to move into them? Sort of a reason?

J.L. Well, when I met Serene [spelling uncertain], it suddenly became possible to do prints. He was my teacher, I studied Italian with him. We were very congenial and it became easier to do prints than not to do them; before it was impossible. I really don't think that I have any interest in reaching the vast public by making my paintings easily accessible in the homes of suburban doctors or anyth ng. If I did more paintings and they were cheaper then more suburban doctors would have them in their homes and that still wouldn't reach anybody. In Mexico,

when I was a kid, the Mexican artists were painting great frescos. They were commissioned by the government usually, and the peasants would come down from the hills in their wagons or whatever and they would come to see the works of Orozco and Siqueiros and Rivera and they were public matter. I've been quite fortunate: that courtroom you mentioned a couple of times was reproduced in Time, in some sort of color. Now whatever is reachable to these people is say ideal, was reproduced, I don't know how many million times. For any way I reach out to the public, it would be detectable in even a bad reproduction. I don't think, I mean in technology the, a, reproduction is so widespread that I don't even consider it. The ownership of a painting of mine has nothing to do, if who owns it and who let's say, supports me for a period of time I did it, has very little to do with, I don't know who is going to buy it, if anybody does. It's a huge canvas, it's going to be, that is, and the subject matter is not conducive to put in a bedroom. I don't know if it's going to fit into anybody's living room very well. I'm just doing it because it's in my mind and I'm really not concerned with, I mean my sermons are not directed to the congregation, that's the limitation of my

craft. It would have been the easel painting it was called had a limited public reach anyway. I think really why I do it, in this way, is because it's within my control. Painting is a very complex thing for me so I'm not going to draw or paint for reproduction, and in that sense, apply my work to mass media. There's too much in it of a being involved, and an inwardly turned craft, and historical consideration for it to be as shallow and direct as a poster drawing or something or advertisement for some cause I endorse. And on the other hand, if it were things like murals and this type of thing. A couple of years ago I was afraid I might get involved with doing some murals for the state building in Albany and I feared it because I didn't want to do it and I was being coerced into it by people around me. Fortunately, it fell through, I didn't want to do it. I don't have any truck. I don't have any truck with wealthy sponsors. I don't want them to have a word to say before I do what I do.

D.K. You mostly never worked for commissions and your work was never commissioned?

J.L. No. I had done an occasional portrait, reluctantly.

D.K. Recently, or when times were hard or?

J.L. Oh, that's not too many years ago. There was a

thing I had to do, I was embarrassed to do. It wasn't a question of not being able to refuse. She was a friend with plenty of money, I didn't want to do it. I did it. But I'd rather do my own thing. And have the same amount of money, so why shouldn't I do what I please? If he pleases, I mean the guy who wanted me to paint his mother, would I reach the public?

D.K. I've never understood something and perhaps it's not to be understood, I don't know. You are lumped together with a whole group of painters by Seldon Rodman and others who put you in the same category and yet I look around the studio and I don't see, do you see yourself as part of a school or a group or coming out of a line related to Ben Shahn, Bloom, Lebrun?

J.L. You know what's kind of funny? The career of a critic has a lot to do with making categories. And the career of an artist seems to have a lot to do with staying out of them, and this is the contention between us. You've compared me to so and so, I have not. But if that's the way you like it, that's great. You know I have a lot of admiration for Ben Shahn who I don't consider a painter at all.

D.K. No, I don't either.

J.L. He's some kind of a gifted graphic artist. Talented,

definitely. Water color technique, he worked in water color. I'm afraid I look at water color as the way a basso looks at a a boy soprano.

D.K. Who looks at them?

J.L. A basso, someone who sings base. There are no deep resonances in water color. Bloom who it seems to me hasn't been painting for many many years, he and I have all sorts of biographical affinities and we've been broken in some of the same fields, but philosophically we are absolutely antithetical.

D.K. Do you own any other art works of other artists?

J.L. Yea, a few paintings.

D.K. Do you want to tell me who or is that.

J.L. Well, I don't think it would be very interesting.

D.K. Okay.

J.L. We have what we happen to have, we sort of like it but,

D.K. Do you have any of your own stuff on the walls at home?

J.L. For the most part portraits that my wife has done.

D.K. Can we talk about a couple of your works? Your Adam and Eve. I was curious about a number of things, and I don't know if it has to do with, unfortunately I haven't seen it in person, which is really a detriment to my understanding as to its size and everything, even numbers are not so helpful. Certain

things I noticed about the painting and I, again why things are, I'm not sure it's always a legitimate question, but I noticed that they are both hairless except for his beard and the regular amount of hair. Is that, is there a reason, is that a whim? Is that conception of them as being young and old at the same time, is there a way you interpret that?

J.L. I don't know how to answer that. They're hairless because it may be kind of inhibitionism or Puritanism on my part. At the time, well, great masses of body hair. Did you notice that Adam covers his genitalia with his hand? I don't have a great involvement with male genitalia anyway. I don't want it to appear in my work. I notice that in the last ten years or so there's a great obsession with the male genitals, it's one of those now things. But I'm more Victorian, enough to stay away from it. And traditionally its been stayed away from and I perversely like that tradition. As far as the Eve is concerned who is hairless, that's not too far removed from the plastic cast of the sculpture. They don't have pubic hair on the statues of Aphrodite. That's Victorian, let's say, German of the last century ideal, blond and hairless is the concept

of the Hellenic Culture. Also all this kind of prudery kind of fits in with the time, I don't know. I don't understand it, I did it with Cain and Abel. Cain seems to have a thicket of pubic hair so as to obscure the genitalia. And; Is that an answer?

D.K. I see all kinds of elements in a picture, you know something about the feet. For some reason reminded me of Huckleberry Finn, my own imaginative concept of Huckleberry Finn, a terribly bright picture.

J.L. Well, you see this is where your lack of involvement with art is a difficulty, because there are overtones there of El Greco and Hugo Van der Goes, and indeed, a kind of a French Renaissance in sculpture, and so forth. I might say there are many quotations to which I take it you're not aware of, but it is a part of the picture. It is in its way an enigma. You see I do a lot of imitation about painting in the past. I mean that's something that isn't measurable to you, yet is a very important part of it. It was an important part of Judaic art, a particular king of Israel may have some kind of relation to 16th Century German painting or Flemis'. There may be something reminiscent in the turn of the hand. or in the relation of light and shade and color, the degree of black, these are all art problems.

D.K. And do the names. There are certain things I can think of that might sound . The Rembrandt painting in London, Belshazzar's Feast, is that what is going on here? Is there a question of this identifying it or?

J.L. It's not a question of identifying it. Anytime you see a nude man or a nude woman standing on either side of a tree, you don't need much .

D.K. Yes, that's what I was thinking. And also you put it in .

J.L. Well, you see, that in a way proves my point about references from the past. Flemish painting for example arose out of illuminating manuscripts. The word is always in some way incorporated, perhaps it was embellished in gold letters. And I have done that. I have used Hebrew letters in gold, in some of these. It gives it a decorative manuscript flavor in some language which to the W.A.S.P., let's say, will be very mysterious. I mean I have admired so many paintings with Persian, Coptic script laying across it. I have admired so many Japanese prints with cartouche. And this Hebrew which looks very strange to a Protestant from Kansas, I have as a part of my heritage and I can dazzle them with this strange alphabet, which I can read, which I can print

with some dexterity. Another aspect of it is that the superimposition of a flat thing like letters of an alphabet may have something to do with the depth control. The degree of recession in advance and suddenly there were letters which are on the frame of the picture, that has some bearing to it. In a funny way some of this nonsense is worked on with collage, has something to do with image of photographic and flat areas. The use of letters in Hebrew, you know, it gives it a little kind of tang, does that explain it?

D.K. Well, yes. I haven't experienced all of this in person.

J.L. Let me put it this way. We once were in Italy and it wasn't too long after the war, and we met an Italian woman, she was a countess. There's a very sad situation. She said to us, you Americans, you wouldn't understand. So, we said we were Jews. So the countess said, ah, you would understand. Well, let's say, in a way that's a free use of Hebrew in this thing. I want to show that I have a long tradition behind me and I'm not an American regionalist. I don't paint as though painting started five years ago. There's history; there's time. I got the dubious favor of being born Jewish, so I have that.

And why not show it? It makes for interesting painting. And when the great painting was being done in Europe, say in the sixteenth century their community would not allow us to be artists and our community would not allow us to be artists and so now we can be artists, so there's a hell of a novelty and a hell of a freshness to it. And at some times it seems to me I want to paint like everything good that ever happened because I'm making up for lost time. That's a strange degree of being tied to Jewishness the thought has entered my mind. I don't owe you that and I don't owe me that, but it's a nice excuse to go with it.

D.K. There's so many things here. You seem to be much more of a person who lived the business of being Jewish and cared about the business of being Jewish. What I mean by that is you don't try to, well your attitude, there's no notion of. Well, I'm not sure I understand your rebellion against it and it and your attitude at the same time.

J.L. I'm not sure I do either, except that I do come from a period and a place when the Jews were very assimilationist. Two of my brothers married Catholic girls. And I, the rebel, am the only son who married a Jewish girl. It's weird because I was given up as

lost for my radical ideas, my bohemian ideas. I was a goner for the community, obviously. You could easily predict it. So that's it. I don't know what's rebellion. I was telling somebody the other day. We had the syndrome, we painters, it's a word I'm using too often, we say modern and apathetic. Somehow or other in painting as I understand it, I'm a modernist and I'm not an academician. I, by God, am orthodox. I only want the real word. With me it's true, I mean it's not the book of Daniel and it's not Deuteronomy, it's Rembrandt or it's Titian, but I will have them I will have them authentic. I will not paint like my teacher paints. I will try to go to the source, in that crazy sense I am really orthodox. I'm very upright and tight about it. I look at the academy as sort of slack and shabby and I look at the modernists as for the most part hyprocrites, the same way I look at Abby Hoffman. This is no movement.

D.K. Have you ever been approached to teach art?

J.L. No.

D.K. Do you teach?

J.L. No, I don't teach. I'd teach for money. I mean there were so many of us that had to teach for money to make a living. Well, let's say, from about the

early 1940's to 1960.

D.K. When you raised your daughter, did you send her to religious school?

J.L. No,no.

D.K. Does she have a sense that she's Jewish?

J.L. Yes, she has. I think maybe it was a mistake. I think she grew up in what was sort of an Abby Hoffman environment, there it goes again. But I think her mother and I are very real as Jews. Not as religionists or practicing Jews in that sense, denominational Jews. She didn't escape it. I mean to say, in other words, she knows very little about Judaism, but I guess she's a pro-semite. This much anyway.

D.K. We've almost covered everything that I had intended to and yet I thought I'd ask about a few other things. Have you ever. Well, you did a tape for the, that's a question I wanted to ask and didn't want to leave without asking. Where, I've read about you in various places, but not in much. You made a tape for Columbia and someone's doing a Ph.D dissertation on you now.

J.L. Yea, a guy by the name of Henry Freedman.

D.K. How do you feel, by the way, about all of that, people write about you and talk about you, being worthy to be the subject of a dissertation.

J.L. Oh, I'm worthy. How much of an honor is it? I

mean how many baboons get this treatment anyway, I mean, why shouldn't I? There is something rabbinical about it when you say am I worthy of this honor, so I say it's not so much of an honor as it's done to fools every day, so why not me? I'm as worthy as the next guy, I don't know, I take it as, I am going to be sixty next month and it might as well come along. At this time of life it does happen.

D.K. But, you know it doesn't happen to most people, even most buffoons, and it won't happen to my father, good chance it won't happen to me.

J.L. Well, I've been an artist of some note for nearly forty years.

D.K. How does that affect your art? I mean it must, in a sense that.

J.L. Let's say it was a mixed blessing. I got, I wouldn't say a good press, but an extended press when I was young, which didn't seem to enhance my ability to make a living. So this early success somehow didn't solve anything and it seems to me that by the time I could really make a living and live comfortably on the sales of my work, I'd already tried out all sorts of things that I wanted to do. I did all kinds of things because sometimes I had to teach anyway to make a living, and I didn't think I was getting.

D.K. Where did you teach?

J.L. Well, I taught at [names a school that is not clear on the tape] and I had classes in my studio, at home and many schools where, well the GI bill was folding up and I couldn't get a job in the schools, so I opened my own studio sometimes, and I made some money. I still thought that I was entitled to support myself at that. Finally it reached a point where I could. So I, I forgot the question.

D.K. The question was about success, how that affects you. Then, I asked another question in between.

J.L. Well another thing I might add was that finally after all these years, I find myself completely out of fashion and not really being made much of in any way at all, so that's also a mixed experience.

D.K. What do you mean, you find yourself out of fashion?

J.L. I must say we have three leading painters in America whose names I won't mention, but I will say that one of them trained as a hairdresser, and the other trained as a shoe designer and the third was making enlargements for billboards. They're all very famous, I mean this is a madhouse today. We have minimal.sm and lord knows what other mishugas, and this stuff is very famous and this catches everybody's eyes because it's ephemeral. It only lasts for about five years, but I say it's a mixed success. I mean, an

honest success, but it's sort of an acknowledgment that it takes a bout with idiots. [Last phrase is not too clear.] It keeps me sane.

D.K. Do you ever feel that at any point in your life, and this may be a terribly revealing question about me, and I'm not sure that, well, that it is in some ways, not that I've had any early success. I haven't, it's still too early, but that you have become your own person, I mean was it your own idea, or what you became was in some way what other people said you were, that kind of thing. Well see that, well, somebody will say, I mentioned you to a teacher who said that once you see Levine's style, he can remember your pictures from Marsh's store windows from the 30's. Once you see that style you know it's Levine's and you never forget it. Has your style changed a lot or you've perfected, perhaps?

J.L. Well no, as my work used to be more violent and it may be more violent to him now I can exercise middle-age control. I may loosen up as I get older, I don't know, I was, my young work was quite violent, but that isn't even style though. It's possible that one's way of working goes deeper than what he's seen to be, belligerent or what. He may have meant something which is quite beyond that. As far as you

making yourself your own, your deciding what you want to be and becoming that, that's an old story among rabbis, isn't it? I know of one story, I'm not sure I can tell it, about this very angry man who was told by the rabbi to be patient and calm and forgiving and so forth and to try to be that way even though he wasn't. It just gives a sort of rough idea of the story, it's hazy in my mind. But if a man was forebearing and made himself calm and forgiving and became such a person. I think you become what you want to be, I think maybe I am somewhat like the person I wanted to be when I was a kid. I think I am what I meant to be; I think I do what I meant to do. I can do many things today that I was not able to when I was younger. But, I wanted to be able to do them, now I can do some of those things. So I don't feel too bad.

[Flip of the tape.]

D.K. Did anyone ever try to use your name?

J.L. I may have been on a letterhead or two. Like I said, I never was a leader. There were times/ [he is cut off.]

D.K. You may not be a leader and yet there's something about this that is truthfully beyond you and beyond this whole project and it has to do with, looking.

Usually artists, and by artists, I don't mean painters, but in the broader sense, musicians, writers, poets and all of these people, people who do whatever artists do to be artists, have an eye and they look out and they see things. They notice, especially good artists. Artists are teachers too, the amount of, in the sense that a teacher is a leader. You struck me as being very much of a leader, and there's a lot to learn from your paintings about all kinds of things, all kinds of experiences. There are certain images that come to my mind when I look at them. Maybe they have nothing to do with you or what you intend, that doesn't mean you don't teach.

J.L. No, I probably intended it. I just wanted to say about the Cubism thing, you could still try to fathom what that was all about because there's still something to it. I think that I never had the notion of pleasure painting to be something of merit, or I always wanted to establish some basis of understanding with anybody that looked at it. As I once said, I see no harm in using the conscious mind in this way. But still, that doesn't mean, I don't mean to say, that I was trying to say before that the other face of this is not all nonsense. There are things about me that are taken seriously. I don't want to disparage

the other man's thing unless he really is a fool which he very often is, right now. Well you see the Modernist movement was done to pieces, really it has become something cruel. The time was in the heyday of Picasso and Matisse, people like that, there were people with a definite knowledge and definite power. These are bygones. We are left with artists who are inept people who are being led around by critics. And what I said reverentially about the history of art, I'm not talking about my own feelings about it; I'm not talking about the field of art history which has occasionally has [words not clear]. The art scene as it is, is a bad scene dominated by non-artists and the craft is more dead than it is anything.

D.K. This leads me to two other questions that have bothered me. One is, I think they're related. People, the incredible price of art, I'm not talking about art that allows an artist to make a living, but I'm thinking 50, 60, $70,000, $100,000. I saw a thing by Agam, the kinetic sculptor. He's a French artist, an Israeli; he lives in Paris. I keep thinking for the sum of $50,000 and I know he didn't work on that for a whole year, he couldn't have.

J.L. Well, sculptors have always had very heavy expense.

D.K. Even if his expenses are .

J.L. In materials, the foundry, it has to cost thousands before the artist makes a penny, well that has to be.

D.K. Oh, yea, I don't deny it. What I'm talking about is this business of having people that invest in it. Art becomes a kind of currency, in other words. As an artist, how do you feel if people invest in your art as though it were a stock, in the hopes that it will go up, not really giving a damn, as I'm sure must be the case sometimes.

J.L. Investment is a bad thing, I suppose, catagorically. With me it has this advantage. If I have one exhibition and somebody buys it, they buy it because they want it. And they don't know if they can get their money back, but they just have it because they want it, I can get x hundreds of dollars. Now, if I'm understood as a good investment, and they buy it because they like, because they buy it because at this point and if they want to sell they would need to make a profit. I will get x dollars. The fact that I become an investment is the difference between my working serenely with all the bills pa'd and the other way which means scrounging and teaching and having to do other things. As soon as I became to some degree an investment, I became free from

financial worries, and that in fact is good. And I don't know if I really care that much whether the people who own my work really care for it. Because maybe it will change hands several times and maybe it will be reproduced so people can see excellent reproductions in color, which would be fine as a probable promotion. I don't quarrel with that. There are other things. Some of these vast prices may not be the real prices. Up to now I understand the law has changed, but vast prices were put on things on auction, but were privately sold and whoever put it up had to pay five percent of the estimated price. A certain something is accomplished. In one case one leading artist had a painting sold under him to a Swiss concern which turned up as a Swiss subsidiary of his New York gallery. And this goes on all the time. The trouble is that so much of the art which is done is like this old time gold stock that people used to buy. There was not only no gold in the mine, there wasn't even a mine. I mean there could be a blank canvas but there's public confidence. Well, that's not my concern, although I'm relieved not to have to worry about money and this thing came on me in the past dozen or so years, and it really got very complicated. I'm not a rich man, but I'm damn well not a poor one.

D.K. Do you set the price for your pictures?

J.L. No, I don't. My gallery charges what they can get, and it's more than I would ask for which is why I don't set the price. I mean if I thought, he wasn't even paying me for my time, which happened at one time in my life, I wasn't getting enough to support myself during the time I painted, then I had a quarrel. But if the price of it is more than my needs, good. My daughter has an inheritance, whatever.

D.K. Well, you also travel a great deal.

J.L. I've been traveling quite a bit and that's very pleasant.

D.K. You're not one of those people, did you ever, the thought that crossed my mind, there's a Rembrandt in the National Gallery in London, a young girl wading in a pond, I can't remember the title of it. You know which one I mean. And when I was there, there was something I'd never seen before, and that was somebody else was standing there painting the same thing, copying the master. Have you ever done anything like that?

J.L. I've done very little like that, I did do it when I was a youngster and I was too young to, if I did that I would try to do a forgery. I would try to do something that would x-ray and be something similar.

You see, well, it is a topic itself but Alvin Borrows [spelling not certain] who used to work in the Fogg Museum at home had an interesting thing. He had an x-ray of the central figure of the Concert by Titian. You show an x-ray of that head and then you show an x-ray of an excellent copy of it by a Russian named Nicholas Rokov [spelling uncertain]. You see, the Titian was built, in the x-ray, something like a cameo. What you get in an x-ray, is the atomic weight of the lead [pause] which of the x-ray. So what you get basically is something that practically looks like a piece of sculpture in this thing. It's a relief.

D.K. I've seen a couple of them.

J.L. Manipulated thick and thin, and here the Rokov failed entirely. It just has a surface resemblance, but it was not achieved in a parallel method. The thing that interests me is the parallel method.

D.K. Have you ever had anything of yours forged?

J.L. No. I've had things which were signed with my name, but they couldn't be called forgeries.

D.K. I saw something that said contributed or inspired by Jack Levine in Playboy magazine.

J.L. Yea, I'm aware of it. It was a terrible disaster. Awful.

D.K. I want to thank you for this, I could sit here and learn from you all kinds of things but I don't want to take anymore of your time.

J.L. Well, I've enjoyed it, but one clarifies some things sometimes.

D.K. You can't repay people for this, I just want to thank you.

J.L. It's good for me too.

D.K. After thoughts: This interview was taped on Wednesday, November 27, 1974, between approximately 12:50 a.m. and 4:15 p.m. It was taped in Jack Levine's Studio at 95 Bedford Street in New York. The studio is up five flights of stairs, the top of an old brown-stone structure. The studio contains several canvases being worked on simultaneously, one very large canvas that contains only the outlines of a painting in charcoal, a future painting, a partially painted painting on an easel, and several not completed easels lining the walls. The room is large and it was exceedingly cold in the room during the interview because the heater wasn't working. There was a little tiny heater trying to heat a rather huge room. During the interview Levine smiled often, but laughed rarely. He has a kind of interesting demeanor; he's not at all overbearing. He's a small person,

not a large person. And his paintings' scope is, the power of his paintings couldn't be assumed on the basis of his physical appearance. He's rather frail, rather gentle, very understanding and very patient. The room contained all kinds of art supplies, a small bathroom where Levine keeps a toothbrush, several toothbrushes, several of which, I think, are to brush his teeth with, others are for other purposes. He has a small bottle of mouthwash on his sink. His sink, and he has toothpaste. The bathtub and the toilet and the sink are all covered with paint; his whole studio is covered with paint. He has good light and looks out onto nothing. The studio is for him a world in and of itself, removed from the rest of the world, as he says in the tape, he paints from his mind, from being removed from the world, though he paints the world.

APPENDIX II

INTERVIEW WITH RUTH WEISBERG

D.K. Remember to add things that I don't ask because that's going to be the key to this business. I think we should start with the family background, because I think that's terribly important and those are the things I don't know about you, anyway. Like where were your parents born and when, that kind of thing?

R.W. My father was born in Chicago in 1905 and my mother was born in Philadelphia in 1911. They are both first generation, in other words, it was their grandparents who came, in fact one or two of my sister's older brothers, I mean my mother's older brothers are, were, one was born in Poland, one was born in Berlin, in fact my mother's five siblings they were all born in different places, no two people were born in the same place. The two families are rather different. My father's family is very Orthodox, from Russia.

D.K. Do you know which part of Russia?

R.W. I know White Russia, but it's never been as clear to me exactly where this town, this shtetl was. Whereas I know even on the map where my mother's shtetl was,

and there's a real contrast there. And his father and father before him, they were Abrahams, every other generation was an Abraham - George, Abraham-George, you know, Gershom-Avraham. They worked in the woods, they were innkeepers. And my grandmother from that side, it was her second marriage which was a secret in the family for a long time, and she had a pushcart, that kind of economic level of survival. And they came to the States in 1905 which was of course the big year. No, it must have been a little bit before then because my Dad was born in Chicago. Maybe they came just at the turn of the century, and I know my grandfather Seth was a big man with a big red beard.

D.K. Do you remember him?

R.W. No, no, I never, I mean I never knew either of my grandfathers, but I knew both grandmothers. But he said when he landed in New York that he would go as far west as he could because he felt that your chances would be better if you were not in the center of population, so he went as far as his money took him which was Chicago. And that's why he ended up in Chicago. Now my other grandfather and grandmother have a very different background. My grandmother was one of the Percle family in Yelahov,

which is a shtetl.

D.K. How is that spelled?

R.W. Oh it's spelled several different ways, I know some of the spellings, it's with a Z. And a shtetl outside of Lodz and I've seen photographs of it. I really just have much more connection really with the Yiskor book of Yelohov that what the impetus for doing the shtetl book and my grandmothers death. It really is that side of the family that I'm more connected to. My father was an only child, and in marrying my mother he really rejected a lot of the values that he grew up with because my mother's family was very political, very Zionist but not, kind of anti- it was definitely anti-Orthodox and in some ways anti-organized religion. I mean they substituted some other thing, which was Zionism, a kind of Marxist-Zionism, and my grandfather was supposed to go to Berlin and study for the rabbinate because of his father's long line of rabbis. Instead he started to study engineering and had a double doctorate and began to teach at the University of Berlin and he wooed my grandmother and it was a romance rather than an arranged marriage. And she ran away to marry him. She was one of these fourteen girls, no thirteen girls and one brother, and the girls were beauties, you know, this is all via the

family route. This dry goods merchant in Yelahov which was one of the wealthier families, they fit into that category of the chaine, I don't know how to pronounce it in Yiddish, but

D.K. I don't either.

R.W. But there are all these categories of people, scholarly people, and the merchants, and there was a kind of a nickname for the people who were well-to-do which was the beautiful people. So she ran away and married my grandfather and they had a kind of Bohemian existence as far as I can tell. And ultimately the three Jews that were teaching at the University of Berlin were fired. This was now 1903 or 1904. That kind of a mini-wave of anti-Semitism they were fired from the university, there was to be no Jewish faculty. So it's just about that time was the San Francisco earthquake, you know, whenever the time that the San Francisco earthquake was this is when it happened. So all three engineers decided to go to San Francisco, there was a world wide call for engineers. They left Berlin without their wives and they didn't go in steerage you know, that whole contrast between, my father's family came in steerage, and my mother's family didn't. There was always a kind of conflict, a rivelry between my parents about that background which my mother always won. My father

was very attached to his father particularly and he told stories of his father, but the sense of it was that it was my mother's family, the dominant family the Herps. My mother also adored her father -- worshipped him, and he came to the States and never really got to San Francisco, but did various engineering projects, first in Philadelphia and then ultimately in Chicago.

D.K. And he sent for his family.

R.W. Oh, he sent for his family right away pretty early on and then had more family. Then went to Salt Lake City in Utah to start a Zionist commune with, I've been told how many families, about twenty-five other families. They all went to Utah because they thought it would be like, it wouldn't be like Palestine. They tried to learn to farm, they were preparing themselves.

D.K. Were they attached to a specific movement? Do you know the names, different names like Shomer Hatzair and Habonim.

R.W. It was a specific movement, but I don't know which one it is, or maybe it was one before those.

D.K. Those are pretty early.

R.W. But it was definitely a Socialist Zionist, it had always been told to me that it was Socialist Zionist organization. And it didn't work because the Mormons

cut off their water, there was a lot of hostility and prejudice. To this day my mother hates the Mormons. They had pigeons also and before they left they had to liquidate all these pigeons and eat them. And my mother remembers months of eating pigeons, and no water, and I guess the sense of failure. Anyway, she lived in Utah for about three years, you know while this thing was, while they were do this thing. Ultimately my mother's family went back to Chicago and my grandfather went to work for a big firm where he really did most of the major structural steelwork, you'd recognize the name. And what happened is they wouldn't advance him because he was Jewish, they wouldn't give him proper title.

D.K. It wasn't a Jewish firm, then?

R.W. No, it wasn't a Jewish firm, a regular company. You know, my mother will point out buildings in Chicago, in that Hyde Park area, some of the really tall buildings my grandfather built, in steel. He did bridges. You know there was always a lot of pride in, he was one of the first Jewish engineers in the whole world, but he couldn't advance in the United States. And also his policies were much more radical. So he went back to Russia and he worked for the Bolsheviks, he was one of the engineers on the Moscow

subway. He in some sense deserted my grandmother, but it was all for honorable causes, right. Then he was one of the poeple who became involved in Biro-Bidjan.

D.K. Which is what? I don't know that.

R.W. It was a small Jewish state within the Soviet Union. It was also an experiment to establish a Jewish state, and it was in Siberia. It went on for many years, it was a very interesting, again an experiment to prepare for Palestine, which is interesting vis-a-vis the Russian stand on Palestine today. And it was a farming community, and he helped found it and then returned to the United States in the early 30's to lecture, to raise money for Biro-Bidjan, and the intention was to go back, but he was dying of cancer by that time. He died, let's see my parents went on their honeymoon in '31, and he was still in Russia, so he died in about '33 or '34. I don't know, there are some stories about his reactions to the Purges so, I'm sorry my history's so mixed up.

D.K. It's about that time in the '30's.

R.W. It's about that time. But I think he wasn't in Russia when that happened. So there was, I don't know, my mother's background is curious in a sense that, my grandmother had to really kind of do it on

her own, which is not so untypical of Jewish women of that era. She was really the survivor and the one who somehow made ends meet and it made her into a kind of curious personality. She had a lot of bitterness, she also adored her husband, but, there was a lot of resentment too. Here she was the one who stuck with the five children with very little money coming from him even though he was very, very honored in the community and like his funeral was attended by hundreds and hundreds of poeple. And my mother never got along with her mother but adored her father, even though I think, she ultimately realized that all of her mother's traits were not her fault. But I remember as a girl growing up, with my grandmother coming over. She was always a very, very feisty woman, mischievous, and would start fights and would do all kinds of things like purposely fall off of a streetcar so she could sue the streetcar company. She was always involved in lots of things, she always had something going. But she never also gave up her Socialism. She would propagandize us and bring us pamphlets and, whether it was Socialism or not-smoking, she was very much against cancer. I can remember when I was in my early adolescence she brought pamphlets over about syphilis, which frightened me to death. She was a

political person, very political person. And very much against Orthodox Judaism, all the way through. In high school when I had a very religious boyfriend for a while; I was going steady, Berry Maumerstein. He was from a very Orthodox family, they kept Kosher. She one day when we were all at our house, she didn't have carfare, she lived by herself which was her choice, well I don't know, it wouldn't have been very easy to live with her either. I have this mixture of tremendous admiration for her and real feelings of, that she influenced me and a lot of love for her. But she was not an easy person to get along with. Whenever she was over it was always, you know emotionally tense because of my mother's feelings. Anyway my boyfriend offered her carfare, and she looked at him and in this wonderful thick Yiddish accent, she said, "I wouldn't take your Kosher money."

D.K. That's really, that's priceless.

R.W. She did not approve of this romance. So I also had the sense growing up that I knew I was Jewish, it was a very profound identification for me, there was never any question about, and there were lots of stories told about my family and about the holocaust and about Poland. My grandmother told me stories of the shtetl from the time I was a little girl, but --

D.K. What kind of stories?

R.W. What it was like to live there, all about her sisters and her brother, the family, what it was like to live in Poland in those years, and the prejudice. She had a lot of hatred for the Poles and she was kind of inculcating me with her prejudices also. Which was not true of the feelings of Germany; even, in spite of the holocaust somehow, the Poles were the great hatred rather than the Germans, because she also remembered a very enlightened era in, you know, at the University of Berlin and a whole kind ofintelligentsia that existed in Germany, that didn't didn't exist in Poland. So to her that was kind of an enlightenment, even though there was, my grandfather was fired but there weren't any pogroms. The kind of prejudice was perceived as different and I think World War II, in some sense, came too late in her life for her to change her basic hatred which was the Poles.

D.K. When she described the shtetl, she didn't describe it as a happy place.

R.W. It was a mixture. She described the oppression and the prejudice, but she also described the dancing and the songs and things like that, and the dry goods store which apparently had been a wonderful place to play, and her sisters and her family, which was a

very warm family. So it was a real mixture, both the positive and negative things, it wasn't a fairyland; it wasn't just fiddlers on the roof. She was too politically aware to give me that kind of picture. Also you have to understand that she spoke some very strange combination of Yiddish and English, and what I pieced together, you know I always kind of understood her but it wasn't like a word for word thing, I was always missing some of the words. She was a great talker, she used to talk a lot about it, and I always wanted to know about it. But on the other hand my family didn't belong to a synagogue, which was really unusual in West Rodgers Park. There was synagogue after synagogue on Californa Ave. All my friends but one belonged to a synagogue, and I would be taken with my girlfriends to a synagogue, so it wasn't like I never went to services but I didn't go with my family.

D.K. What kind of services, Reform or Orthodox?

R.W. Mostly Conservative. I must say that I don't think that I, I mean maybe I've been once or twice in my life to Orthodox, once in Rome. And strangely enough, Reform Judaism was looked down upon a little, even by my family. I mean if you were going to be something it would be Conservative, because Reform was

too Protestant, that wasn't Jewish enough. The whole idea of organ music and stained glass windows was really kind of looked down upon. And Orthodox Jewish was too superstitious, too many rules, too much what they had been rebelling against. So Conservative Judaism felt comfortable, I mean that was what they related to the most. And most of the temples were Conservative. And so I had this kind of, I mean there were even people who didn't think I was Jewish in my grammar school because I went to school sometimes on Jewish holidays and things like that. And I had this kind of outside, inside feeling about myself, and one other girlfriend, Connie Steiner, whose parents were Austrian Jews who were atheists, who had pronounced themselves atheists, and they also were in someways ostracized a little in the community. And we would go to school on Jewish holidays. Of course when I went out into the world I discovered myself to be thoroughly Jewish, I mean I was only less religious within that very kind of ghetto childhood.

D.K. You lived in a neighborhood tnat was mostly Jewish?

R.W. Well my grammar school was like ninety percent Jewish and my high school was eighty percent Jewish, so it was, ultimately I saw what was good about that, and could kind of relate to what American Judaism in an urban setting was,

because I always had that high school reference. But on the other hand there were things about my high school that to this day gives me chills down my spine; it was so competitive. Some of the values, it was just, there was such a dual sense of values. On the one hand it was so important to be smart, bright, intellectual and articulate, on the other hand a kind of social climbing and back-bitting that went on, as teenagers to me is still a little terrifying and it really, I think I carried the scars for a long time. The world, until maybe this year with being acting associate dean [last phrase with laughter], the world has never seemed as competitive once I got to college. I mean the most competitive it has ever been is in high school.

D.K. In some ways I feel the same, with my high school, you know Hamilton High School[in Los Angeles]in the 60's was eighty percent Jewish.

R.W. And you know when I talk to people who went to Mumford in Detroit, or whatever the corresponding high school was and there is one i most big cities and there were a few in Chicago, Sullivan's and von Steuben. You have a sense of a fermenting situation, it just sounds different, it certainly sounds different than going to a Protestant high school in a small town. And now certain amount of people are writing books about

these high schools.

D.K. Did you see the "Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz?" Well, it's about a Jewish boy, young Jewish boy who's on the make. And did you ever get that feeling that that's what all these high schools have done, a bunch of Jews on the make and a lot of pushing?

R.W. Right, there's a lot of pushing. I mean, some for good things and some for not, from my value system, but it confused me as an adolescent. I wanted everything, I wanted to be popular but I also wanted to do something with my life and I had a very, very strong sense that I wanted to leave West Rodgers Park, which most of my friends did not do. They're mostly still in Chicago and somehow corresponding situations somewhere else, and I was really one of the few who left. I went to Europe, I did these things.

D.K. We're going to come to that. I want to go back to your parents first. What's your father do?

R.W. My father's an architect.

D.K. An architect, that's right. I knew, I couldnt remember on the plane.

R.W. Which I was always very proud of, that my Daddy's an architect, an unusual thing to be; somehow my parents were more artistic and would write to museums and had friends who were artists and we went to artists' studios, and there was a sense, some of whom were Jewish, most of whom were Jewish, the artists. Many of these people were Siporin, Cohen

that we talked of and who were connected with the WPA, that kind of socialist Jewish artist, is the kind of artist that they related to the most. That represented how a Jewish artist would be. I went to artists' studios even as a really pretty little girl. And then I went to the Art Institute, I went to Saturday classes there from the time I was six to the time I went to college. So that was ten years of going down every Saturday with a portfolio.

D.K. That's a long time. And were your parents also Socialist?

R.W. I think they started out as Socialist and they turned into Democrats and I think they've gotten much more conservative--I mean it's a very typical pattern. And all their friends had been Socialists. They had a very tight group of friends who still to this day represents a certain kind of human beings to me. My mother had a book club. They were all first generation or they had come from Russia or Poland. And they were all Jewish and they were all very intellectual, and a lot of them were social workers, there were some lawyers, and they were very ambitious in their book reviews for a long time, and then as they got older. Now they're not. There's a certain kind of, oh I don't know, not mellowness, more age that has settled. They're getting to be very old, my mother is sixty-four.

D.K. I met them at your house, didn't I? Right, I just couldn't remember the details.

R.W. But many of their friends are older than them and then some

of course are now dying. It's very sad, for me too, and it's very hard on my folks at the moment. People are dying and people have cancer and all those kinds of things, but they always had a kind of Bohemian flavor, this crowd of people. I mean I don't think that there was like sexual hanky-panky but there was always a lot of, like every New Years Eve my Dad would do an adagio dance with Sertta Gertz. I can remember after one of their big parties, and they always did funny skits and acted out things and costume parties. In the morning my sister and I would get up and want to know all about the party. My mother was a good story teller and she would tell us what had happened. You know the idea of being a grownup was this idea of being intellectual and being a little wild. I mean they didn't get stoned and it wasn't, that wasn't the, although they weren't heavy drinkers either, I don't know how htey got high, but they did. It wasn't so different from a certain kind of life style that I ultimately felt at home in the 60's and now, where the model was not that bourgeois, that's not to say that my parents haven't gotten more bourgeois, I think that happens with age. Even the thing with Juda.sm had gotten a little bit more conservative. They wanted my sister's children to go to Sunday school, whereas they didn't care that we went to Sunday school. Which is an interesting kind of contrast. My father's been concerned that my

sister's children who are growing up in Ann Arbor have a sense of their Jewishness. Now I guess growing up in West Rodgers Park you don't have to worry about it in a way, and in an Ann Arbor you'd have to differentiate yourself, there just really aren't that many Jews.

D.K. Your parents weren't Zionists, or anything like that. Did they belong to any of the organizations or --

R.W. Well, their affiliation for many years now has been with ORT, which is not exactly a classical Zionist organization but many of their goals are very Israel oriented. Like recently there was a big fund-raising thing for the Israel Bonds and my mother was one of the three women who money was raised in honor of and they raised, and maybe I'm off by like ten thousand, like $160,000 in my mother's name and then other money. So I think you'd have to say that they were basically Zionist.

D.K. Have they ever travelled to Israel?

R.W. Many times, and they visited the schools, I mean the ORT involvement, my mother's been Mid West regional president.

D.K. There's really an involvement.

R.W. Yea. In my home my Dad was, there was a lot of respect for his profession and a lot of influence but my mother is in many ways the more central personality.

Everything she's ever joined, she's been president of, the idea was you always took a lot of responsibility and you were always the leader. My Dad was always the quiet one, my mother was a talker, and an organizer and a doer and a mover. And so my sister and I were two girls, though I knew my Dad did want a boy. So there was also some, if we didn't do something, there was no brother who was going to do it. The idea was that we were supposed to really do something special with our lives because we were special people, and I always had a sense of that. Which in some cases gave me a lot of difficulty, especially like in high school, because people told me I had a superiority complex and things like that. Of course I was very ashamed of the fact that I should have a superiority complex. Yet at home I was always given the sense that I was special and should try to be special.

D.K. Did your parents encourage you to do whatever you wanted to do or did they have a model in their mind?

R.W. They had a very complex model in their mind, which only revealed itself over the years, and the thing that was so confusing about it, and still is, is that I was supposed to do everything somehow. I was very bright and I was very artistic and once I decided to be an artist they were, I mean they didn't

force that on me. First of all I was so young when I decided that I think it amused them, although I never felt ridiculed about it, but it was always an amazing thing. Ruth had decided she's going to be an artist, and there I was six years old. But they were very supportive, and there were a lot of lessons available to me. I took dancing and clarinet and art and when I wanted to quit clarinet and quit dancing, although I regret quitting dancing lessons, that was okay, they talked to me about it. And I never wanted to quit art, and the assumption was that I was going to be an artist and that was a wonderful thing to be but then the assumption also was that I was going to get married and have a family. For many years I said I wasn't going to have a family and that was very upsetting. Sometimes the way I've lived or some of my political involvements have disturbed my parents. So I think one of my problems over the years has been, and now I can laugh at it more and point it out to them, but one of the problems has been everytime I achieved something I was pointed out something else tha they wanted me to do. And so I'm a really deeply engrained need achiever.

D.K. You were supposed to be Leonardo da Vinci, like all of us.

R.W. But a Jewish Leonardo.

D.K. Right, there's something about that that is true. Do your parents have a good sense of humor, do they laugh a lot? It sounds like they do.

R.W. My mother's more of a joke teller, I think this whole milieu as I said was a lot of fun. My father's I never heard him tell a joke in my whole life, and in that sense he was very different from other people's fathers, right, he was not a clown, ever. He was always quiet and more gentle and he had very fixed opinions; he had a feeling about a thing, that was it. Whereas my mother was very changeable. My father added a lot of stability to my life. He's a shrugger of shoulders; he's that kind of a man, he's a big man, you know he's shrunken a little in old age. There's a lot about his physical presence. And you know he lived in this rather exotic world of Greeks, he designed mainly restaurants, and he would take me on a job. And this was somehow, I mean he really wanted a boy and he would take me to the ball game and he would take me on the job, there was a limit, I mean he didn't teach me carpentry and I regret that

enormously. There's a way in which I've always been comfortable in shops and around working men. I was used to going down to meet the sheet metal man and the carpenters, you know, there was this whole masculine world that intrigued me and was very fascinating. The installation of restaurants is really a very fascinating thing, and if we'd go to a restaurant that he'd done, we'd get to go into the kitchen and they'd bring us out special dishes. It was an aspect, you know Chicago was my oyster, my walnut, and they were very much Chicagoans and they knew a lot of people and they knew a lot of places and it was an exciting place to grow up. We did things, a lot of things together.

D.K. You did do family things together.

R.W. Right. Or sometimes I would go off with my father without my mother and my sister. So I also had that.

D.K. Who's older?

R.W. My sister's older and my sister became an architect.

D.K. Is she still?

R.W. She's, she free-lances now; she designs people's homes; she lives in Ann Arbor; she's married to a doctor and has three children and has somehow took the other of the role model. She became less professional, less oriented to her career, although she's kept it up to some extent. But she has the three children and she's married to a doctor. It wasn't that my parents wanted

their daughter to marry a doctor, but it is the other side of the role model for a Jewish girl, right. He does very well.

D.K. Was there conflict between the two of you in your life, was it like, I mean did you get along?

R.W. She was four years older than I. And I think one of the things that happened was, my mother being such an aggressive, articulate, talkative person, was that you could take two states. You could either be a shrugger of shoulders and kind of retreat somewhat which is what my father, I mean that's simplifying things. Both my father and my sister tended to kind of create their own world, and I just competed with my mother like mad. Occasionally I retreated but mostly I tried to outtalk her, or I tried to meet her on her own terms. And I'm very close to my mother and I'm identified with my mother, I look like her and sometimes it was very confusing to me whether I was my mother or not. Whereas my sister was a distinctly different personality, seemed very mature, she was always a quiet child. I think one of the really important influences which I've just realized is that there was an older sister. My parents had a child that they named Isabel, and that's two years before my sister was born, who died of pneumonia when she was just about three

months old. Now the, I don't think I was ever kind of aware of what a terrible tragedy that was or how hard that was on my parents until I have a child and saw how attached you are to your three month baby. And when my sister was born, and my mother really tried to have a big family, she kept having miscarriages, my Dad who had been an only child wanted to have lots and lots of children, so they kept trying to have children and then finally they had my sister after, there was a miscarriage in between, they had my sister. And they were so protective of her, you know that she was dressed real warmly, and whatever combination of genes and environment, she was always quiet, and a very serious child. When I came along they relaxed more, which of course is typical of second child raising, and I was apparently very much like my child, I was a very exuberant child. People still talk about what I was like as a child because apparently I was, I wasn't wild but I laughed all the times and was doing funny things. I entertained my family then and I was the baby sister and my sister took care of me a lot. And I think they were ultimately conflicts about clothes and all the things that children fight about, but since she was four years older she was much more the older sister and she had the personality of the older sister. For years and

years I always had her on a pedestal, and it was only, over some incidents regarding my first marriage that there was any kind of a split and any kind of a feeling that there were things about my sister, she had faults, I just saw her as, I mean I saw all the quietness as maturity and that for many years I thought that when I'll grow up I'll be like my sister. But of course I never did become like my sister. And she also had a lot of influence on my taste, the poets she read, the books she read, the pictures she looked at, she wanted to go to Europe. There was one summer where my, in 1955 my parents went to Europe, it was some big anniversary I guess maybe it was their twenty-fifth anniversary, I think so. And we went to California. I lived with my aunt and my sister went to UCLA, she was eighteen. And that summer we were very very close and she told me all her dreams, you know that she was going to Europe and what she was going to do. And the strange thing is that she didn't do any of the things she had dreamt. She came back to Michigan that fall semester and met her husband-to-be and kind of really settled down. But I did all the things my sister wanted to do.

D.K. What was your house like specifically, what, can you describe some of what, you obviously knew artists and had books, and what kinds, what was it like?

R.W. Well, first of all there were two houses and they were both very very important. I haven't talked about the Dunes at all.

D.K. What's the Dunes?

R.W. Other than people, you know, it's, other than maybe my immediate family, it was the most formative influence. Maybe I'll talk about the city house first and then the country house. We lived in a big brick apartment building. When we first moved in it was in this neighborhood that was mostly Lutheran. There had been apartment buildings built in the 20's and since the crash, so there was just empty lots for blocks and blocks. And as I grew up everything built up. I spent a lot of my childhood playing in houses that were going up, that's where you played, there were very few playgrounds. One temple that had swings and that was it, and then there was a playground about a mile away. It's curious to me to think about how little we made do with, we played in the alley a lot. But the house itself, though, was very beautiful. My Dad was an architect and although we lived in an apartment, he had paneled the whole living room in Philippine mahoganey, which of course doesn't exist anymore, it was honey colored wood, it was just beautiful, and it's aged beautifully. And it was bookshelves on two sides and then a big bay of windows.

The furniture changed over the years but it was always really quite beautiful and there was always a lot of art on the walls and it was always original. And there was some sculpture, ceramics, they were collectors. As I got older their collection got more and more interesting. Now the house in some ways is too full, because they're limited by the size of their apartment, and they have to have all my things up, and then all these other things, so it's gotten a little fussy, as many people's houses do when they reach, I mean my house is already too full so I'm really sympathetic with the problem. It was a very beautiful, very aesthetic house and they were always changing, putting more wood panel in and ultimately they put stain glass in the dining room which was right, with the bank of windows, right next to the other house. There's a brick house right near it so it's sort of looking out at the brick through the windows. And so it also got in some ways more bourgeois, all the appliances and things like that.

D.K. Did you have your own room?

R.W. I had my own room and I got, it was blue and white checked. Then when I was about seven or eight . got to pick all the material in the room and have my room redone. And I picked a very kind of contemporary turquoise and brown print, and then there were brown

covers on the bed. I was pretty decoratorish, when I look back on it now it really makes me laugh but that's what I liked. And my sister picked something also very modernistic in chartreuse and she had a blond wood and I had cherry; I had a dark wood and she had a light wood. But we did this, those kind of, there's a lot of democracy in the family, when we went out to restaurants we'd get to vote, and it was always my sister and I voting for the Chinese restaurants and my parents voting for the delicatessen. That was always the split, not always but often the split. So we would trade back and forth, those were the two favority cuisines, as in many Jewish neighborhoods.

D.K. You were lucky you could find a delicatessen, that's one of the good things about Chicago. Did you ever have any pets?

R.W. I had two cats, I had a cat when I was four, a very wild cat named Mrs. who my father ultimately ditched somewhere; he didn't like the cat. He was just, there are stores about the cat, the cat is a source of a stories. And then I had a cat when I went to college for just about a semester that ultimately my roc ate took. We have a cat now, I love cats, I don't like dogs at all. My mother's always been very afraid of dogs and it's so nice to have a cat. I feel privileged

that I have a pet, in that sense I think I'm a very urban child. We used to, like even in grammar school you used to read about Dick and Jane and their dog Spot, who could relate? Who had a dog? Ultimately later people had dogs a little bit more, that was a novelty to me, that somebody first of all should be named Dick and Jane. Who knew anybody named Dick and Jane? Everybody was named Susie, Steven, Michael, David, and Sharon.

D.K. Those are common names. Very few Idas too, those are my generation. Okay.

R.W. So the house in the country.

D.K. Oh, right you had another house.

R.W. So there was always this kind of funny split, my parents really tried to raise me with kind of liberal to socialist values. I mean I can remember the day when I was six that they told me about, you know about you Mcsomething, only certain amounts of people from different countries could come to the United States.

D.K. Like the immigration restrictions, I don't know which.

R.W. I don't remember whose names is [sic] attached to that. It was with another very different kind of fami.y. My mother and Sara Cornack [spelling uncertain], there, out in the Dunes, told me about restrictive immigration, and then I had some more questions about the United States and did

we do things wrong and --

D.K. How old were you then?

R.W. Six. I just, I could remember this day, I remember how we were sitting in chairs, outside in the sun, and they told me about it, and I cried and cried. I was really upset, but I never have felt, you know about how a lot of people were about America even until they were teenagers or into the 60's. I always had this view of it, as a very imperfect political situation. It really is interesting. I think that was very formative and that my parents in some ways always respected my intellect, they did not baby me, in fact if anything they erred on the other side. I was very precocious as a youngster. I read things very, very early. I read books that were much too advanced for me, and I loved to read and I, and they showed me off and they talked to me about intellectual things very early. But part of that was good, you know a lot of it was good, maybe it was just a little forced. But anyway, during the summer - -

D.K. That was one of the questions I had not gotten to. It's funny, I was told about an old essay I had written and about how important it was that we were all good Americans and this was in 1963, and that was very late, and so I can see that as -- Did they ever talk to you about any other kinds of political things,

were you, did they talk to you, did you watch the news or listen to the news or read the newspaper and discuss it. Like what did you talk about over dinner, did you ever talk about, did you talk about the things that most people talk about, what they did during the day or did you talk about serious things, did you discuss.

R.W. I think we did both. One of the things that was always very nice was my Dad shared his experiences, he would tell you what job he was working on and how things were going, what was happening. My mother also would, you know especially once I got into grammar school was not home a lot. I made my own lunch, she was going off to meetings. I think it's very curious to look back because you know I began to go downtown by myself in Chicago when I was eight years old.

D.K. That's very young.

R.W. It's very young, I don't think it could be done today maybe even. I babysat for myself very early. My mother wanted me to be very independent, I mean all the things that happened that now are seen as Womens' Liberation things but weren't touched in those terms. She worked very actively for the PTA but there w re people who thought that she was a very bad mother because she was not with me that much and yet as I got older, much older. Hi, she's going to be on the stage.

My daughter. A break?

D.K. Oh sure, then we have to talk about the other house which we haven't really talked about. We went off onto the political business.

R.W. What we talked about at the dinner table. I think they really made an effort when we were children to talk about ideas, ask us what we did during the day, and to kind of not, to use it as a springboard to talk about interesting things. They were very, they were that kind of parents that really want their children to grasp concepts early and to have values. I think sometimes we were encouraged to have values that they couldn't live up to, and that there came an age in which this really began to bother me and I, from rereading some of diaries I know there were times later in my adolescence when my parents would be talking about furs or jewelry or very material things that I was very angry at them. There was a kind of a double message that material things were not important and then later, that you should not be a fool about money. This whole thing about the value of money, which is also very Jewish, that you shouldn't be taken. My father had stories about selling black people cigars, five cent cigars at a dollar a cigar, which was an honorable thing to do, that was okay as long as you weren't the one who

bought the nickel cigars for a dollar. That was always, that was one of my Dad's funny stories. I really never ever found it that funny, I always, there was always that other message about Black people being good people and brotherhood and all this kind of thing. This really public stance of not being prejudiced against black people. My mother always made this tremendous effort which are cleaning ladies to be, she would always sit down and eat with them. But still they were the cleaning, the black people we knew were the cleaning ladies, right. Their life was not integrated, they didn't even know many people who were Jewish, much less, I mean the people who weren't Jewish were Greek because of my Dad's business. So I didn't really know any Protestants until I was in high school and I made friends with the Carter twins who were very exotic to me. Their values were the values that, I mean I can understand what happened, and I think it did happen to a lot of people who are exactly in my generation. Because when I talked to people in the 60's when people acted on these political and social concerns, their parents who had inculcated them all, couldn't always go along with them, and were sometimes very disturbed by what they had started and began to pull back.

D.K. Is it happening to you at all?

R.W. Well, maybe it will, at this point I think Alicia is too young for me to, I do want to try to be consistent. I think I --

D.K. What I meant is about your values changing and your becoming a little more bourgeois, in a position of authority now and --

R.W. That's a very good question.

D.K. Do you see that at all happening? Because it's like, you know this business about the dress and I see it happening to me a little bit. You know I wear a suit, coat and tie, something I didn't own three years ago because of a position. And I remember the first time I saw you at USC [University of Southern California] and you were wearing a skirt and a sweater. And I thought, Wow, you've got legs. It never occurred to me, that was one of the first things that came into my mind, because I'd always seen you in jeans. And I wonder if that is happening to you a little bit now, that kind of thing.

R.W. It's not a question that I don't ask myself fairly often, and it's always, I've always had a kind of a variety of, there's one thing I've always liked about myself is that I'm comfortable in a lot of different situations and I'm pretty fluid and I can, part of that I learned when I lived in Italy. There's just lots of different roles, and I think after you complete

your adolescence; in your adolescence it's very confusing because you wonder who you are when you take these different roles. Now I'm very centered and I know who I am and so when I change these more superficial manifestations, it doesn't disturb me very much and I can do a lot of different things that way. I can talk to a lot of different people and I can talk to black people on the street and I can talk to administrators at USC and that's a pretty wide range of people. But it isn't that I don't have some feelings of discomfort, like our support group at USC is all these Pasadena society women who I know have no Jewish friends, and that I feel just a little uncomfortable about that. I sometimes feel that I'm the Jew in the non-Jewish situation. But whether I become bourgeois, I think everybody's become more bourgeois in the 70's. There isn't the same milieu to relate to as in Ann Arbor and there isn't if you go back to Ann Arbor, as it turns out. But I do feel like I'm a 60's person who's just waiting around for the 80's or something. I'm not in tune with the 70's and I'm not trying real hard to be, it's just not my decade. That's kind of my basic feeling about it.

D.K. Ok, let's go back to the house.

R.W. So the Dunes had been founded by a group of Socialists

again who had originally shared cabins as communes, summer communes, and they were shacks and there was no electricity and there was outdoor plumbing and it was kind of this whole trip of not, that has come up over and over again, of not being too concerned with material possessions. And ultimately as people got married and grew up and had children and the cabins, on the whole, became family-based. But not all of them, some of them are still shared by more than one family. And there were groupings, there were really a lot of interesting, there people from the University of Chicago and the Chicago Symphony. A lot of people who were teachers and mostly Jewish people, but not all Jewish people. All had this kind of Bohemian Socialist style.

D.K. Were these your parents' closest friends?

R.W. Some of them were their closest friends but some were not. There was a whole group of friendships that took place even in the winter, and all the children of these families have always felt a tremendous communality, and I still feel it, enormous. But I can see them today and there's a bond, an enormous bond.

D.K. Do you keep up a little with them?

R.W. Yes. And it was a very beautiful place and we lived in this tar paper shack. You couldn't live there in

the winter, there was no heat and you wore your old clothes. And wherever you were for lunch you were, you couldn't telephone your mother and tell her where you were. I think it was lonely for my mother my Dad only came up, I know it was lonely for my mother, my Dad only came out on the weekends. But it was paradise, it was heaven on earth. There was swimming and hiking.

D.K. Where was this?

R.W. It was in the Indiana sandunes and it was very very beautiful. It's now all polluted and there are steelmills, I mean when I was sixteen, the steelmills owned the land and we had leases, and then they came in and took their leases up and they built Burn's Harbor which was at that time Burn's Ditch. But that's who I was, and I did an enormous amount of my adolescent kind of identity crisis, I went off by myself and I would think about things, eternity and death and the stars and all the things that one thinks about, and I sketched a lot. But a lot of it was just seeing and exploring and naming things and having a whole piece of the earth that you totally identified with, and still, and when it did die, I mourned it like the closest of friends and I still have tremendous feelings of longing for the Dunes. And I think for many years it was like a myth for me,

like that's when I was the happiest in my life. And it took me some time for me to get over that, which I don't think was healthy in a way, it was like there was something in the past that always was more beautiful. The summer I was nine was the most happy time in my life so my personality in some sense my personality, my identity got centered too far back. It was harder to live in the present because of this loss.

D.K. How old were you when this was?

R.W. Sixteen. And I still dream of it and I wake up with these feelings of longing and I sometimes go back and the house is still there. They destroyed it, I know that, but in the dream they haven't destroyed it, or sometimes I go back and I see it destroyed and I cry and I cry and I cry. And also losing it at that age of sixteen coincided with losing my childhood which was a real loss. And I think there were some ways in which I never felt, I mean I felt pushed out of my childhood by my mother particularly. I had to be grown up and I had to be mature and so holding on to the Dunes meant holding on to a lot of other things as well.

D.K. And that was the summer activity almost every summer?

R.W. Right, every summer. Oh there was some summers when I went to camp for three weeks.

D.K. What kind of camp?

R.W. Camp CHI, the Chicago Hebrew Institute. I went to the poor kids camp.

D.K. What was that?

R.W. Oh, Camp CHI was a pretty fantastic place. My mother had gone before me and it's a Kosher Camp.

D.K. Your mother had gone when she was a?

R.W. When she was a kid. It's a Chicago Institution and it's for three-week sessions. Now a lot of the kids in my neighborhoo, which was a fairly wealthy neighborhood, went to eight-week camps where they had horses. But I went to a three-week camp and there were children in the camp that were sent by Jewish agencies that were from poor Jewish families. Not everybody there was from my neighborhood, there were kids from the West Side and the South Side. There was much more emphasis on again somewhat Socialist Jewish ideas and you were supposed to have, you know they weren't really totally at home with their arts and crafts program and their outdoor program. I mean this was a little bit, it wasn't new but it was never the emphasis, the emphasis was on, when I was in camp the emphasis was on learning Jewish dances and doing plays, you know a lot of dramatics. That's really where I learned to do all the Jewish dances and a lot of Jewish songs.

D.K. You know how to do them?

R.W. Yes, and we were Kosher at camp. Folk songs were just coming in at this time and I was --

D.K. What year was that?

R.W. Well it was early for folk songs really.

D.K. What were about the years?

R.W. I was born in 1942 and I went to camp the summers that I was like twelve, thirteen and fourteen so it was early 50's. I met later some of the guys who were the kitchen crew. One of them was one of the founders of the SDS [Students for a Democratic Society] also, and they were into folk music early and it was Negro spirituals so there was a lot of that learning Negro spirituals. But that fit in with the value system of that camp. It was a good camp. And my very closest friends went with me, especially the last summer, Conny Steiner.

D.K. Did you like going away?

R.W. I liked going to camp, and then after camp I went to the Dunes. So my summers were wonderful. By that time my winters were more confusing, there was beginning to be cliques and popularity and --

D.K. We're going to come to that, I have a whole, that's on the other side of my paper. There's a question that I haven't asked, and we'll talk about school in a minute because I think it's, I have a feeling it's

important. What's your earliest memory that's something?

R.W. My earliest memory, I've thought about this because all my early memories have to do with being embarrassed. The first memory is getting lost in, there's a belt of forests around Chicago called the forest preserves and my mother was a Brownie leader and I went out with the Brownie troop. I was three or four. And I got lost, I was found in among another group of Brownies but I thought it was the Brownies I was supposed to be with, and when they told me tha I'd spent half the afternoon with these strangers, I burst out crying. And I remember sitting on top of this table, usually there's a visual memory. And that's my first memory. And my second memory has to do with my grandfather on my father's side who had a cigar factory.

D.K. Very common, very big business, I just found out.

R.W. Right and my grandfather had already died but we were visiting old friends of my grandfather's and he had died before I was born and people were rolling cigars and I went to lean over to look at the cigars and I did an arabesque and everybody laughed and I remember it was a fairly dark room and all these old people with cigars the laughter.

D.K. Well, those are interesting memories. Were you shy?

You were embarrassed?

R.W. No, I don't think, other people's image of me is not as a shy child at all.

D.K. But your own?

R.W. But my own early memories are of embarrassment, of humiliation, of being unaware of myself. I think I became fairly self-conscious. I think there was a drive to become self-conscious so I would not embarrass myself. Maybe this is just socialization.

D.K. I don't know how it works either. I have the same feelings, although my earliest memories are the difference, of sailing at Balboa. Did you do well in school?

R.W. I did pretty well in grammar school, I had a very mixed career in grammar school.

D.K. Let's see what were the dates for these, I guess they're pretty standard.

R.W. Right, '42 so I must have started school when I was five which is '47, so I was in first grade in '48. We went to California for a couple of months when it was 1948.

D.K. What did you do in California? To visit your aunt?

R.W. My aunt was having a baby and was having difficulty so my mother went out to be with her and we went to the California schools; I have pretty vivid memories of that. I went to J. P. Manloks [spelling uncertain] in North Hollywood.

And it seemed very easy to me and they had long recesses. I was a very bright little girl, but when I got into the fourth grade I had a schoolteacher named Mrs. Lawson and I had her for two and one half years which is illegal in Chicago, you're not supposed to have a teacher for that long, but I did, who did not like me at all, apparently I was big for my age and I was very squirmy and her favorite little girls all wore raggedy pinafores, you know ruffly pinafores that were real sweet. To this day in my mind she was a very Protestant woman and a lot of the ways that we were she wasn't comfortable with, but I was also a real squirmy kid and we had bolted down seats, we had to sit still, and we had to raise our hands to go to the toilet, kind of incredible things vis-a-vis what childhood education is like now. Some of the teachers in that school I think were able to overcome it and make it where you could get up, but the whole, this was a woman who thought it was really important to sit still and I couldn't do it. And I didn't do as well in her class. And then a whole group of my friends were skipped and I wasn't skipped, and my mother was very unhappy about it and the school psychologist was called in to test me and see what my IQ was and my IQ was very very high and it was decided that I was to be put into another class provisionally

and though I might be skipped later, I was ultimately skipped. But there was this whole kind of traumatic period where I wasn't skipped and then I was skipped and for two and one half years Mrs. Lawson, or Miss Lawson rather, I can remember that I made up a song, "I hate Lawson in the spring time, I hate Lawson". And she really was a grey hair, rimless glasses, tight little grey curls, she was a real spinster, uptight lady. God that was hard, and I began to hate school and I would sneak in books, much more advanced, you know I'd read the text real fast and then I'd sneak in books.

D.K. Like what, do you remember any of them?

R.W. Oh, listen, I read D.H. Lawrence, I wanted to read all these sexy books.

D.K. What grade was this?

R.W. It was really early, I was like nine or ten when I began to read these things. The Gypsy and the something or other, The Gypsy and the Virgin, really early. I don't know what I made of all this, exactly. I also was growing up very fast, I was big for my age, I was a woman earlier than the other little girls and that was also very confusing and little upsetting. I was very very tall for my age. I stopped growing at eleven, so I was practically this height at eleven. And I had very posture for a while. I was much more

interested in the boys than the boys were in us, you know all those kind of problems. But it also meant that I was probably more mature and more advanced and so when I was skipped I was more comfortable. Ultimately in high school I went to summer school twice, I was a full year ahead of myself by the time I got out of high school and I was more comfortable, with that group. That's where I probably should have been. High school also, I only really did well in the difficult classes like chemistry. I did very badly in[lost word]and had kind of mixed grades and I think 100th in a class of 500. This was very disappointing to my parents because I was so bright. But I wasn't able to perform in high school, because I was alienated in some sense. I mean I didn't have such a fancy word for it, but I was turned off. I put my energies into other things, I didn't do badly being 100th in the class, but I didn't sit on the stage, I wasn't in the National Honors Society, as my sister had been. It was kind of like my school had a special class to prep kids for the National Merit Exams and we had the highest number of National Merit winners in the state. There were an enormous number of really bright kids in that class, and ultimately my roommate in college, the two of us, didn't make this prep class for the National Merit,

yet we got into the semi-finals we had 99.8. In any other state except New York and Illinois, I would have gotten the National Merit, I would have been a finalist, but not there. And that was some sort of vindication for me, see, I am just as bright, see I did better than most of the kids who took the class and I didn't even take the class, that kind of thing. And I did very well in my college boards; I think really got into college on those scores, because I got into Michigan which was very hard to get into. Well it might have also been because my sister was there but you know that combination of things. But I did manage to get a very good college which was important at that time, everybody was going to college. But I --

D.K. You started college in which year then? That was a year ahead of yourself so it was 1959. Someone told me once it's important to have dates.

R.W. But I'm used to, I have to do the chronology myself, I'm not sure when I went where. I don't go by years, more aging. I actually graduated when I think I was sixteen.

D.K. Well wait a second, you were born in, that was 19[illegible]8. That's right, your birthday's in July so you would have graduated at sixteen, that's right. What kind of activities were you involved in in your junior high

and high school?

R.W. There's no junior high school. You go from eighth grade.

D.K. Okay, from eighth grade. Well from the time you were twelve, what did you do in addition to go to school?

R.W. Well I did a lot. Well at the beginning I tried, I mean one of the crushing things was when I graduated grammar school I was, I mean it, some of it had to do with my mother, everything took place at our house, and the kids always came to our house after school, and I had a boyfriend Howie Olefsky, [spelling uncertain].

D.K. When did you have your first boyfriend?

R.W. Well you know we were all very precocious. The first time a boy ever called me up to go to the movies, we were in the fifth grade.

D.K. That is a little precocious.

R.W. But then it stopped for a while and everyone hated the boys. But by the time we were in eighth grade there were dates in some sense, at least people were coupled off and I had a boyfriend. He was just a real quiet, nice little boy, except he was tall which was one of the main things. But when I got to high school, his older brother was in high school and he told Howie he shouldn't have a girlfriend, shouldn't come into high school encumbered with a girlfriend, so he dropped me. And that whole first semester in

high school I didn't get to dance at all. We had a high school auditorium where you went at lunch-time, everybody danced and I didn't get to dance because I didn't have a boyfriend anymore. Something happened between grammar school and high school in which, and I didn't get into any of these social sororities. I was in my yearclub, there were these four year clubs and I didn't get into them and it was a tremendous trauma because I'd really been expecting, you know there was such a difference in popularity, in my own popularity between eighth grade and my first year in high school. My first year in high school was absolutely miserable and my sister had said, they're not important, don't even try to get into them. She had kind of gone through this thing and not been in the inner circle, she had not been popular, but she felt that it wasn't important and she told me all this, but I tried anyway. I wanted everything and I didn't get in and I was crushed, this was the beginning, she's got a superiority complex, and people didn't like me for the same reasons that I'd been in a powerful, in grammar school and a leader, those traits were found obnoxious when I got to school. And I'm sure I was obnoxious, in looking back I was totally obnoxious. In that first year of high school was very

devastating and the second year wasn't so happy either. But I did better as I said the difficult classes and I kind of got interested in some subjects, mostly science and math because they were the difficult subjects, and I wasn't an art major in high school because it was too easy. But I went every Saturday to Mr. Jacobs' class at the Art Institute and I was very involved with that, very identified.

D.K. You've been involved since you were six.

R.W. Right. Then the high school class at the Institute, the high school level class was very, very good. They were just extremely good. When I got to college there was a real contrast between how good they'd been and at the Art Institute, the instruction was on a very high level for high school students. There were kids from all over the city and I'd make friends with kids, you know the serious students came back the rest of the year. And there were Black kids in your classes and this was my first and only contact with like Catholics and Blacks and all other kinds of kids. It was very good for me for lots of different reasons, but also because it became my identity. When I got to my junior year in high school, I got scared about being an artist. I realized how hard it was going to be and by this time I had found a certain ability to be by myself. I would go down

to the Art Institute very early with my Dad, like 8:30 or 9:00, and I'd go when it would open up and I would wander for hours and I would sometimes stay, later. So I saw every exhibit that came during that year, like every week, I'd see it, like thirteen times or fourteen times. There was a very important Matisse exhibit that came in '53 and another one of Picasso. And I literally memorized the placement of every picture that was in the Art Institute. I knew their collection down to the smallest little glass vase, and I loved it. The truth is that I was most, it was always like I had a secret life, right. There was this high school thing that I had to do and but where I was and the things I would day-dream about, was the Art Institute which is of course a fantastic museum. So in becoming familiar with their whole collection, I was really giving myself a whole kind of museum in my head which I still have. I can still go in and out of the rooms as they were arranged in 1955. And the Dunes, these were the two places that, I would read poetry and draw pictures and had all these kind of moony adolescent identifications but they were good, and I think they were what gave me my balance in this really kind of miserable period of my first two years in high school. In my last two years of high

school, all these kind of bright, basically shy kids began to be more important in the high school, and all the very social kids somehow they were, there were some alternatives and choices and we got more mature. By the time I was in my senior year I was friendly with a completely different set of people who were active in the yearbook and the newspaper, and I was editor of the yearbook and I was very active and had extracurricular things in high school by the time I finished. But it was a different set of people, and all my friends were in the National Honor Society except Nora Plosovsky [spelling uncertain] and I. And we were the only ones who weren't, didn't get top grades. But they were all the brightest kids, they were interesting. By the time of my senior year people were getting to be beatnicks, we would read Ferlingetti and we went to hear jazz and we were getting very sophisticated. I mean now when I see high school kids I realize it isn't so sophisticated, but we wore black stockings, black skirts, and black sweaters, white lipstick. We did the whole kind of beat, that was the thing to be when you were a senior in high school which was 19, you know it was Bohemian, and then I went to college in Lake Michigan and there was a lot of that. Folk music, there was the Kingston Trio, but that wasn't

really it. Of course, if you talk to Kelyn about being there in '59 and '60, he was very involved with the folklore society which was, those people ultimately became the political activists. But the big things in 1959 and '60 were the folk songs and poetry was also very, very important. And I was also very into poetry.

D.K. What kind of poetry?

R.W. Oh, everything. I read everything. I was a voracious reader and I read very ambitiously all through high school and I did that a lot, I mean that was, every night I would read in bed and there were good books. And my mother had a lot to do with that, and I read all of James Joyce and I read Gide, that was one of my sister's favorites. And I read Proust, I read the Russian novels, I read Dostoevsky. There was very, very good literature, Ibsen, Strindberg, that's the kind of things I read.

D.K. Okay, so you're in --

R.W. And I wrote poetry too. But I mean that wasn't a major kind of expression.

D.K. Did you ever write anything else?

R.W. No, just some stories that I wrote. I had a diary.

D.K. That you kept?

R.W. Which I kept for a while. But mostly poetry. I'm still very involved with poetry, I read a lot of

poetry, it's still very important. And I see, the ideas, some of the ideas that are discussed in poetry, the aesthetics of poetry, are still very influential on my work, and I'm very concerned with the idea of metaphor and simile rather than symbol for instance. I think that a lot of the kind of basic aesthetics and of terminology I use come from the aesthetics of poetry rather than visual.

D.K. That's interesting, we'll come back to that, I just want to make a note of that. So you got to college and what happened then? You moved away from home, right?

R.W. I moved away from home and went up to Michigan. My sister, I think it was the first year of her marriage, and that was very traumatic, she didn't really want me to be there. She and her husband were going through, I learned much later, a very hard time for various reasons in their first year of marriage. I didn't know that and I was very confused by her pushing me away and it was a very bad year for my sister; and ', I missed my mother a lot and I wrote her pretty often. And then by this time, when I was graduating high school I had a boyfriend named George Hart who had been a Hungarian refugee, not during the Hungarian revolt, not during that year, actually his father had been

killed by the Nazis and his mother had been in a concentration camp and this was also a very important part of his identity and his mother had married a German who had saved her life in the concentration camp, who ultimately became in the post-war era the German ambassador to Austria but then was a night-club owner. The whole story about that family is very interesting and very strange, but the whole thing about how his life was saved and how he survived in wartime Hungary, what he weighed at the end of the war. But he was, curiously enough, he was much of a Germanophile, part of it was this new father, but part of it was something do do with the war, but I never, there was a part of himself that was very shut off from his wartime experiences. He was older then I, considerably older, he must have been born in about '38, '39. He was really a little boy during the war, I think it really marked him. He looked older, I guess he was four years older than I but he was still in high school when I first met him because he was behind because of when he'd come over. He'd come over when he was eleven. I was ahead. I guess he was in college when we met, but I remember him in high school. He was very handsome, he was a very exotic figure to me. He was very sophisticated and knew all about jazz, and ultimately

I realized that there wasn't that much in common and there wasn't that much depth, but I fell very much in love with him and we were going to be married when I was eighteen. My mother was all in favor of it, she really liked him. Which, I think there was a lot of vicariousness in that too. And I think that by this time there was a lot, my mother and father passed through some kind of a difficult period, and my mother was living through me an awful lot, at this period. And that was really beginning to be a strain. So I went to Michigan and I roomed with this childhood friend from the Dunes named Nora Posovsky [spelling uncertain], I did very well in college, I got straight A's, and my mother was vindicated. Ruthie really was as bright as we've always been saying. Then they went up to the, at the end of that year there were some ceremonies for people who had such and such an average and they came up for it. My mother let every single one of her friends know I'm sure, but I was unhappy. I mean I loved school, but I was unhappy at college. My sister who I had visited had much more of the kind of the undergraduate, one of the things that happened to me I think that my sister, like my sister's days in high school have a nostalgia to me. And the songs that were popular when

she was a teenager seemed very magical and romantic. And when she went to college and I could come up and visit her as a high school student, and there were fraternity boys. When I got to college I couldn't give a damn about it, but somehow it was all over by the time I got there. It's a funny way.

D.K. That happened in my family too, with my younger brother Tommy who's four years younger than we [i.e. my twin brother and me] are, and saw all these things through us, couldn't wait to get to high school. And he became president of the high school, but it wasn't the same high school and it wasn't the same thing, and he got to college and it wasn't the same thing already. He was there for the last quarter of the demonstration. So we left, they stopped, and here he was because --

R.W. And my sister had lived in this wonderful integrated dormitory situation where there was men's houses and women's houses and I lived way up on the hill, Mary Markley and it was awful, it really was awful. We were very isolated and you know when you go to art school you're in class all day so I just threw myself into the classes and loved it. And in my humanities courses too I really liked it, English, one of the English classes wasn't so good, but the other was excellent and I liked, I just being in college in terms

of the academics. But I wasn't very happy and I didn't date, because George was in the service and he was in Germany and I was being faithful and all this kind of stuff. So I didn't date anybody else. I considered myself lavaliered or whatever, some stage of engagement to him.

D.K. Gee, I haven't heard that term in years, that's great. I haven't heard that one, that's terrific.

R.W. So I convinced my parents, and I think partly because my mother saw this thing as a very romantic thing and partly because I was supposed to, I mean I always predestined to do things differently and be an artist and all this. I was supposed to go to art school in England, I applied and I was accepted. I was supposed to go to the Central School of Art. And the summer my Dad wanted me to spend in Florence because that was the ideal place to be, the Italian Renaissance, he had a real beaux-arts architectural education, Florence and Paris were the important cities. And I went to Florence and then I went to Perugia because there was a school for foreigners there and I started studying Italian and I loved it, and I had visited England and I didn't like it, it was very cold. To me England was yet to be born, and it just didn't seem very comfortable or friendly, but I loved Italy, and so I stayed in Italy and went

to art school for about, well, ultimately I was there for about two and one half years. I never went back. And I broke up with George within about six months, you know I saw him in Paris and then I went and visited him in Germany twice. That was also very traumatic because here he'd been such an exotic sophisticated figure to me, and after a year of college he was neither that romantic nor interesting, I got very bored. He drank a lot, this is one of the reasons I, formative reasons, I never drank. It doesn't make me feel good, my joints feel funny when I drink, but also it seems so boring to me to just sit and drink. And he didn't have that much to talk about, I don't know it just, he just wasn't what I expected so I broke up with him and became engaged to the son of the people who owned the pension where I lived. In Italy it was impossible not to be engaged. He wanted to marry me but that wasn't really why we were engaged. We were engaged because you were either a nice girl and you were engaged with the young man you were seeing or walking with on the Corso, or you were not a nice girl. You couldn't date in the American way, it just wasn't, totally unacceptable. And I really adjusted, I, it was possible in Perugia, there was always a group of foreigners there and I

could have spent two and one half years just hanging out with very fast crowd in Perugia. But I didn't. I really had a more sheltered childhood. Although these people seemed too conservative to me, I mean my girlfriends couldn't go to the movies without their father or brother or their mother with them, which I did do by the way, I did go to the movies after dinner. But most of their taboos I obeyed. And I was really totally integrated, by the time I left, into Italian society, all my friends were Italian. And I can't tell you how unusual it is for an Italian girl to make friends with an American girl. They're seen as the enemy because we could do all sorts of things that they couldn't do and there was a lot of resentment and there still is a lot of resentment against foreign women in Italy. But for some reason they adopted me as their mascot and I still have a lot of friendships in Italy. We went back two years ago and I saw all my old girlfriends. It was strange, they're all in the same place they were too.

D.K. Why did you stay two and one half years? Is there something you finished?

R.W. Yea, I got my degree. You know there was a time when I thought I was, there was a part of me that was pretending like I was going to stay. I went with this

young man, Alfredo Dellacqua [spelling uncertain], for about a year. Because there was some overlap between George and Alfredo. Then the last, about half a year I was there, I was going with an older brother who was a doctor. An older brother a friend, a very close friend, and was engaged to him. I think I was engaged about five times, somewhere in there.

D.K. Let's talk about some of the friends, because I think my generation too knows destroyed people from drugs and people who's potential was higher than mine that I know and are now really very nowhere and very happy, and not going anywhere, or dead, suicides.

R.W. As I mentioned, I have kept track of a lot of my closest friends, in fact now I'm in contact with all of my closest friends. Either I know where they are and I can get in touch with them or I'm in some sort of correspondence not often but all my closest friends I'm in touch with from my whole life, which feels good. And the late close friend that I got in touch with was Connie Steiner, who I've mentioned a couple of times. I had lost her, I didn't know where she was. Because of my show at Triad [Gallery] in Los Angeles she found my name, and one of the nice things about having my maiden name is that people find me. And she's been living in Thousand Oaks for the last five

years, and it was really neat, she came for dinner just before we left. It was really wonderful to see her. And almost all the people who I was really close with I still have very good feelings about, they're still really good people. You know just, I mean one Machy Klinter [spelling uncertain] who was just always the sweetest person, a wonderful listener and did marry a CPA and had three little kids and is living more of the kind of life my sister is, in a way. But many of the other people are doing very interesting things, and it's been possible to kind of continue friendships because there are shared interests as well. You know it's there, kind of interesting. But especially how many people in the Dunes kind of continue to, have, be the same kind of people like they always were.

D.K. Do your friends, I read this article, this wasn't one of my official questions, but it just occurred to me, perhaps you're part of this too. There was an article in the New York Times Magazine in this year something about the children of the '60's, a contradiction, and all of us do, and that we go to work dressed up in coats and ties and come home and we put on jeans and ge. some wine and, it's a totally different world, all of that it's the opposite of, like the lawyers who work, the big firms in New York who go home into an apartment that's decorated with old

furniture, even like almost where we are now, this is where they're really comfortable and away from it, and you see that as a contradiction. I don't see it as a contradiction.

R.W. Well most of our friends now are either in the university, mostly they're in the university, I can name some who aren't, like one of my friends is a beautician who used to be a ceramicist. They're either artists or they're in the university or some combination of both or they're a psychologist. A couple of friends work at Rand but mostly they're, you know and they're academics which means that they wear a tie only when they have to, you know and I can dress a number of different ways but sometimes I can wear jeans at work, too, because I'm an artist. And that's always the kind of primary identification and therefore people expect artists to be a little outrageous and if they're not they're a little disappointed.

D.K. You're not outrageous. Not at all.

R.W. No, I'm not outrageous because I don't have to be. But in other words I think if I needed to be I could be and I mean I think a lot of things are permissible in another word. So I don't have to worry very much either about what I wear or, my vocabulary changes somewhat. I can talk more than one way and my clothes

can change but I have all the different clothes. And I like sometimes to dress up a lot and I like to wear slouchy old clothes. I feel comfortable in a range. It's something I don't think about that much either.

D.K. I used to think about it when I used to walk out, I used to live on Telegraph Avenue [Berkeley], and a couple of times when I would go out to dinner in San Francisco, I wore my corduroy sport coat and tie and I walk out onto that street with a coat and tie on and it was so obvious, you know, and I was so self-conscious. And I got to the City and I felt great there and I loved it, and I came home and as I walked into the house I'd have the same --

R.W. Well, if you'd excuse me saying so, I think some of these questions are coming more from your relation.

D.K. Oh, they are, they are.

R.W. Because to me I think in whatever category I've ever dressed, I've dressed, to some extent as camouflage. I mean if I wear jeans and I don't wear the most washed, far out, I just, I've always wanted to be the watcher, I've always to be the observer, and not necessarily have people look at me, in a lot of ways. I mean granted I have some vanity too, and I want to have certain, I care about

how I look but I don't think it's a major part of my personality as lots of other people. So you know, it seems like it's getting emphasized more than I would.

D.K. Okay, then let's not emphasize it, let's make that clear, I mean I don't want to, I mean a lot of this is my own projection of things, I mean that I know and I don't want to overemphasize it, I want to find out, so that's good to know.

R.W. Another about being an artist is that the whole idea that other people have of artists being this way or that way, when you're an artist and you know a lot of other artists, you realize that artists are all kinds of people. You know maybe it doesn't, you don't have as much concentration on the conservative end, but there really are all kinds of people who are artists. So I have less of a stereotype of what an artist might be than you do. Who I am is an artist, but there are just lots of different ways that I could be and it would still be an artist, to me. The artist is what I do and the way I look at the world and my necessity of putting it down some type of, rather a role so much. Although it's also a role and a pretty powerful identification in our culture. Sometimes that gets masked by being a university person and sometimes that disturbs me, the fact that people might think of me first as a

teacher or associate dean, which is really not how I think of myself; I think of this as being much more transient, even though I spend a lot of time doing it now, unfortunately.

D.K. Okay. Now we really left off sort of in Italy, you haven't really come home.

R.W. Right, by the time I was there, like, two years, I could see that one of the things about my upbringing, is that I had a very strong sense, even though I knew that my father wanted a boy and that some of things I was doing had to do with compensating, I still had a very strong sense that women could be doers and movers and shakers and be-ers and that was just not possible in Italy. Women were very, very oppressed there, and had very much a subordinate role even though, and in all the ways they were powerful were very sneaky ways, very manipulative ways, and that really, really bothered me. The way I talked and the amount I read, at first they blamed it on my being American, but after a while they saw it was me and I was criticized for being a certain way, so intellectual, reading so much, and being so serious about my art. You know my intensity was seen as something very strange. It didn't fit into the culture, and I was really ready to leave, come back to the United States and do graduate work, and I applied to

three different places. I applied to Michigan, IIL [Illinois Institute of Technology], and Chicago Art Institute. And I was accepted to all three places, actually I got the best kind of terms at IIL. I could have gone directly into graduate school and at Michigan I had to take certain units over, they weren't quite sure I was ready, in all my subjects. I went right into graduate school in printmaking but not in everything else. But I chose Michigan because I didn't really want to go back to Chicago, I didn't want to live with my parents, all of a sudden they frightened me. And while I was in Italy I wrote my mother practically everyday. I really missed my mother a lot. And then my mother came one summer with my Dad and we travelled together and that was the worst summer I ever spent with my parents because, you know a lot of the things, I saw them very clearly and they weren't a lot of things I thought they were or I wanted them to be. I was eighteen I guess, that summer. It was the summer I was turning nineteen, it was very hard on them, I was very critical. I mean a lot of the adolescent rebellion that usually takes place earlier, took place that summer. And I was just enormously critical of both my mother and my father. My father wasn't as artistic, he didn't know as much as I did. My mother wasn't really an intellectual,

and she didn't, you know all of their value system wasn't as consistent as they had presented it. It was awful. A very hard summer. Although I continued to write my mother very often after that, somehow I realized that I shouldn't go home. And I had by that time kind of chosen a woman in Italy that was kind of like my mother substitute and I have always had a tendency to be very close to older women, and very often to like men who are on the quiet side like my dad. There's a certain of older women that, in many different situations in my life I have tended to choose a mother figure like that. In Italy it was a woman, a very poor woman who lived, named Sora Bruna [spelling not certain]. Sora means sister. And she was a very fascinating person, had lived a very, very different kind of life, had many things to tell me, she was a very wise person, and I just loved her very much. She's dead now. When I left Italy, she and the monk who was my printmaking teacher were the people who I really loved the most and felt the closest to. And then I had some girlfriends who were very close to me. It wasn't really possible to have friendships with men then, all these romances. And I also had this enormous need to be loved in a romantic sense, and that was going to be tremendously reassuring to me, and I needed these things. And I

think I got into relationships just because the person was in love with me, rather than any feelings I had for the other person. An enormous need for romance, and I got, so I went back to Michigan because it was the only place I'd applied that wasn't in Chicago. Later I realized I should have applied other places, Michigan didn't have that good of an art school at the time. I started back in school, and I was. Donald Hall who was a well-known poet was my English teacher and he was teaching poetry, and there was another class member and I who just talked all the time about the poetry and were kind of more involved than the other students. And I began to date him and got involved very rapidly. His name was [name withheld by editor] and he was from a very wealthy Washington, D.C. family, his father had been a lawyer for the teamsters and then ultimately for the big shipping firms. And within three months I'd married him. He was a poet, I don't know how good of a poet, I'll probably never know but, I got very intensely involved in poetry and kind of helping him write his poetry. But the whole relationship was pretty much a disaster even before the marriage. And I was fulfilling needs that were pretty neurotic on my part, all the desire to be loved and desired, and it just didn't work at all. The marriage lasted a year and

a half although we were only living together for about a year. And he was a very immature neurotic personality, which I guess maybe unfair for me to say on the tape but we had enormous problems of every kind and one of the things that he did was whenever things didn't work out he wanted to go somewhere else. So we offand went to Paris, and we lived there together about five or six months. He became involved with an older Greek woman and things got very bad. I didn't know about his involvement and I don't know how I didn't know about it, it was just staring me in the face, but I didn't know about it and I went to Italy to visit my friends and I was going to come home, back from Italy and either everything was going to be all right or it wasn't. And when I got back, and by this time I'd been really unhappy in this relationship, I'd lost a lot of weight, I was getting stomachaches all the time, it was a very, very unhappy period of my life. And I came back and he was very mysterious for about three days, wouldn't hardly talk to me, and I just got sicker and sicker, and finally he told me that he'd been having an affair with this woman and he was happy and he was going to run away with her to Greece and he did and I went into the hospital. I just got, actually I was very, very lucky because he put me in some other small hotel,

we were living in an apartment on Rue Mazarin at that time, he put me in a small hotel and I was just absolutely spaced. And I laid there for I don't know how many hours, and then I started to wander around the city which was, I mean I don't even remember it, but a friend of mine found me from the Atelier 17 where I was doing printmaking at that time, at this international cooperative, that was kind of my excuse to be in Paris. One of the reasons we had chosen Paris it was a good place with two international cooperatives for printmakers and I joined one of them and that was, and if I hadn't been so miserable I would have gotten a lot out of it. Ultimately this friend Gail Singer found me and she herself had been hospitalized several times. She's been sick on and off for years so she had a psychiatrist who she could take me to, and he committed me to the American Hospital, and I was there for about a week. Didn't want to die, but I didn't want to be in contact with reality either, it was just a little too rough for me at the moment. I think I was on a lot of sedation too, but ultimately one morning I woke up and looked at myself in the mirror and wanted to comb my hair and stuff, and I guess from that moment on I was. I wanted to make a new life for myself. I was able, I think a

lot of difficulty in the marriage was that I wanted to make it such a success and I'd always somehow made things such a success, and to admit what a disasterous failure it was! It was very hard. But from that point on I was able to kind of decide that isn't what I wanted, and be happy. I went back, no I stayed in Paris and my mother came and we went back to Spain together and took a trip and that was very good, my mother was very supportive. Then I went back to Paris and was still working at the Atelier 17 and was really beginning to enjoy it and then my ex-husband came back and wanted me back again. His new relationship hadn't worked out, and I got very freaked because I realized that part of me really was still somewhat pulled, but most of me knew that I had to get out of this thing so I told him that I was going to the shop, Atelier 17, and instead I got onto the airplane with my purse and I went back to the United States. I just ran away, which, you know running away isn't a good thing, but it really was a good thing.

D.K. That's incredible.

R.W. But I went to Ann Arbor, I didn't want to fly to Chicago because I think that meant more owning up to this failure for some reason but Ann arbor was neutral ground. I went back to Ann Arbor and I stayed with my

sister which wasn't too cool. That also was the beginning of a very difficult period with me for my sister because somehow she disapproved of all my messing up of my life, somehow it was my failure, she was the only one willing to act out, I mean my parents really were very sympathetic and didn't do a whole big I told you so although they could have because they didn't really want me to marry this young man although they in some way had in some way been blackmailed into it too, you know, here he was a very nice Jewish boy, kind of thing, from a good family, and there was a way in which they never dreamt that it would turn out so badly, in some sense, even though they didn't like him very much, he was not a very likeable person in this era of his life. I haven't seen him since our divorce so, not too much of an idea of what became of him, I hope he got over some of his problems. And I assume that some of it was just his age. I don't think ultimately. I spent a year in some kind of psychotherapy when I got back to Ann Arbor. It was not a very good therapist at all; he was very poor, which I only realized later, but at least some of that talking out I realized that there were reasons I had wanted to marry him and all the things that had gone into it and what my needs had been that fed into this relationship and why some of the

things had been so bad. I think I became a little bit more balanced about blaming him so totally, but there was a big block on that whole period of my life, and I still don't remember a lot of the things that happened. I mean people will mention incidents or what happened and I won't remember, it's like the period of my life that I have very few memories of, I blocked a lot of it. And I wouldn't say my ex-husband's name for years, I wouldn't even pronounce his name, and I went back to my maiden name very, I was very, that the lawyer should even ask whether I even wanted to or not shocked me. When I went back to my maiden name, I decided I would never take any married name again. It wasn't that I would never get married but I would never, I had my name back and I was keeping it. And by the time I did get married again I felt that I had my own identity and I wanted to keep my name, so there were lots of reasons for me to keep my name even though the whole Women's Lib hadn't happened and people hadn't started to keep their names, so I had a lot of problems when I first got married and wanted to keep my name and people didn't understand and got very hostile, very weird, now that I think about it because it was only a few years ago.

D.K. Right, it was a very, but it was certainly ahead of its time.

R.W. Yes, it had a heavy connotation at one time. So when I got back to Michigan, right I had gone to Paris and hadn't finished my degree. I was working on my masters but I hadn't finished. So I went back to working on my masters and took lithography that summer and this was 1964, which unbeknownst to me was a great time in Ann Arbor, Michigan. And all kinds of things were happening. I knew just very few people in Ann Arbor because this ex-husband of mine had been really a kind of a snob and maybe a fairly insecure person, and we had just a very limited group of friends, a real clique, and they were all into poetry, they were all into poetry or art. So I saw just a few of them and they introduced me to some other people and it was great to be in Ann Arbor in the summer. You could sit down in the union and meet, you could just go and sit down and meet people. It was, you didn't have to be introduced. And so I met a guy in the, a philosophy graduate student and began to date him, and he introduced me to his friends, Kelyn Roberts, we double-dated for a while. Kelyn invited me over to hear some of his poetry, he was also writing poetry at the time. And I was supposed to go over with this other friend, and he didn't want to go, he and Kelyn were fighting about something intellectual. So I sought out Kelyn the next day in the library and

I told him how disappointed I'd been that we went and listened to folk music at somebody else's house instead of going over to Kelyn's and listening to poetry. So I said I would like to come over without Fred. So he invited me over and I had dinner at his house and he read me some of the poetry. Then I came over again, but there was really a kind of a friendship of about a month and a half or two before, you know we started going, you know on each other. But there was a certain kind of wonderful thing to me right in those beginning few months because I was still very uncertain about myself, but kind of had made a resolution that I was going to pretend I was a healthy, happy person, you know. And I could with Kelyn. He was really sweet. He was so centered and right from the beginning, I felt my God, how could I have decided to fall in love with such a good person. I could not believe it for a long time. We just were very happy right from the beginning. That first year I remember, it was a very wonderful year for me. He had a lot of friends in Ann Arbor. Kelyn had already been in Ann Arbor since 1959, and he knew everybody, he just took me into his world. Then I continued to go to school. Then I decided to go back to Paris because I really needed to learn the things they were teaching at Atelier 17. There was a special kind of color printing, a viscosity printing that's done there.

I had just really begun to learn it after my ex-husband had left me and had gotten focused enough to begin to learn, and it was very hard but I decided I would go and I would finish learning it and I would come back to Kelyn and, so I went it was a very good thing for me to do. I was really kind of on my own for about five or six months. It was very hard being separated from Kelyn, it was kind of, I mean we didn't make it a trial period in talking to each other, but I think it was in reality. I ultimately decided to purchase a press and bring it back and Kelyn had found a bigger apartment. I came back with my press, which was a big commitment on my part to kind of move into somebody's apartment with the press and I lived with him for another year, and then, what happened, and then we got married. But the commitment was bringing the press back then. And he's always been, right from the very beginning terribly interested in the art and supportive. Like many times, like my first sales, he was the one who urged me to present myself and try to sell something and I didn't want to and you know, so much of my being able to, you know sometimes I lose sight of it. But I've been with him now for eleven years and you know counting before we were married, so much of what has happened has been with his support and fostering and interest, and I just cannot imagine, and I don't

know any other woman artist who's had more genuine support than I have from my husband. Because that kind of thing is very often a problem. Especially with the woman the artist and the man doing something else, but even occasionally in reverse.

D.K. I think, didn't you also lecture together?

R.W. Yes, we've lectured together, we've written articles together.

D.K. That's really, that is a, I noticed that. It's terribly interesting.

R.W. You know, it isn't that it has always been absolutely smooth, I don't mean to paint it as a nirvana, sometimes Kelyn very strongly held an idea and I haven't, I think one of the things about Kelyn which is like my mother, is again a very powerful person and intellectually he will argue, and very often will argue until, he will never concede his point, you never win. I think the adjustment in the first few years of marriage was with this personality who never, who never gave in, right? I have a lot of, I had a certain lack of confidence.

D.K. Do you want to take a break now? We're at a point where we can go on to something else.

R.W. Kelyn's style of argumentation was very different from mine, I mean I always argued for what I believed in, you may see in these families I don't know if you'll get a sense of it today is that they just argue

for the sheer love of arguing, and they're game players, which I'm also not. And so there was a real adjustment on both sides, Kelyn comes from a rural Protestant background although his family is atheist and urban Jewish background, from one point of view we couldn't, we were different, but actually I felt very at home with his parents right from the beginning, and you know they read a lot and they love to go hiking and they were Duners, they were the kind of people who were at the Dunes. And they shared those values, and there were ways, there are ways in which I'm more comfortable with them then my own parents, although my attachment to my own parents is enormous and I love them very very dearly, I'm very close to my parents. But there's something about their life style now that is more irritating to me, and I'm not as comfortable, whereas with the Roberts I feel very comfortable. This very argumentative style of Kelyn's was hard on me in the beginning and that took some years to kind of work out and understand and also Kelyn was not very affectionate when I first met him publically, he and his whole family have become more affectionate, more touching, I think that's a lot my influence because I just kissing and hugging them, you know when I saw them and I hadn't seen them for a long time, at first they were taken aback, but then they got not only used

to it, but they kind of looked forward to it. So I think we've all changed each other. I love them very much, I'm close to his family. I think that Kelyn and I had some rough times particularly in 1970 when we were separated for a while. After that we went into therapy together with a very good person. It was a kind of modified Gestalt therapy, very wonderful and very useful to me as a person not only in my relationship with my husband, very valuable understanding of one's self and one's relationships with people and what it is you're saying to people and what it is that you're hearing, and ways of kind of being realer with people. It's helped a lot in terms of my child too, not forcing myself, like to pretend that I'm always absolutely overjoyed to be with her, I mean still retaining my own, being in touch with my own me and feelings. I think because of that I've actually experienced very little resentment because there's very little conflict. I really wanted to have a baby with Kelyn and we did, we arranged our lives in a very honest way, so that we're not with her all the time but that turns out to be good for everyone. There really hasn't been a conflict between being a mother, and a wife and a artist, there's been some conflict between a mother and a wife and having a baby and having a university career, that's gotten to me just only in about the last two

or three months. I regret very much in some ways that I had to take this acting associate dean position, but I was up for tenure and I was drafted from both above and below and there was really very little choice, but the last two or three months have again been very tense after really being very very happy for the last few years. You know I'm centered enough in my own life, I know that I'm happy in my choices, it isn't so hard vis-a-vis the people around me I think. But I've felt very tired, it's making me feel older, I feel some resentment not being able to spend more time with Alicia, and a lot of resentment at not being able to spend more time with my work. And I realized again, actually I've always known this, but it's the first time I have the opportunity to see what happens when I don't work on my own works. I get very restless, grouchy, and irritable, and just like, it's this huge area that's just getting emptier and emptier. I feel very empty inside because all these images are pushing on me and I'm not doing anything with my hands I'm not touching things, and the real visceral need to be an artist is not being satisfied and I've always suspected it's a very central part. You know I don't want compare it with anything, but it's there, and I've always been enormously productive because I've just had to be because that's been who I've been and this

being forced into a position in which I'm not, is a very great strain.

D.K. I think we're almost up to the present. Is there anything from the time you met Kelyn to now that we should talk about, that I don't have in here. Or maybe like how you came to USC or how you ended up in California, is that important?

R.W. Well Kelyn finished his doctorate and I was teaching at Eastern Michigan University which was at that time a very exciting faculty, a very very good art school, exciting place to be. But I was ready to leave because I was a little angry at them. I wasn't allowed to teach advanced drawing and I was just allowed to teach printing. They had a tendency to treat, I mean they had hired a lot of women but we weren't teaching in the more interesting courses because they knew they didn't have to keep us. If our husbands were going to stay we would stay, and if our husbands were going to leave they were going to lose us anyway. So there was a way in which they used that, and that was very irritating. I was angry also they had fired one of my friends. And it was beginning to be not as good a situation, and has definitely deteriorated now. So we kind of both sought jobs in other places and I got one in Tallahassee, but he didn't, and he got an offer in Austin, you know we were trying to find a place where we

could both find a position. And ultimately I got a grant through the Near Eastern Center at UCLA, I had already decided to do the book. And the idea of doing the research at UCLA Library, which is an excellent library in Judaica and having enough money to travel to New York and do some of the photographic research in New York at YIVO [Institute for Jewish Research] you know it just did seem ideal and I felt that, I was scared to go to L.A. without any kind of identification which was the realistic fear and other people who've moved places with their husbands where they had no identity, have had very shattering first years. I was just talking to a very close friend who was going through this kind of a conflict. And I, we were very lonely when we first went to Los Angeles, we didn't know very many people and we were coming from Ann Arbor which had been such a profoundly collaborative, I mean the late 60's in Ann Arbor, I mean you really felt that there was no place in the world you'd rather have been than there. There are so many good people and so many interesting things happening and politically you felt like you were in the middle of everything. I mean it was just a fantastic, maybe you could have been in Berkeley but it was Berkeley, Ann Arbor, Madison and or maybe Columbia and that was one of the places to be in the United States. And

we were in Ann Arbor and that was fantastic. It turned out that we were leaving when it was over, I mean we left in 1969 and that, the fall of 69. We could of stayed one more year but I don't, having gone several times to visit I realize it isn't the same and you can't go back to Ann Arbor again because it isn't that Ann Arbor. And neither is Berkeley. But I think when we got to L.A. we were very profoundly identified with Ann Arbor and we found Los Angeles lonely, and very diffuse and very alienating and I think gradually we've come to like it quite a bit as a place to be now. But it isn't that I'd always wanted to be in Los Angeles. I still feel I could leave which is not all that common. And as an artist of course it's really in a lot of ways a better place to be than Ann Arbor. It didn't matter then, but now being in L.A. seems like an important.

D.K. Market or?

R.W. No not, some market but that isn't really the reason. The reason is you can, you know what's happening and you can to some extent you're meeting the people you'd just be reading about otherwise. I mean I have always wanted to feel like in touch with things, as if I was in an important place. I do believe in the right place and the right time and it's very hard to predict, but Los Angeles does feel like the right place for us. I have a lot of, I have gone

through periods of being very profoundly alienated from the art world and there's plenty of reasons to feel bitter and hostile, and I had a kind of, I spent a lot of time thinking about and talking to people about my feelings about the art world for about a year and a half, and June Wayne and various other people, another friend of mine who's now living in Paris, Paul Harper, just various people who were either art historians or artists. And then it seems some kind of funny short story I was reading in some magazine, I don't know, it kind of, maybe I was just ready to all of a sudden realize that I was wasting a lot of energy feeling all this hostility and that you know, it isn't as though my view of the art world has changed, I view it as a very corrupt and corrupting influence and it does very bad things to art. And it's not just me, I mean used to be, is it because I'm not part of a certain kind of mainstream and not in Art Forum that I feel this way, or is it because, you know it goes back to the roles in high school. Do I feel critical because I'm excluded. And especially what June Wayne said, every artist always knows, fame always alludes you. You can always have another goal vis-a-vis your career, but that's all artificial. You really have to always save your maximum energy and attention for your work, and the things that happen for you

largely happen because of yourself anyway, nobody comes, the golden fairy dealer never comes and touches you on the head and if he does it means, you probably are selling out something fierce or sleeping with somebody. And that you can have your own kind of success, which I really think is true now, by just pursuing the things that are really you. Anyway there's no other way to live, how can you live this other way? And so I've made my peace, kind of, with the world in that sense, and I have had a number of very productive years, and also I think, you know it's not that every piece of art that I've made I think is perfect but I really like my work and it goes in the directions I want it to go, I don't have the kind of conflicting feelings about my work that many people suffer, there's very often I wish I'd drawn the arm a different way or if there's something about the composition that seems weak or I can critique my own work but there it is, it's me, it's my vision and I don't have conflicting feeling about that.

D.K. Do you do versions of the same thing, to correct those kind of things?

R.W. Sometimes, oh yea. You mean studies before I start?

D.K. Oh not just studies before, but I mean after it's done, once it's, say you have a print, I mean you look at it and say, you know if I did such and such,

you critique it and then you do a very--

R.W. Oh yea, I mean prints are very open to this kind of process and, but even so, sometimes at the very end there is something that is still disturbing you that you couldn't change or didn't change and you see it later. What I'm trying to, you know you have to be as an artist a very critical egotist. You have to basically believe that your vision is of some value. You know believe that all this time and money that you're going to put into your work is worth it, and anyway you don't have a choice, you just have to do it for these other visceral reasons. But besides that you have to be very critical and of course getting this balance of being able to be very critical but believing yourself is an interesting psychological position and I think I mastered it in terms of my art before I mastered it in terms of my life. It was a little easier to do it with my art, to be more accepting of myself. And one of things that Gestalt therapy did was to help me to accept myself as a person, who I am, all the combinations and moods and possibilities.

D.K. This may be unfair, so we'll skip it, but did you get something about career or success coming before personal considerations? Did that ever happen, have anything to do with it? Did you ever feel that you had to be a success and that being a good person

would come along with that or is that all, in that category.

R.W. You know there's really not the right category. There's three categories really in a way and they're all simplifications. One is kind of career-success, success in the world, which one can have, and then the other is being a good artist which does not always mesh at all with career success, fame; and then the other is kind of personal happiness. But it turns out that personal happiness and being a good artist are the same. That's I mean there's some things that seem all the way on one end and some on the other, but mostly there's a big grey area that's all a continuum. That me as Ruth Weisberg the person and me as Ruth Weisberg the artist is mostly the same person, so it can't be divided out, or only very artificially. Whereas me as having a successful career is very easy to divide out. Of course it's a whole artificial thing that one pursues and manipulates, it's like a game and has certain consequences. And sometimes it gives you a little more confidence and sometimes it beats you on the head a little, but basically it doesn't have much to do with other two parts, or it's better when it doesn't, is my basic feeling about it. You know one could be very melodramatic about this. I really know people who have been destroyed by that art world

out there, it's very very much like Senn High School, you know as a metaphor. And that's very sad, and it's hard to exaggerate how harmful it is. And yet in the United States it is a good place to make art, in spite of all that. So that's paradoxical, there may be a certain kind of corruption and, you know I mean Socialist countries don't necessarily produce good art. One thinks about Norway which is a country I'm very familiar with now, having shown there several times.

D.K. How is that? How'd that come about?

R.W. It's kind of a long story.

D.K. Is it important?

R.W. No, I don't think so. At Atelier 17 I met one person and my press is Norwegian and I kept contact and someone who went to UCLA's father had collected my work then. But they were probably very nice people, a very nice connection, but one of the things about Norway is that the art work tends to be rather bland, it's like there's not, there's not as much tension in the culture so the artist does not tend to be as interesting. There sure is a lot of tension in the United States. Whatever the dichotomies are, one of the things that I think unifies great artists is there's always something attempted, I mean the thing can be very serene looking but there's something always on the edge of madness or on the edge of chaos

or on the edge of the definition of work or on the edge of what you thought people's abilities might be, to synthesize something. I like art that amazes me, I mean not in a tricky way, sometimes it can be very very subtle, I mean you know my taste when it's not flashing in any sense but there's something in the people who I admire.

D.K. Who do you admire?

R.W. I admire people historically, I mean I have not given up art history, I'm very involved in art history, so that Goya, and Velazquez, and Giotto and Masaccio are very important to me and I go back and look at most of these people Collot and Durer, the great print-makers and great draftsmen. I don't feel that I've had to, nor did I want to give anybody up, I mean a lot of people in the twentieth century cut the ropes, and I had done just the opposite. And some of this had to do with what my parents conception of what art is, I know that, I mean my father's feelings about the Renaissance and my mother's feelings about German expressionism and that art should be a feeling. I've never been attracted to just purely geometric work and I probably never will be, it doesn't seem to have any value to me, even if I lecture on it and I say it's good for this reason and it's trying to do such and such, I don't get any real deep-seated aesthetic pleasure from that work, I don't get that

little shiver down my spine like looking at a Goya. And I have a big range of people that I really love. But there are limits to my enthusiasm, and maybe because of when I was born and the whole abstract expressionism battle had been won, okay you can do abstraction, but they don't seem to me, you know there are a lot of arguments that they are spiritually higher because they're not bound to material things. But what I love is taking that real visual reality and making it a vision, making it a metaphor or making it transcend itself, transform itself. I want to take visual realities.

D.K. Within the visual reality.

R.W. Right, so even in my most abstract work there's something very real, I like to play with that dichotomy of the very real and the very unreal. And you know when I was younger I did a lot of things that were very surrealistic and very much like German expressionism, and I'm not doing, using those things stylistically any more but some of those emotional involvements I'm still using. The contemporary people that I most like have a kind of visionary aspect to their work. Peter Milton and Bruse Launy [name not clear], early Von der Licht [name not clear], some of the people that I like the most have this tendency to transform. But I mean also I like people who do very different things than I do. I like things that are poetic and magical and mysterious and attempt

something, you know vis-a-vis the human spirit that seems to expand us. I don't like work purely of virtuosity and I certainly don't like work that's devoid of human content. And of course I search for those things for my own work, you know it's always something that haunts me that I have to get out. Something maybe that I don't quite understand myself so that keeps me mystified and interested and trying to find visual equivalents, I think that's very important, always put it in visual terms. I think I am, I tend to be a verbal intellectual kind of artist, vis-a-vis other artists, but I'm, there's other artists now who are working off the information [words not clear] or puns or whatever and I only tend to really like their work or be engaged in it when it is visual enough to engage me. I'm a person whose primary sense is visual and the next is tactile, that's like the important senses. And if I'm deprived in that way I get uninterested. And there's nothing. I love to look at everything in the city and the country, you know I just can't ever get enough, it's like a hunger. I've always been that way, ever since I can remember I've been very very visual, I've got a very good visual memory and all of these memories are tied up with visions in my head, so that when I began to work off of my childhood, you know I had visual equivalents of certain incidents of certain periods

of time.

D.K. Do you dream a lot? And you remember them?

R.W. Yes, I dream a lot and I remember them and I, they're very important to me and I sometimes work off of the dreams, very much so.

D.K. When you draw faces, I am thinking of some of the ones in the Shtetl Book, because they're my faces, I picture them. Were they anybody particular?

R.W. Sometimes they are. And sometimes it's very funny like especially like the children's faces would come up that would be from my childhood.

D.K. Do you ever see your own face in a lot of those faces?

R.W. Oh yes.

D.K. Because I see you in, I see parts of your face, in several of those faces.

R.W. That's very true, and my sister's one face, and Connie Steiner's in another face. And those girls in that particular print began to have names, and some of them were names of people I knew and then some of them were just made up names. And they had relationships, I know who were friends and I know who was whose older sister. I became very involved in those particular people.

D.K. You know it's funny because that wasn't the one that first really grabbed me and now over the past, you know it's not that I don't like the other one, it's just that this one was the one that I ended up putting

in my bedroom and I think for conscious reasons, because it was something I just kept looking at. The faces have become, you know also strange.

R.W. You know it's a little bit like writing a novel where the characters take on their own life, in fact that lithograph that I did after I finished the book incorporated those same children again, and now the printing that I'm going to do for ORT is going to use the children again for the third time. So I have not yet resolved all the possibilities and all my feelings about those children. I think now a lot of it has to do with having a child, so I see them yet a different way. There's things that keep coming back to, I do animals, animals that come back over and over again and people and a certain kind of landscape. I have a picture of myself on the rocks in Chicago, you know how the rocks are by the Lake, when I was about eight years old. And I've done that picture in one way or another all my life, this single figure on the rocks has come back.

D.K. Didn't you have that thing about the rocks too in that show at USC, but those were different rocks, right?

R.W. Yes. So it's been, you know I like landscapes that are the bones of the earth. I don't really tend to do trees and vegetation, I like bones a lot, I

like those kinds of forms. You know when you choose a subject matter it's always a kind of a, oh a combination of an interest in a formal problem and the content, not that some of these things can be divided that easily, but you know you're interested in transparency so you're working a lot with water or, you know I mean different, like I did a whole series that if you would look at them, you'd say it's about women, but it's about women and pattern and I was trying to absorb the influence of Mary Cassatt and Degas and trying to examine, you know intimate kinds of scenes with women in closed interiors. And I used a lot of back scenes because I was interested in transparent color, so there's very rarely just a single reason, there's usually, I mean there's so many images that one could do that you usually choose those images that are both most urgent and also that have the most compelling complex problems attached to them. And I've just been through this whole period in which not exactly intentionally but somehow I kept working off the same ideas and so that body of work has a real feeling of cohesiveness. But it was kind of you know fascinating for me to see afterwards, how much each image that I really wanted to do turned out to be something that wasn't on the ground; I just wanted, I used to have a lot of fantasies about flying, it has a tremendous emotional meaning for me, this being so free that you're not touching the ground. And I also wanted to do pieces

of reality that would imply an infinite space rather than a finite space. I didn't want people to be anchored or grounded or based. And everything I've done for the last three years has been that way, has been either floating or flying.

D.K. And then pregnancy came into that too, I think. It seems to have become a part of that whole picture.

R.W. And then you find that meaning in many places in the Indian cosmology that I was reading a lot on at the time, I read a lot of things about the fetal development and the floating in the womb, I don't know, you just find mirrors. If an image is really strong and powerful, you find it more in a lot of places, because you know cultures tend towards powerful and meaningful images, I mean if you read other people's mythology or cosmology, it's going to ring bells, you know you're going to resonate to it and that's because it's working off very basic things in human nature. I mean not that I want the most simple universal image, but there's a tendency to.

D.K. One more question before I forget that one thing, did you read Carlos Castaneda, that business with the flying and .

R.W. Right, yes, I had also read a lot of Castaneda.

D.K. Talking about flying which we could talk about forever, because I'm not sure we should spend too much time on

that. You've done two books, right? What's Tom O'Bedlam's Song?

R.W. It's a sixteenth century Jacobin verse, anonymous therefore it went through a lot different changes, and I had a lot of fun and a lot of, oh, there was a lot of participation by different people in Ann Arbor, it was a very Ann Arbor experience of all sorts of ethnomusicologists and people in the English department helping me find different versions of this poem which had also been used by Kenneth Patchen in one of his novels, Albion Moonlight. It's a very beautiful poem, almost every version of it is very compelling. I had kind of liked it and then one time when Kelyn and I were visiting his folks we were talking to a typographer, a man named Joe, who had put together some of the poetry books for people at U. of M. And Kelyn was saying well why don't you do a book? And I am very interested in books and always have been, I'm very, I have this attachment to books both as the meaning they have in our civilization but also the thing as an object, I really always liked books. And so I said, so I'll do a book, and that appealed to me very much and I've kind of day-dreamed about and you know well why not now? I had reached a stage in which instead of oh someday I'll do this and someday I'll do that, I was

beginning to feel confident enough in myself to just start doing things. So that took me about a year to do, and I knew I wanted to do another one. I learned a lot from doing the first book. There are things in it, like the binding, that I realized pretty shortly after it was finished that the binding had to be stronger and I realized I had to learn a lot about bookmaking if I was going to do another book. So I really embarked on a huge self-education project and read everything I could on bookmaking, and all the aspects calligraphy, typography, binding, history of illustration, and also embarked on doing a second book, which was the Shtetl Book, which felt more like my own book, that was the book to do, that was the book to do because I had been examining my roots and my past and my childhood, but this was a way of coming to terms with my identity as a Jew and my identity vis-a-vis my grandparents and my whole family history, and also being a Jew, a book seemed, of course, that just made so much sense to do a book.

D.K. An incredible amount of sense. What's the, you want to talk more about that, I didn't want to.

R.W. Well, one of the things that resulted from that was, several things opened to me from doing a book. One was that I taught a course, after a year and a half I

taught three courses in the history of the art. And that was very satisfying and I hope to do that again. You know a whole kind of, I have always done that, I have always kind of taken on some area of interest and read everything I could about it. I don't know, that's really exciting to be enthusiastic about something and --

D.K. Isn't that the only way to learn?

R.W. Right, but you know when I was in school, I would take a subject like stained glass windows or Gothic architecture or something and I'd read everything I could in the library even though it wasn't a class assignment. And I've always kind of had a little bit more fun doing it on my own than a class kind of thing. The other thing was that it gave me an identification like at USC as a Jew which was helpful to me. I mean that's always a little hard, there was a little tension in that situation, but it was a way of really coming out in a very public way, as being Jewish, and it made me ultimately very comfortable. And all the things that we discussed about being a Jewish artist, I mean if you're a Jew and you're an artist, then you're a Jewish artist, but this somehow gave more content to that. I'd expressed, I used my Jewishness just as now I use being a woman in a more direct sense, just by using parts of your identity,

being a Duner, to use that word now, which has a very specific meaning for me, I've expressed parts of that part of my identity, being a Jew, and being a woman and being a mother, being pregnant, and being Kelyn's lover and all those things have been, come out in my work more specifically now, and that feels good. That feels right to me, that should be. I don't want to kind of purposefully omit any part of my experience. I've done a, there was a very big painting that I did of the el tracks in Chicago which I think was one of the best painting I've ever painted and I am also on the platform as a nine-year old, just my head and the rest of my body's fading away and that painting was sold a number of years ago and I have not seen it for a number of years which makes me a little sad because I would like to have that painting now.

D.K. Do you, that was another question I had about, how does one you know end up being, prints, of, you know, primarily, isn't that what you do mostly?

R.W. Right.

D.K. Is that design circumstance and design, or is that not important?

R.W. No, it is very important, I think. There's a lot of different factors. One is what medium you respond to, what you really like. Do you like wet clay or do you

like metal, and each thing is worked a different way and you have to be attracted to that medium. And when I was a freshman at Michigan I walked into the print studio and I watched them working on the copper and I knew I was going to be a printmaker. I had this tremendous leap inside me, I was just so excited by the smells and how it must feel to touch, you know I didn't get to touch so much that first day.

D.K. But before that you did sketching?

R.W. Before that I was drawing, painting, mostly drawing. As I said the Art Institute had an excellent, excellent program, but it wasn't, and I think this is very good: it wasn't one of these things that you sometimes get now where you try ten thousand different mediums. It was just basically aimed at getting you to draw better and see better and be able to put your lines down and make forms. It wasn't that involved in, you know we didn't get to fire ceramics and work in resins and all these kinds of things, it was basically learning about form. Which I think is okay. And the exposure to a lot of different technical aspects can come later, you know from childhood. In college I tried to give everyone a rather large kind of technical vocabulary, always at the service of something to say and some vision and some real involvement with the visual ideas.

For myself the graphic techniques, first metal plate and then litho just entranced me. It seemed like I had to paint if I wanted to be an important artist and I did like the medium to some extent, one of the reasons I gave up painting was because there was only one of them, and then it was gone and you also had to charge a lot of money for it and it was difficult to exhibit and it just became a hassle and a burden and it wasn't that worth it because my ideas I could just as happily translate them into graphics. And when I gave up the idea that I had to be a painter because I would be a more major artist, and there's a lot of that kind of prejudice around, still today but less, less. Then I was just very happily kind of settled into my definition of graphics which is very large and if I have to paint again, I'll paint again and if I have to do sculpture which I have found that I need to do, I will do it. I'll use any materials, that, you know if you have a vision and it has a raggedy edge then you have to have something that has a raggedy edge to it. And you can't do absolutely everything that's in your head, sometimes it's just --

D.K. I know you're not only a printmaker, I mean I know that.

R.W. Yes, but prints are very fascinating in and of themselves, even if you could only do one print it would be worth the litho because you could make ink do something on a lithostone that you can't get it to do on paper directly.

It's a unique medium, and really fascinating, and the process is fascinating.

D.K. That I was fortunate enough to see a little bit of.

R.W. And then there's a kind of, always been, and I've lectured on this a number of times, a kind of social concern in printmaking, a kind of social responsibility to it. First of all, you can get something out faster in a print, you can react to things, it's an intimate statement usually, although not always. And artists have very often either chosen it for their most political statements or most personal statements or their most experimental statements, like Rembrandt and Goya both went to prints whenever they wanted to push at the definition of their art. Even though there's been a lot of hack work done in printmaking, it also has it's own ethic to it, it's different from painting. Painting is always, often more pretentious and more public. This gives printmaking a kind of interesting history to work off of. And also it still has its reality today when you have to charge a lot for painting and you don't have to charge that much for print, you can display them in many places simultaneously. In a mass culture it makes even more sense to make prin s. I mean there's not, there's so many people to reach and if you just do one object, how, even if you get into the most famous museum, how many people are you reaching?

And then okay maybe there's some things that get reproduced a lot and they become part of the people's imagery, but they're not seeing the real object. So if you want to reach a lot of people with the real object, prints make an awful lot of sense. If you didn't like the medium, it still wouldn't be a reason to do it, I think that's the most important fact. But after that comes a kind of social reality in doing prints which I'm very comfortable with

D.K. Did you ever have trouble drawing hands, I mean were you always good at drawing difficult, hands are very difficult, I know and I remember. Somehow hands come to my mind.

R.W. I know, well hands are the second and most expressive part of the body. You know I think I learned to draw hands so young that it's now, I mean it was just very important to learn to draw hands well, so you did, and I did. That must have taken place at the Art Institute, because I was already very much into drawing hands when I got to college.

D.K. Okay, let's see, what about the Kelyn press, how did that all come about, I'm curious about that.

R.W. Well, you know the imprint had to have a name and Kelyn was very wonderful and very involved and it was some way in which I wanted to honor him so there. Qualities that I, it was a lot of fun. I mean we had involved a

lot of people. Not in any official real sense, but everybody chose a position of all our close friends, I mean it was just a kind of big delightful thing. One of the things about our lifestyle in Ann Arbor, even more than Los Angeles, was we really had a big extended family, I mean people ate over all the time and slept over fairly often, and you know it wasn't a commune, but it was one of those very 60's kind of big big apartments where there was always people coming and going, and very involved and I got a lot of work done in spite of all that. But that was, our life was very public somehow at that time. I think since coming to L.A. we've, we partly had to and partly by choice, have a more private life. People call before they come over, things like that, they don't expect to crash necessarily, you know what I mean. There was a 60's ethic in Ann Arbor too at least, you gave everything free and you did everything you possibly could for people and kind of expected in return. Although I think that still is very much a part of our lives vis-a-vis the other people I meet, you know people are coming and staying with us all the time, it's just a little bit more formal. But in previous years you m.ght have just appeared. Anyway Kelyn is also a very nice name for a press, besides being a good name for a person.

D.K. I thought maybe we'd talk about the artist as an art

historian as opposed to being an artist, and we've already sort of talked about that, I don't really want to, I wanted to ask you a question about beauty. I wondered did you ever think about beauty or what it is or how it --

R.W. You know, beauty is a very historically dated term, it means within a certain complex of terms, it means something very specific and it's an ideal that you can't really espouse because that whole aesthetic has kind of been disgarded. But there might be a substitute for that word, or it might be what you mean by that word that I.

D.K. No, I don't know what I mean by it, I was just, it doesn't have much meaning there.

R.W. It has a kind of a dated meaning, you know when you talk about it in aesthetic terms, the beautiful, you know the sublime that used to be a goal of art, but that excludes all kinds of homelier other things and of course one of the things the artists had to do is liberate themselves to just the visual reality from their own point of view which might mean an interesting texture on an old woman's face, rather than a beautiful ideal Grecian beauty or something like that, I mean it was a very limiting concept when it was in force. And what we respond to in the Nineteenth, rather, the Twentieth Century, as beautiful, is of course, that's

so culture bound. and then what artists consider beautiful is yet mainly subculture as well. And there are certain forms in the subject matter that does come up over and over again in the Twentieth Century, it's a little idiosyncratic to artists. I don't think the general culture is as interested in violins or things like that. The beautiful is finally seen as a relationship rather than an object. I'm not sure what you're trying to get at, I mean one possibility.

D.K. I wasn't either I was just trying to think of a general thing that wasn't, I guess there are all kinds of things that I could be getting at, but I'm not sure that it necessarily, I mean somebody looks at your book and says that it's beautiful or a work of yours is beautifully done, it's beautiful, this, and the word beautiful has a historical meaning which, but also a contemporary use, which can be associated with, I mean you can even take a look at a picture of a distorted woman and say, my God, that's beautiful.

R.W. I think it's a term of praise but it's lost its specific meaning except that that what the speaker is saying is this moves me, this reaches me, this is important to me.

D.K. Right. I wanted to ask you as well, what kind of magazines you, would you read, or subscribe to.

R.W. Well, there's certain things we subscribe to and then about every year we try to subscribe to something new because what we have found is if you subscribe to most things more than a couple of years, it becomes repititous, so for many, many years we've subscribed to the Village Voice, the New Yorker, and from time to time we subscribe to a gourmet magazine that we subscribed to for a while but we don't anymore. We now subscribe to the Rolling Stone, which is a new thing for us and which we're enjoying a lot, but I don't know if we'll enjoy it forever, you know. We used to subscribe to Ramparts, Harpers at one time, but that's more ongoing, National History Magazine, National Geographic, Sports Illustrated. We used to get the Santa Monica Evening Outlook, but we don't anymore. And then we get to see a number of other, you know we used to get to see more of the small magazines but they've all of kind of gone under. Like the Massachusetts Review, like the little magazines that had poetry.

D.K. I never heard of it.

R.W. Like in Ann Arbor I used to go to the poetry reading room and I would see all of them and then I subscribed to some for short periods of time, and others I've just borrowed from friends or just read in libraries. We read from time to time Esquire or Playboy if there

was a story we wanted to read. There's just a lot, you just can't keep up with it. Mostly we get Art Week now consistently, but some of the art magazines I read at school, there's a lot of periodicals. What I'm finding difficult now is getting time to read books, I mean just this year especially has been very hard.

D.K. It's hard to keep up.

R.W. Right. A book you might be interested in that I've read recently, I mean a book that I would recommend to you is a book called The Pilgrim at Tinker's Creek.

D.K. Yes, you mentioned it, and I'm still looking for it and I've even read a review of it, and so I have it on my list. As a matter of fact, I was just in a bookstore in Cincinnati yesterday and I asked if they had it and they didn't have it.

R.W. They have it in Martindales, in the mall in Santa Monica. I mean I bought three copies of it, given them as gifts.

D.K. And I should make a note, a note about the, right, we also read part of it. One other thing about habits, you know I once did a paper on somebody, so I think it's a funny kind of personal. There was a German, you know Prussian, used to go to bed every night at ten and get up at seven, and you could see that in his work. Do you have those kinds of, I mean --

R.W. I don't think that we have as regular a life, I mean the baby has made our life a little bit more regular. Kelyn for instance is a much more night person, and I have kind of adjusted myself to be more of a day person because you get more work done. I have had many different work schedules, I'm pretty flexible, you know, whatever kind of works for that, depending on my teaching schedule, depending on whether it's summer time. I haven't had that many years where I wasn't teaching, so usually it's built around the teaching schedule. But I've usually chosen to have early classes like eight or nine o'clock classes so I could consolidate all the classes into two or three days and then have the other whole day for work, I like that the best. But it's not rigid, you know I'll set up a working schedule but then if I, some night I might work till two in the morning. On the whole though, I try to get a good night's sleep, I find that it really makes a difference. That's one of the difficult things now is I'm not getting enough sleep, I don't function so well. You know sleep is important.

D.K. You know I haven't been getting enough either. Oh, one other thing.

R.W. But I think it is an interesting question. You know some people, a lot of artists have periods where they don't work at all and then they work intensely, but I tend

to be a pretty regular person.

D.K. You tend to sleep between things, you can put down a thing and go to sleep and then come back to it. Which is different then, like Jacques Cousteau works some forty hours at a time and then sleeps another forty.

R.W. I'm not like that, I would rather have a kind of regular work schedule, which doesn't, it's not that rigid. I will skip a meal or I will stay up real late occasionally.

D.K. I sort of knew that before I --

R.W. No, I think it's an insight into a person, to know how they work. And I've had almost no periods in which I just couldn't work or something like that, very few.

D.K. When did you do the miniatures? Have you always done miniatures?

R.W. I think I started doing the first miniature in about 1966, I haven't done one for a while now, but I really intend to do some more, I like miniaturization, I'm very intrigued by small things. The miniature, there's rooms in the Art Institute in Chicago called the Thorn Miniature Rooms and I loved them as a child. And one of the reasons I loved them was I wanted to become smaller, enter that world, it isn't that I'm so intrigued by the thing, it's that I wanted to be in there. They have, really have a fascination for me and I really want to do more.

D.K. I've just seen this fabulous, fabulous miniature books and Hebrew books, from the Middle Ages. I just was

looking at them around this week at school, we have a fabulous collection of them in Cincinnati, go into the rare book room and you'll go crazy.

R.W. Did you find the card for my book?

D.K. I find the card for your book, yes and I found the number and everything and it's all set, yes. I was looking in the wrong place and it turned out so I felt very good.

R.W. Yea me too, it worried me.

D.K. Hey, this card's here, I mean that's not like having a library book, you know what I mean. It says in it RBR, you know rare book room. The first time I looked at it I thought it was like Berkeley it used to have the RBR, reserved book room. Okay what else can we, should we add to this, have I left out? I mean I've left out a lot about your work which is something I'm going to regret.

R.W. One of the things I think is interesting, for me anyway and I don't know what's going to come next, is that I went through a long period of really using memory and death for motivating forces, in other words I wanted to remember things, I wanted to hold on to things, and that was very connective with doing metal plate which is a very obsessive holding to medium, you know you have to really dig into it. When I switched to doing things that were more in the present that coincided with therapy and it coincided with changing to lithography and beginning

to think about having a baby and a lot of other things, then I chose a medium that was more spontaneous and more you know where the gesture was more important and where life turned out to be the most important thing, rather than death. And I think that I see, you know I see about three years of work that was really a lot about memories and the past and death, and then there's about three years of work that's very much about life and making life and being alive. I mean if I were someone looking at my work that would be something.

D.K. With the contrast between the Shtetl Book and the picture of you in your living room, you know where you're pregnant, there is a difference. One is you can see, the two is just a, do you have photographs of your work?

R.W. Yes.

D.K. I was going to ask you, do you have copies of them or negatives, could I make copies of some of them?

R.W. I think you could make copies and I might have some copies to give you. I mean I'd have things in the, I have things I can give you for sure.

D.K. Because I, you don't need to because the school will pay to have them duplicated, so you hold onto them, and maybe we can talk about a selection. We should try and figure out a few things to include of your work.

R.W. Yes, I agree because if you just talk about me and nobody has a visual image that would be disturbing to me.

D.K. I have to, and since they've offered to pay, I don't like it that we should take advantage of you.

R.W. Well, you know I've done all the documentation because of the tenure decisions. I have some extra photographs and some negatives.

D.K. And I may think of things to ask and we may have to do some by phone or by correspondence.

R.W. Right and are we overlapped one day?

D.K. Yes, in Los Angeles. Right. And I think this could go on forever, that's artificial, but to cut it off sometime, I never know when to stop.

R.W. Well, if you have any other questions.

D.K. Not right now, I'll think of things later and ultimately I'm going to have to answer some of them myself. In fact there was a question I thought of about Jack Levine, about this contradiction I perceived and I thought I should ask him about it, and I realized that is a question I have to answer, that's my question. And so I'll think of some of those too.

R.W. Right, one of the things that's of value in a proces like this is that you know I have certain views of myself and they do change, it is a dynamic kind of thing, I see myself and then a new thing happens to me

and everything shifts a little. Or that's true of your own work, everytime you do something new everything looks a little different to you. But what you see in me is going to be different probably, very valuable for me to read or know. I'm very excited about it.

D.K. It should be interesting. Okay, officially we say it on the tape, thank-you, that's important.

D.K. This interview was taped in a log cabin on the farm of Kelyn Roberts' family. The farm is on the outskirts of Grand Rapids, Michigan. The interview began at approximately 9:00 a.m. and was concluded at about 1:00 p.m.

NOTES

JACK LEVINE

1. Unless indicated by a specific note, all the material on Jack Levine has been drawn from the interview designated Appendix I.

2. Frank Getlein, Jack Levine (New York: Harry N. Abrams), p. 9.

3. Ibid.

4. Levine does not recall exact dates and the chronology of this museum trip appears to be earlier than Levine indicates in the interview.

5. Getlein, p. 9.

6. Emery Grossman, Art and Tradition (New York: A. S. Barnes and Co., 1967), p. 70.

7. Getlein, p. 14.

8. Mahonri Sharp Young, Jack Levine, Recent Paintings (New York: Kennedy Galleries, 1972), p. 2.

9. Getlein, p. 12.

10. Grossman, p. 73.

11. Selden Rodman, Conversations with Artists (New York: Capricorn Books, 1961), p. 202.

12. Selden Rodman, Eye of Man: Form and Content in Western Painting, (New York: Devin-Adair, 1955), p. 160.

13. Ibid., p. 161.

14. Getlein, p. 14.

15. Ibid., p. 16.

16. Jack Levine, "Notes on the Trial" (Xerox copy, Art Institute of Chicago, 1955), p. 2.

17. Getlein, p. 9.

18. Alfred Werner, "Jack Levine: Social Realist," The Jewish News (East Orange, N.J.), February 6, 1975, pp. 12 and 47.

NOTES

RUTH WEISBERG

1. Unless indicated by a specific note, all the material on Ruth Weisberg has been drawn from the interview designated Appendix II.

2. Norman Gibson, "Book to Cost $250," Ann Arbor (Mich.) News, March 31, 1969.

3. Ruth Weisberg, The Shtetl, A Journey and a Memorial, (Santa Monica: The Kelyn Press, 1971).

4. Ibid.

5. Ruth Weisberg, "Curriculum Vitae" (Xerox copy, 1974).

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