



*The Bancroft Library*

University of California • Berkeley









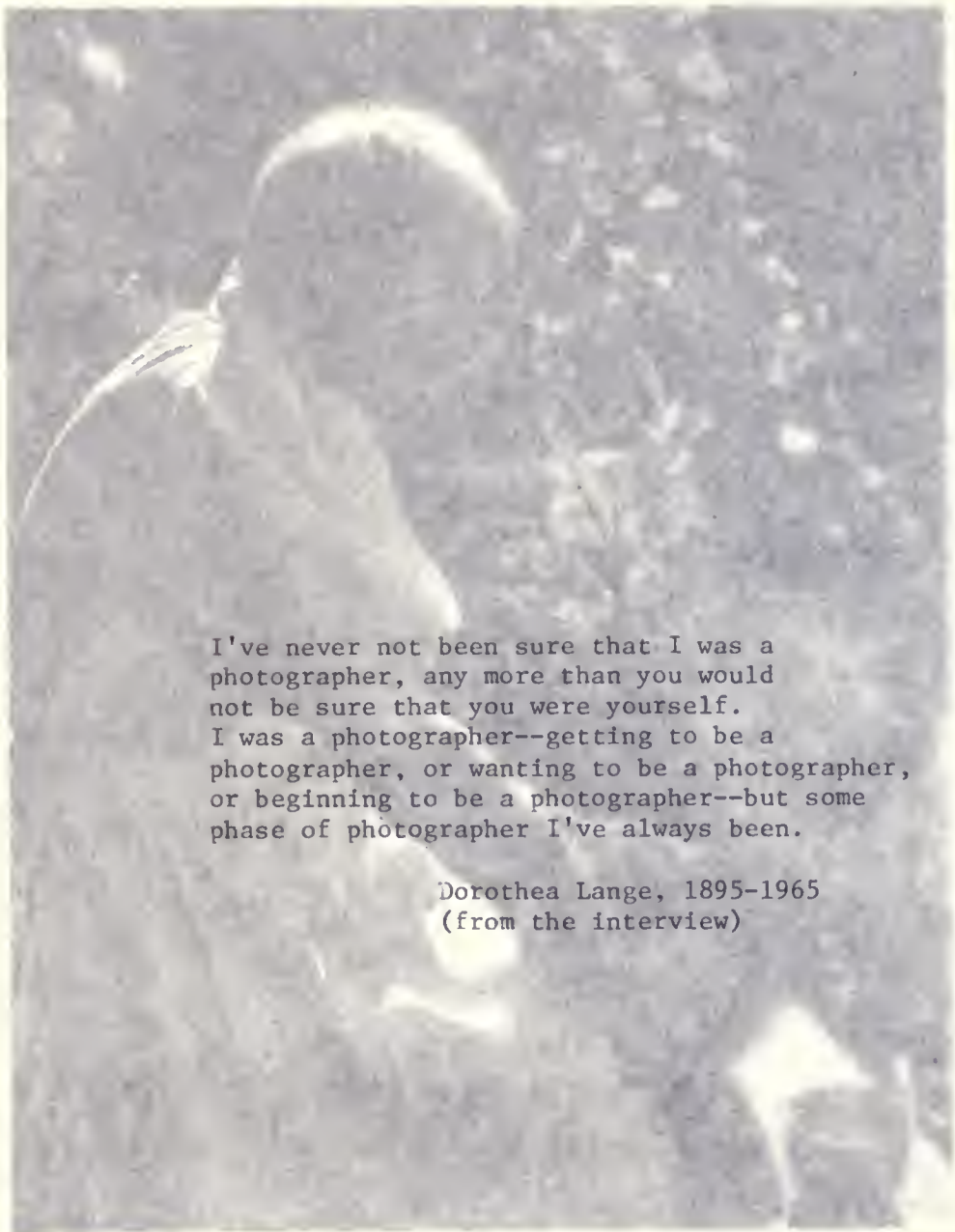












I've never not been sure that I was a  
photographer, any more than you would  
not be sure that you were yourself.  
I was a photographer--getting to be a  
photographer, or wanting to be a photographer,  
or beginning to be a photographer--but some  
phase of photographer I've always been.

Dorothea Lange, 1895-1965  
(from the interview)

I've never not been sure that I was a  
photographer, any more than you would  
not be sure that you were yourself.  
I was a photographer--getting to be a  
photographer, or wanting to be a photographer,  
or beginning to be a photographer--but some  
phase of photographer I've always been.

Dorothea Lange, 1895-1965  
(from the interview)



Dorothea Lange in 1956

Copyright 1968, Rondal Partridge  
All commercial rights are reserved.



University of California

Bancroft Library/Berkeley  
Regional Oral History Office

Dorothea Lange

THE MAKING OF A DOCUMENTARY PHOTOGRAPHER

An Interview Conducted by

Suzanne Riess

Berkeley  
1968





This manuscript is made available for research purposes. All literary rights in the manuscript, including the right to publish, are reserved to The Bancroft Library of the University of California at Berkeley. No part of the manuscript may be quoted for publication without the written permission of the Director of The Bancroft Library of the University of California at Berkeley.

Requests for permission to quote for publication should be addressed to the Regional Oral History Office, 486 Library, and should include identification of the specific passages to be quoted, anticipated use of the passages, and identification of the user.



## INTRODUCTION

The home of Dorothea Lange and Paul Taylor at 1163 Euclid Avenue in Berkeley is approached down a steep, banked path. At the end of the walk is a great, large door; gongs and bells give a choice of ways of asking admittance. Inside is a landing and ahead, down a few steps, is the living room; the dining room is to the right; the stairs, upstairs, are at the left. It is a many-leveled, private, beautiful, 1910 Berkeley house, completely settled into its surroundings.

Our first interview in October 1960 was held in the living room, a room with a view of trees off a balcony at the far end; inside it was all soft colors of wood and oatmeal white painted wool-covered walls and a very warm fire. The black and white of Dorothea's photographs spread across a long working desk in that room. For most of the rest of the interviews we sat in the dining room. It was late afternoon when we talked--Dorothea saved mornings for work--so that it always seemed the sun was setting as the interview closed, and that room received the last rays of light.

It would be fun now to visit the house again and to notice more, to get details, captions, like Dorothea's photographs. But of course it is not a monument; it was and is alive and changing, yet held together by the same taste:



effortless-looking and art.

In the interview sessions Dorothea spoke slowly because she allowed herself to reflect and to remember as she spoke. She was really trying to get back, to answer the questions and then to "close the door" on the past. Her speech was quiet and thoughtful; I could not tell when it was mingled with pain from her illness, when not. But she was compelling, spell-casting, and I felt my questions came as rude splashes in the pool of her thoughts.

Obviously I was enchanted with the woman. I still speak and write of impressions of her, not facts. I cannot guess how much she was aware of any specialness about herself. When, in the interview, she spoke about peoples' attitudes towards Maynard Dixon, I should have asked her what she thought others thought about her, and how that affected her, but I did not have such questions in my mind then. Certainly to me she was a different person from the Dorothea who is the subject of the Memorial Service tributes appended; to them, and to Wayne Miller in his tribute,\* she was the real person who made excellent photographs and ran a real household and was a substance and a strength to her friends and her family.

Dorothea Lange was chosen in 1960 to be interviewed by

---

\* Appendix



the Regional Oral History Office because of her part in the history of artistic developments in the Bay Area. She agreed to the interviewing reluctantly, and mostly because of her husband's enthusiasm for the idea. She warned me that she would probably go deep, that she was very interested in the personal, in her own self; at the same time that she doubted how good a subject for interviewing she would be, she allowed that "people who maintain they don't like to have their picture taken usually really do like it."

The transcript of the interview bothered her. For a long time she was unable to do anything with it. I have notes in my files on conversations with her that reflect her desperation. She said at one point that she had come nearly to throwing the manuscript into the fireplace, but she realized she had to deal with it, that it gave a picture of herself that she did not like but that she thought not entirely false--just not true enough. Again she likened it to, in photography, the difficulty people have in choosing among proofs for the most honest likeness.

In subsequent conversations she was "squirming" or "guilty" about the manuscript. Often she was not well and then when she was well she was very busy. I gave her the edited transcript in January 1962 and we expected to have it back to type by spring. In February and March she had a





series of operations. By August of that year she was better and clearing the way to go to Egypt with Paul Taylor. In October 1963 we talked about her concern about the manuscript while she had been gone and she admitted her dread of its being released as it then was. When in September 1964 she told me that her cancer was incurable, she had begun desperately to organize her time. That fall she was involved with preparations for her Museum of Modern Art retrospective and a film taping done by KQED, San Francisco, for National Educational Television. Apparently the filming gave her agonies like those endured around editing the manuscript, but it was at some time in there that she read through and corrected the manuscript. Her changes were very few, and minor--perhaps she had come to terms with her earlier regret that the manuscript was not the absolutely true statement she wished to have made.

Dorothea Lange died on October 11, 1965. However, it was not until 1967 that her husband, Paul Taylor, was ready to read and to agree to the release of the manuscript. In November when I met with Paul Taylor and we went over Dorothea's corrections he added some footnotes and was very helpful in getting material collected to append to the final manuscript.

Suzanne B. Riess, Interviewer

Regional Oral History Office  
486 Library  
University of California  
Berkeley, California

July 3, 1968



## INTERVIEW HISTORY

Dorothea Lange Taylor, 1895-1965, was interviewed by the Regional Oral History Office as a part of a series on Bay Area artistic and cultural history.

**Interviewer:** Suzanne Riess, Interviewer-Editor, Regional Oral History Office, University of California, Berkeley.

**Time and Setting of Interviews:** October 27, November 2, November 10, November 17, December 29, 1960; January 5, January 12, March 2, August 10, August 17, August 24, 1961.

All interviews but one were held in the home of the interviewee. One meeting was held on the University campus. Each session lasted approximately one and a half hours and was usually conducted in late afternoon. The only persons present were the interviewer and the interviewee.

**Conduct of the Interviews:** A chronological approach was encouraged, although the interviewer introduced topical questions and encouraged comment on them within the chronological framework. No list of questions or outline was submitted to the interviewee ahead of time; the interviewer worked with about ten broad questions in mind to be answered at each session.

**Editing:** The interviewer edited and indexed the manuscript. Material from a verbatim transcription of the tape was arranged both for chronology and to bring together some scattered comments on the same subject, and the work was organized in chapter headings. The interviewee received this edited transcript in January 1962 and edited it between that time and late 1964; very few corrections were made, and those mostly in response to queries about spelling. In November 1967 the manuscript was released to the Regional Oral History Office for final typing by the deceased interviewee's husband, Dr. Paul Taylor.



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	i
INTERVIEW HISTORY	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vi
THE LONG PAST - "THINGS THAT FORM US"	1
<u>Family</u>	1
<u>School and After School</u>	11
<u>New York Studio Experience</u>	28
<u>Clarence White</u>	36
<u>More Teachers - "The Lovable Hacks"</u>	44
<u>Gifts and Giving</u>	57
THE RECENT PAST - "PUTTING THE FABRIC TOGETHER"	78
<u>Studio on Sutter Street</u>	78
<u>Maynard Dixon and Bohemian San Francisco</u>	93
<u>Three Southwestern Expeditions</u>	121
INTO THE PRESENT, FUTURE - "THE LIFE THAT BEATS"	144
<u>Corner Window</u>	144
<u>Documentary Photography "Begins"</u>	154
<u>Into the Field</u>	159
<u>Photography for the Government</u>	167
Farm Security Administration	167
Office of War Information	179
War Relocation Authority	185



<u>Taking and Printing a Picture</u>	195
<u>Captioning and Exhibiting</u>	204
<u>Observations and Hopes for the Future</u>	213
INDEX	221
APPENDICES	226





There is a false tone to all  
this which is distressing.

This person takes everything  
so hard, goes through  
difficulties, seems difficulties,  
describes difficulties in  
a monotonous fashion.  
All about herself, herself,  
herself, very unpleasant -

Aug '64



## THE LONG PAST--"THINGS THAT FORM US"

### Family

Lange: My grandmother was a temperamental, difficult, talented woman. She was a dressmaker, a very good one, but she was difficult. She was one of those people that have many legends and stories crushed around them. My mother was a much better person than my grandmother, but there aren't any legends about my mother; about my grandmother there are dozens, and they never leave.

Riess: How was your mother better?

Lange: She had a better nature, a nicer character, she was more kind and compassionate and unselfish. My grandmother was the difficult one.

I very early remember that my grandmother told me that of all the things that were beautiful in the world there was nothing finer than an orange, as a thing. She said this to me as a child, and I knew what she meant, perfectly. My mother needed an explanation for that. And I've caught myself, many years later, with my own grandchildren, showing them what a beautiful thing is an eggshell, forgetting where I had gotten that. And I realize, too, so often I cook the way she did, though she never actually taught me how to cook.



Riess: How's that?

Lange: Well, there's a certain kind of a very particular, fastidious way. Has to be just right.

Riess: Measurement?

Lange: Oh, no. It's that you throw it out if it's not just right. You don't even eat only the best of it. You just throw it out.

Riess: That's hard on a hungry family.

Lange: Well, you don't often throw it out, but you have the impulse.

I remember hearing my grandmother say one time when I was a child of six or seven--I'd been watching my grandmother sew--and I heard her say to my mother, in the German dialect that she spoke, "That girl has line in her head." You know what she meant? That sense I had very early of what was fine and what was mongrel, what was pure and what was corrupted in things, and in workmanship, and in cool, clean, cleanly thought about something. I had that. I was aware of that.

Riess: It was learned by the example of your grandmother?

Lange: No, though I recognized some things in her that made us closer in our relationship than my mother and I were. We participated in those things. My grandmother had a way of protecting me from my mother too. My mother was her only daughter and they were devoted to each other, but my grandmother knew that I was smarter than my mother. [Laughter] She did. I mean I was more sensitive than



Lange: my mother. It was an awareness of things.

Riess: Was your grandmother living with you?

Lange: No. My grandmother lived in Hoboken, where I was born. They were immigrants, that side of the family from whom I came. In fact I always had a kind of a feeling of, "What kind of people could these people have been that they came on a ship and then plomped themselves down, right there?" I mean they didn't have the gumption to go to Cincinnati or Milwaukee or Chicago. They just stayed right there in Hoboken. They must have been dying to go back! Well, they were pretty spirited people, and they didn't.

But in this family, of whom my grandmother was a part, there were three brothers, and two sisters, and a mother. And those three brothers were all lithographers and very good ones. They were very young when they came; they were in their twenties, these brothers. And they all of them were established as lithographers immediately, and were never anything but lithographers, and very good ones, as I said. Then two of my mother's brothers became very expert lithographers. Although I didn't know anything about what they did actually, I used to see these lithograph stones that they engraved on, and I used to like those stones. I had one for years that I kept, until my mother threw it away when she broke up her old home. She didn't see anything in it. My grandmother wouldn't have thrown it away.





Lange:           Actually I didn't like my rich German relatives much. They were really Teutonic people. Later on they put up the money, which I didn't appreciate, so I could go to school further so I'd have an education, "something to fall back on," and be a teacher, and that I didn't want to do.

          Aunt Caroline, my temperamental grandmother's younger sister, was the only completely reliable person, to me and to the whole family. She was an eighth-grade teacher who lived a systematic, regular, quiet life, and the only one who could hold my grandmother in line. She came to this country when she was six years old, in the steerage with this whole family. I only discovered that when I was about thirty. Imagine it! They would never say they came in the steerage; that was a family secret! And it used to take a long time to come over and they carried their own food with them on those boats. You got places to sleep, but everyone brought his own commissary, and my Aunt Caroline, years later, was told that she got very, very seasick and every day her brothers had to throw out some of the food. And they had some macaroons! [Laughter] Almond paste! Imagine taking that. And she got sick on the almond paste. She never would even think of going back again because she would never face a boat ride. Never! But she was really a fine teacher. She used to read to her classes. Friday afternoons, the last half hour, she used to read a book called Woodcarver of Linz,



Lange: and Toby Tyler, and Peck's Bad Boy, and Olympus. One of those adored teachers. She used to have a spring hat and a winter hat. Every spring she got another dress; every winter she got another dress. There was no J.C. Penney's in those days.

Riess: She preserved all the old ones?

Lange: Oh, they were turned. The black would be worn so much it got green and shiny so the dress was ripped apart and it was turned. My grandmother used to make Aunt Caroline's things. She always tried to introduce a few notes of change, or a little bit of something novel in a dress, and my aunt would always have to battle with her over it. A battle that I heard about once was when my grandmother finally gave in, or pretended to give in, and she said, in German, "All right, Caroline, we will make it absolutely simple, absolutely simple, and not a sign of an overskirt." And my poor Aunt Caroline had to back down; of course she had to have an overskirt! [Laughter]

Riess: Would you tell me some more about your mother?

Lange: For many people she was very important but for me there was so much of which I never spoke to her, and she was more dependent on me than I was on her. Inwardly, my mother had qualities of dependence and the outward appearance of things was very important to her. She had what bothers me in Germans, some kind of a respect for authority that I don't like. When I had polio she used to be that way with the doctors, and although I was a little



Lange: child, I hated it. She was slightly obsequious to anyone in authority. I can see now why she might be that way, but it was always so. I never liked it at all. Germans are always being aware of what other people would think of them. When I was a growing child and we were out, and some friend was approaching us, she would say to me, "Now walk as well as you can." Again it was, "What would people think?"

And later on, years later on, she would often use the phrase, "Oh, I'm proud of you!" That bothered me. It would always be if my name was in the paper. [Laughter] The very same thing about which my name was in the paper she wasn't proud of until someone else told her.

Yet I made a photograph of her, which is through and through my mother, and it reveals that I loved her very much. I suppose if one of my children were here discussing their relationship to me they would be able to think of things that were quite horrifying, dreadful, that I did, that I was and am unaware of, as she was unaware. Don't you think so? I'm sure, especially between mothers and daughters. Well, I'm sure too my sons could tell me things that I would want to justify.

My mother once said to me, "You have much more iron in you than I have." And it's true. I have more iron. Maybe I can be more cruel. Maybe it is in my independence, which is more than she had.



Lange: She was also rather sentimental, which I have been too, but I loathe it in other people. Sentiment and sentimentality, they are difficult concepts to manage. I must show you the portrait of my mother someday, because she was a very handsome woman, very well spoken of, my Lord!

Riess: She became something of an authority in social work, didn't she?

Lange: She became number one probation officer of Hudson County, New Jersey, a well-known and competent woman, but not really an authority. She was reliable and good, responsible, compassionate, but I don't think she threw light in any area as the result of her presence. I mean she contributed, she was part of the machinery, but she didn't really have any developed uniqueness of understanding in her area, in her work. Things were pretty backward in Hudson County, and still are. She was unique in that she had integrity, and no one ever tried to even break that down. But in nothing that she did was there originality, no style. Everyone liked her though.

Riess: Did she consider your grandmother an authority figure?

Lange: Yes, she was a devoted daughter--a much more devoted daughter than I ever was. She did in the direction her mother told her to.

My mother took care of her youngest brother, after my grandmother's death, in the same way my grandmother had taken care of him. Watched over him. Temperamental son-of-a-gun he





Lange: always was. One of the figures of my life, this Uncle John. But she did much too much to take care of him. Do you know the movie actress Hope Lange? That's John's daughter. In the paper yesterday I saw that Hopie's going to be in a new picture, going to be with Elvis Presley. My Hopie! How can she do that? Hopie is my cousin--although Hopie is only twenty-six! Don Murray is her husband. And Hopie is a Lange, she's a real Lange, that girl.

Riess: I'm not sure what a "real Lange" is.

Lange: Well, I'm not sure either. But my mother took care of her father, John, just the way her mother had done. He was the favorite, and he was a spoiled pup. He was a cellist, a very fine one. David Lange, my cousin and Hopie's brother, is a young playwright. I think he's going to be good. But he runs around with too-rich people, and that's bad.

Riess: Would you tell me about your brother, Martin.

Lange: My brother is six years younger than I and in all my life we have never really been separated. He lives here in Berkeley now, and he is my very good friend. We are utterly different people, and I have only in the last few years been able not to be his big sister, and always a little worried about him. Always, always I had my eye on him. He's done some pretty terrible things against himself. Even now I'm not absolutely sure that I'm not going to have to take care of him. I have always been a



Lange: little uncertain about him, but I'm devoted to him and my children love him. He is somewhat of a character.

Riess: What does he do?

Lange: He is a printer. He has his own business and he prints language cards, which he sells mail-order. These are for high schools for the aid of language teachers. He has another device that he's developing, something that has to do with logarithms. I don't know quite what. But it's just out this year and he's very much concerned, he's put everything into it. He works about eighteen hours a day the year round. He's a terrific worker.

Riess: Sounds like he hasn't time to get in trouble.

Lange: Well, he can get into great debt. That's trouble. But he manages to get out of it.

He really is a superb fellow, just an extraordinary guy. He's married to a Hawaiian, a wonderful girl. And they have no children, but she had children, and [laughter] they live in what we call the Lange Grass Shack. And that house is something. I am, in comparison with him, very conservative, very methodical. I know just what I am doing. I never will be caught in a disadvantage compared with him, never let down my defenses compared with him. He's always at a disadvantage, always.

Riess: Did he come out to California with you?

Lange: No, he came out some years later. He went to sea, and he went



Lange: around the world a couple of times in the merchant marine. This was during the war, World War I, that he was at sea. And I remember going down to the dock with Maynard to meet him-- Maynard had never laid eyes on him--and he came off the boat and he'd taken off his quartermaster's uniform and he had on a straw hat, too small, and he carried a birdcage, in which there was no bird, and he had been in China. And I said, "What did you bring us?" and he said, "There's nothing in China." And that's what he brought. The birdcage and that straw hat.

Then he went to college here after a short interval, but on and off he went to sea, came back, went to college, worked up in the big timber driving a caterpillar tractor. I remember we went up to see him in those destitute hillsides, pulling that timber. What an ordeal! The hardest job I think I've ever seen. Excepting, you know, the work of the man that you see on the street that has this thing that jiggles when he cuts the concrete [pneumatic drill]. I wonder how a human being can stand that job or the job that I saw Martin do up there. But he's done many such things.

He went down to Boulder Dam and worked for the Six Companies--building the dam. I was thinking along in those days that he ought to be doing more than all that hard, physical work that took all that strength, and living the rough life that went with it. A few years later I went down to the dam--I happened to



Lange: be there and was driving across-and I saw a monument there to the men who had built it. And I suddenly thought of him. I hadn't quite realized, seen it, that way. I had thought he ought to get out of that. But I remember something about the way that monument looked, and I never reproached him again.

### School and After School

I've sometimes wondered whether these things that we do, that we think we do on our own, the directions that we take and the choices of work, are not determined by something in the blood. The older that I get the more I begin to think--though I don't dare say so in the presence of my more trained and intellectual and scientific friends--I think that there is some kind of memory that the blood carries. But why is it that this thing's scorned. It seems to be. There are certain drives that we have.

I had in my early years, before I was fully grown, a great many things to meet, some very difficult, a variety of experiences that a child shouldn't really meet alone. I was aware that I had to meet them alone, and I did. Now I know how much that has given me. For example of this: when I was in the seventh and eighth grade of elementary school I went to





Lange: school in the ghetto of New York City where I was the only Gentile among 3,000 Jews, the only one. The reason that I was in that school was that at that time my mother was supporting the family. She had made of herself a librarian. This was after a very difficult time. And she became the breadwinner of the family. She was stationed in the New York Public Library on East Broadway in New York, which is way downtown, near Chatham Square.

Well, I was a child that she didn't want to leave all day to my own devices. So I went to the library with her-- that became my day home--and I went to school in that neighborhood and after school I went to the library and I did my studies.

Riess: But you weren't living in New York.

Lange: My home at that time again was Hoboken. We had gone back there to live with my grandmother. We had to. My mother had to hold things together; my father abandoned us. And so we had to live with my grandmother and my mother had to support us all. She earned fifty-five dollars a month. That sounds like little, but it wasn't out of line at that time. It would be like saying now that she had to support a family on, maybe, two hundred dollars a month. I mean it was hard, but it was possible.

Riess: How did she make of herself a librarian?

Lange: Before she was married to my father she had for about six months



Lange: been a librarian. She was a singer. And she took a library job before she was married in order to keep herself going, and that gave her just enough. And then she boned up and took the examination. It wasn't so hard, really.

However, that was the library, and it was there in the sweatshop, pushcart, solid Jewish, honeycomb tenement district. And that's where I went to school. So there I learned what it is to be in the minority. I was a minority group of one.

Riess: With no warning. It hadn't been talked over with you.

Lange: Right. Oh, nothing was talked over with me. In fact there wasn't any realization. You know, people don't realize how life is to children. They think when they solve it themselves the kids can go along.

But that was something that I had to do. It was hard in some ways because I had always taken it for granted that I was bright, and I was until then, one of those in school who was reliable. "You never have to worry about her." I was too quick. Well, when I got there, at P.S. 62, I fell from my perch because I couldn't keep up with them. They were too smart for me. And they were aggressively smart. And they were hungry after knowledge and achievement and making, you know, fighting their way up. Like their parents, this the children had. To an outsider, it was a savage group because of this overwhelming ambition.



Riess: So maybe you had a new sense of inferiority as well as minority.

Lange: Well, I was unhappy there, with them. But I had to stay, and I wasn't actively unhappy; but dully behind it all, I went through it. Nobody knew how I was, what the color of my existence was, but there I was. And I had to meet that competition.

Riess: Do you think that you were conscious right away of your minority status? Or did some child make you aware of it?

Lange: No, no, no. They were all right to me. But I was an outsider. And I didn't live there besides. Those schools didn't have the social life that schools have now. This was a great, big education factory, and there wasn't any social life there at all. The kids after school just dispersed--where, I didn't know, but I never set foot into any of these places. I had one little friend, because she sat in front of me all throughout. I can just see her curly hair, she looked like Little Bo Peep, she was the littlest girl. And she was a kind of a friend.

Well, at any rate, I had those walks from the school to the library, and they were rather long walks in all seasons of the year, and I was always alone. I saw a very great deal. Then, I spent the afternoon studying in the library, presumably. I didn't study, I read all the books. All those books to read! I read them in what they called the staff room. Well, the staff room had windows that looked out on and into tenements, and in the spring and in the summer, until the winter, the windows were



Lange: open and I could look into all these lives. All of a tradition and a race alien to myself, completely alien, but I watched. And every year, never a September comes that I don't stop and remember what I used to see in those tenements when they had the Jewish holidays, the religious holidays. In those days all the women wore schachtels, you know, the black wigs, and the men wore beards, and little black hats, yamilkes. It hadn't broken up. The generation I belonged to was one of the generations that escaped out of that and went uptown to high school. That was the beginning of the break. But the elementary schools were down there. I saw this. I'm aware that I just looked at everything. I can remember the smell of the cooking too, the way they lived. Oh, I had good looks at that, but never set foot myself. Something like a photographic observer. I can see it.

Then add to that that there were two days a week when my mother worked nights and I went home alone. I went home generally about five o'clock. Now the scenery changes, because I had to walk from Chatham Square to the Christopher Street Ferry, and that's a walk along the Bowery. And that Bowery suddenly ended at City Hall. There I walked across that park over to Barclay or Christopher Street where that was still another neighborhood.

But there were three worlds there that I had a very





Lange: intimate acquaintance with, and that Bowery part (I remember how afraid I was each time, never without fear), I thought of it recently when I was in Asia, quite often, because in Asia there are places where you have to look where you step because the sidewalks are unspeakably filthy and you never take it for granted where you walk. Well, on the Bowery I knew how to step over drunken men. I had to do it, you know, and I don't mean that the streets were littered with drunken men, but it was a very common affair. I knew how to keep an expression of face that would draw no attention, so no one would look at me. I have used that my whole life in photographing. I can turn it on and off. If I don't want anybody to see me I can make the kind of a face so eyes go off me. Do you know what I mean? There's a self-protective thing you can do. I learned that as a child in the Bowery. So none of these drunks' eyes would light on me. I was never obviously there. And you can see what equipment that was for anyone who later found herself doing the kind of work I do, or maybe it took me into it. I don't know. This was a preparation, hard as it was, but it was a preparation.

Riess: Your connection with the three worlds was as an observer. You didn't have anyone to talk to about these three worlds, or in these three worlds.

Lange: No, not at all, which most children don't. I mean I don't say



Lange: that as a criticism of my family, who certainly loved me very much. But very few people can associate with children, especially growing children, in those half years. Oh, it's rare!

Then also I was physically disabled, and no one who hasn't lived the life of a semi-cripple knows how much that means. I think it perhaps was the most important thing that happened to me, and formed me, guided me, instructed me, helped me, and humiliated me. All those things at once. I've never gotten over it and I am aware of the force and the power of it. I have a grandson who had a birth injury. I nearly broke down at that time, because I knew. That was one of the most difficult two weeks, before I saw that maybe he was going to be all right. And everyone else was very brave. Everybody else. But I wasn't brave. Not about that. I couldn't take it, because I knew. Cripples know that about each other, perfectly well. When I'm with someone that has a disability, we know. Especially in childhood. When it comes later it's not the same, but if you grow up with this thing...

Years afterwards when I was working, as I work now, with people who are strangers to me, where I walk into situations where I am very much an outsider, to be a crippled person, or a disabled person, gives an immense advantage. People are kinder to you. It puts you on a different level than if you go into



Lange: a situation whole and secure . . . I can't say it well, but do you know what I mean? Well this kind of thing, you see, forms us. We all have those things that form us. They are of what we are built; they are our architecture. And there's much we don't know. I mean this is only a part of it. But the explanation of a person's work sometimes hinges on just a succession of incidents, and I think it's a very interesting thing because those incidents dictate our responses.

You know, years later I found myself in San Francisco in the portrait business, and it was a good business, I had the cream of the trade. I was the person to whom you went if you could afford it. And do you know who my customers were? My customers were all the rich Jews of San Francisco, who are a very special group. I mean I don't know of any city that has just that element in its population, these very wealthy progeny of early-day Jewish merchants. And they have been really the--since the war I think it's lessening--the bulwark of art, culture, everything. The great subscribers and supporters, real supporters, not only in money but in time, effort, and so on. And they have raised a very good crop of people. Well, it's odd, isn't it, that I who was one in 3,000 Jews, as a child, with very little actual contact with these Jews, should have as my customers in San Francisco nine out of ten people of that group, of whom I'm very, very fond. I honor and respect them.



Lange: And I think they are wonderful people, the San Francisco group.

But as I say, my lameness as a child and my acceptance, finally, of my lameness truly opened gates for me.

Riess: To many people it does sort of opposite things. A very strong backbone but a warped personality, denying help and so on. This is often the picture.

Lange: Well, I may be that also, and not know it. I may carry such things. I am giving you, of course, a very one-sided look. I could be. I think I see occasionally places where I am that.

I remember someone once saying to me as a child--we were looking out a window of a flat over the Hackensack Meadows and there were washlines, permanent washlines, something like our telephone lines. They're always there against the sky and sometimes there's quite a combination of sound because all the washlines make a sort of funny line and on washday on whole blocks you could hear this rusty squeaking.

Well, at any rate, looking over to the flats where there were yards in between, wooden fences, washlines, these red brick buildings that are still there, looking out over to the west, over the Hackensack Meadows, late in the afternoon, I said to this person, "To me, that's beautiful." And this person said--I was a child, I was fourteen then--this person said, "To you, everything is beautiful." Well, that startled me, because I hadn't realized it. It also helped me. I thought





Lange: everyone saw everything that I saw but didn't talk about it, you see. But when this person said, "To you, everything's beautiful," that made me aware that maybe I had eyesight, you see. Curious, isn't it? I heard a woman say of me one time-- she was a woman whom I admired and she was brought into our home as a guest; there had been great preparations for her coming because she was a very superior person, and I was introduced to her and then I left the room--and then I heard her say, "That child has a spiritual face." I'm now sixty-five years old and I've never forgotten that.

Riess: These are the things that enable you to bear childhood.

Lange: They make you able to bear it, but they also give you direction.

If it comes from the right person at the right time it's like putting a seed in the ground, if the soil is just right and it is the right time of the year, and the seed is healthy; I mean, there must have been something or else it wouldn't have made that impression on me. I must have known that it was true. In a way. I must have known that. And her saying that to me led me a little bit I think in my own career to over-encourage people because I want so much to do that for someone else.

I remember also as one of the things that meant a very great deal to me that a man gave to me a bunch of lilacs on my birthday and I sat on the Twenty-third Street crosstown car, with those lilacs in my lap, jammed in with people, on my birth-



Lange: day, sitting there, feeling so wonderful. I can see myself. Do you see yourself plainly at all when you remember your childhood? I always see. I can remember everything. I can hear the sounds of the horse-drawn crosstown. There were no trolleys and no buses. And it was under the Elevated. I remember the darkness and the light under the Elevated and the cross town car. I sat there with these lilacs in one of the sharp instants of realization of the moment. And the flowers--all my life I don't think I did get over it. I don't think I did. I am a passionate lover of flowers. And that's the moment that did it. Curious? And I had a straw hat on.

I was driving home with one of my little granddaughters, my Leslie, from San Francisco the other day and she likes, as all children do, to give the man the money at the toll gate. She gave this colored man the money and he said, "Thank you, Princess." And she said, "Why did he call me Princess?"

I said, "I don't really know. Maybe he thought you were a princess."

She said, "What made him think I was a princess?"

I said, "I don't know."

And she was very quiet. Then all of a sudden she shrieked, "I know what it was. It was this!" And she had a little edge of white lace on the edge of her dress, eyelet, common eyelet,



Lange: embroidered, you know. "It was this!" If you could see the face this child has. Anyone would call her Princess. That she didn't know. But it was that little bit of white lace, that's why she was "Princess."

But maybe she'll remember that. I know that when she got home she got all dressed up in everything she could find to be a princess. Maybe she'll remember. I was just a little bit older; I think I was about ten then. And the man who gave it to me was my granduncle. And that was one of the sharp things that pushed me in the direction of my later interests. All is bound together.

And then there are years when I don't remember much. Nothing. You see, at about thirteen things change very much for a girl. From thirteen to--oh, on through--I was fighting the world then. I didn't have what it took to enjoy life very much. But of course, there are some memories...

I remember seeing the hands of Stokowski. A young Russian, landed in New York, he got a job conducting a choir at a church. Though my people weren't churchgoing people, my mother liked music, so this afternoon, on a Sunday afternoon, she took me. And here was a man conducting some oratorio. I couldn't see the man; I could just see the hands. Those hands of that man, ah, that I remember. Years later I read about his hands and I knew who he was! [Laughter] It could be no one but those



Lange: hands that I saw on that winter afternoon there.

And I remember spending as much time as I could neglecting what I should be doing--I didn't study well--looking at pictures. I looked and looked and looked at pictures. That I used to adore.

Riess: You used to go places where there were photographs?

Lange: Yes. Well, where there were all kinds of pictures. My love of pictures is not limited to photographs. I love visual representation of all kinds, in all media, for all purposes. I find beautiful things in advertisements. Oh, I found one today, I'd like to show it to you. I think it's so lovely.

But I'd start at that. I was a solitary. I became a sort of a solitary through those years.

Riess: Was your grandmother still alive, to guide you, or to be helpful?

Lange: No, no. I was too quarrelsome with her through those years. She was messy and disorderly, and oh, she drank too much. And I fled. I couldn't take those things. But we lived then in Englewood and she was with us and died there in early 1914.

Riess: Had you been going to school in this ghetto area?

Lange: No, I only went there in the seventh and eighth grades, and then I went to Wadleigh High School. That's uptown New York. Everybody in that ghetto school went uptown to high school, those who went to high school. Not everybody went to high





Lange: school in those days. When I went uptown that whole pattern broke. I mean to say that I was no longer the only Gentile. Wadleigh High School was way uptown and it was a girls' high school. Miserable high school. When I think now what important years those are and what could have been done for me--because I loved books and I could read and I could get things fast--that wasn't done!

Oh, there was a woman who was interested in Yeats. And I got that. And there was a physics teacher there who was the first scientist that I had met, a good, clean-cut brain, who was tremendously interested in elementary physics. That was something. And I liked this woman. Her name was Martha Briuere. Her brother--she came from an illustrious family--was in New York City politics. He was of the reform liberal movement and his name was in the paper every day. I was very proud of her brother and her, and I kind of in my mind adopted these people because I liked them. This woman, who was so principled in her work, did an extraordinary thing for me: she upgraded a paper so that I wouldn't fail, because I had done so dreadfully on an examination where I knew so much better, which would have meant my failing that course. And in my presence she went over that paper and upgraded it. She deliberately gave me what I had no business to get, in order to help me out, which I knew at the time was completely undermining her



Lange: principles. But she did it out of some kind of feeling for me. I don't know what it was exactly but I've always thought of that with the greatest respect. You'd think maybe the opposite; you'd think, well nobody should do that, she should have taught me what's right is right, especially in science. She did the other thing. I've always thought it was marvelous of her.

Riess: Did she have a good effect on you? Did you study physics then?

Lange: That was the end of it, as far as I was concerned. I think this was in order to help me graduate. I know it was critical. She knew I wouldn't tell anyone, and I didn't tell anyone, but I've always thought of her with love and affection and really, several times, have myself done things in my life for the undeserving. [Laughter] And been a little wooly-headed.

Riess: Why were you so bad about studying?

Lange: No direction, and I wasn't with the right people. I wasn't in the right environment and I was rebelling against it, or trying to find a way out of it. And that's where my energies were going. And I had personal problems to solve. And these things... Going to school was just one problem. In fact, half the time I wasn't there.

Riess: You weren't at home either?

Lange: I wasn't home either, no. I was bumming around. I don't mean bumming in any way that was morally objectionable, but I just



Lange: would get so far on the route to school and then I'd turn around and walk around the streets and I'd look at pictures. I remember spring days in Central Park. I remember walking from 108th Street to the Battery one spring day--wonderful day it was. Alone. I had a friend who went with me sometimes, but half the time I was alone. I'd carry the books. I never told them I didn't go to school. They didn't know I was a truant. But it wasn't unproductive truancy, if you know what I mean. It wasn't being on the bum, really. As far as the school was concerned it was, and I carried a heavy conscience load. But I know that city. I know cities. And I'm not afraid to be alone. I have no fear of cities, with camera or without, any hour of the day or night. Those things form you.

Riess: How did you find this fearlessness?

Lange: I don't know. It's like making all parts of the world your natural element, through experience and through no alternatives for you. How can you say that? For most people it would mean having to break down the protections. I didn't have them; I wasn't being taken care of; I was essentially neglected, thank God! But very neglected! Not deprived of love, but they just didn't know where I was and not "how" I was living but "where" I was living.

You know, with all the reading I've done since, I realize



Lange: how enriched I am through having been on the loose in my formative years, how much--this may sound very conceited and maybe it is--but I have known all my life so many things that people, my contemporaries who have been "regulars" and always done what they should do and have gone down the regular roads, followed the channels, been proper, made the grades, lost. Some of the things that have been vitally important to me, in fact, guided me. I used it all. That's what I'm trying to say. I've been fortunate that I've been able to use it all. I think of myself in those days with a good deal of pity in a way; I was a lost kid. But something guided me, something guided me through that.

Then, after high school, I was faced with, "Well, what are you going to do? You have to have..." I said, "I want to be a photographer." I said that to my mother in 1914, and my mother said, "You have to have something to fall back on." She hadn't any confidence in this. (Many years later I heard myself saying to one of my daughters, "You have to have something to fall back on." What a shock it was to hear myself say it! But I heard my mother's voice saying that.) I didn't want anything to fall back on; I knew it was dangerous to have something to fall back on.

But I had announced that I wanted to be a photographer, and I had no camera and I'd never made a picture. My relatives, as





Lange: I've mentioned, provided the money and insisted that I go to school, to Barnard.

### New York Studio Experience

Lange: But in those years I got a camera and I spent every spare moment that I could working in photographers' studios in New York, nights and Saturdays and Sundays.

Riess: While you were going to Barnard.

Lange: To Barnard to learn how you do this, how you earn a living. And I had many looks in to how you become a photographer.

And then I made a friend. I went to get a job with Arnold Genthe. And I did get a job. That was a look into a world I hadn't seen; that was a new one to me. That was a world--well, how can you say it--a world of privilege, maybe something like that, command of what seemed to me the most miraculous kind of living, very luxurious, everything of the highest expression. A world of Oriental art was in that place.

Arnold Genthe was an unconscionable old goat in that he seduced everyone who came in the place. Yes, he was a real roué, a real roué. But what I found out when I worked for him was that this man was very properly a photographer of women because



Lange: he really loved them. I found out something there: that you can photograph what you are really involved with. Now his seduction of women was only part. He wasn't at all a vulgar man; he loved women. He understood them. He could make the plainest woman an illuminated woman. I watched him do it, right and left, and they all fell for it.

However, the point is that it has something to do with the life of an artist. He was an artist, a real one, in a narrow way, but it was a deep trench. And I learned that there.

Riess: And his life an art.

Lange: Wherever he went. He was in love with the kind of a life he lived, he was in love with himself as a human, and his effect on other people. He was a creative person. He did the first color photography I ever saw and loved color as he loved women. The same kind of color. Nothing hard, analytical, nothing disciplined in that man. Everything was warm and beautiful and when it wasn't, he wasn't there.

Well, that was quite a place for me to work.

Riess: What were you doing for him?

Lange: Well, there were three women, three girls. I was the youngest and then there were two others. One of them was the receptionist but she wasn't there half the time. So I would do that sometimes and would answer the telephone. I would make the proofs. I



Lange: would spot the pictures.

Riess: What is "spotting a picture"?

Lange: Oh, there are dust flecks, white spots, that you cover with India ink. And I learned a little retouching there, which was done extensively at that time, on glass plate. And that's where you would slightly modify a feature--you could do it with an etching knife--and you filled it in. It's still done, but not as it was done then. And I would mount the pictures. And I would say he wasn't there when he was there [laughter], I got to know all the women he wanted to see and which ones he didn't and where he was.

The first time I went in there he looked at me and he said, "I wish you'd take those cheap red beads off. They're not any good." The first thing. And I can see them now. They were red cut glass beads. I thought they were nice. I took them off, and I remember that so well. He was absolutely right about those beads.

Riess: Most young girls would weep at that point!

Lange: Not I. Because I knew. Why, my grandmother had taught me better than that. I never wore any costume jewelry, not after those red beads [laughter], not that it's all bad, you know. It was just the wrong thing.

I learned a good deal there, though I didn't learn photography really, because he worked within a very limited



Lange: technique. He worked under a certain battery of lights, certain very controlled conditions. His best things had been completed when I was there, his dancers, his Isadora Duncans, the things he did in Greece. They were past. He was there working within a good commercial formula and making a lot of money at the time.

Riess: How did Arnold Genthe's tutelage in the ways of life affect you?

Lange: Well, it didn't hurt me. I mean to say I was not injured. Now, again I must say I was more fascinated than I was a participant. Only once did he upset me personally, and that horrified me. But for some reason or other I got over it quickly, and I was devoted to him. I think I believed in his sense of beauty. I think that's what saw that thing through. Years later he was in San Francisco, a year or so before he died, and he telephoned and I went over to see him. And we had the finest time. He was still the same self-indulgent old roué! But, somehow or other... Well, you know they use the word glamour a lot now. He had the real thing. He was a validly romantic character. And this young girl we're speaking of sensed that his life was valid and had love in it. And that saved it.

Riess: How did you come to Genthe?

Lange: I just went and asked for a job.

Riess: I've read that Genthe gave you your first camera.





Lange: I remember the camera he gave me, and the camera that I had before that is kind of foggy in my mind. Did I or didn't I have one?

I also worked for about six months for a very well-known Armenian studio where I learned a good deal about commercial trade. I did telephone solicitation for them, and retouching, and printing. He was a strange person; Kazanjian was his name, and he taught me all of that.

When I first went there I was one of a battery of telephone girls: "Good morning, Mrs. DuPont, this is the Kazanjian Studios calling. Mr. Kazanjian is so interested in making a portrait of you and your son together, and we will be in Baltimore on Saturday morning and is there any possibility if you have any time over the ...". That's what it was.

Oh, I was fascinated. I would have found it hard to do if I had been stuck with it. But I was looking into it, you see.

Riess: And it worked.

Lange: Yes, and I would see the pictures go through and I would see what happened. This was a performance; it was like a big show to me. I could see those jobs from the beginning to the end, the devices, and what people wanted and what was bad. The DuPont family were staunch supporters of the studio and I remember the photographs of the mother, the matriarch of that



Lange: family, Mrs. DuPont, surrounded by her grandchildren. I retouched those photographs. And she had, open on her lap, the telephone book! [Laughter] It was so sharp that you could read the names. Well, Kazanjian charged \$200 the dozen and they ordered dozens of pictures of Mrs. Dupont with the children and telephone book, opened like a family Bible! And I had to, finally, when I called Kazanjian's attention to what this was, do all the changing of this so that you couldn't read it. Those were the ways I learned. When I got going myself I knew a good deal about the portrait business as a trade.

Then there was another person from whom I was learning simultaneously, in a different direction. With Kazanjian I learned the trade. With Genthe I was learning other things. And then I went and worked for a person, also on Fifth Avenue, who taught me technique and precipitated me into being an operator.

Riess: An operator?

Lange: The taker of the pictures. Arnold Genthe had no operator. He was a photographer. Kazanjian had a lot of operators. Spencer-Beatty, the woman who had this business, lost her operator while I was there and was in a very critical financial situation. The sheriff was after her. She had a commission to do the Irving Brokaw family, and no operator, so she sent me, with an 8x10



Lange: camera, out of sheer desperation. She couldn't afford to lose this commission. I did that, and it was all right.

Riess: Why wouldn't she go?

Lange: She didn't know how! It was her own business but she always employed operators. She didn't know anything at all about how to work the camera.

That was the first big job I ever did and I was certainly not prepared for it. It was sheer luck and maybe gall. But I had enough insight, you see, by that time, to know how professionals behaved on these jobs and what people wanted and didn't want, what was acceptable, what was the commercial product.

Riess: And were you at ease with these people?

Lange: I don't think I was that day. I was scared to death for Spencer-Beatty's sake because I knew she had to have that three or four hundred dollars, not scared of the people, but that I wouldn't be able to do the pictures that would be acceptable to them--hard-boiled pictures, really formal, conventional portrait groups. I don't know how old I was but I was certainly not ready to do that. With a great big 8x10 camera. They sent a car down there with a driver and a footman. And there I was, this obscure little piece, scared to death but I did it.

And then she sent me, maybe a few weeks later--I'd



Lange: almost forgotten this--she sent me to photograph a great actor after his performance, and it was Sir Herbert Beerbohm Tree. I photographed him in the role of Cardinal Richelieu. It was the first time that I did anything like that. I'd never been in a theater behind the stage and I've often thought he knew it, because he was so jolly with me, and gave me so much time. He was magnificent. You couldn't miss really. And the role had to do with an orange--there's the orange again--in cogitating he played with this orange, wearing these magnificent cardinal's robes. He was very patient with me and it made a very good picture. Very good for Mrs. Beatty.

Riess: She kept you going as an operator there?

Lange: Yes, and I kept her going! [Laughter] I was earning about fifteen dollars a week with Genthe and I worked every afternoon and night. And with Spencer-Beatty I made about twelve dollars a week, Saturdays and Sundays and whenever she had to have me. The printing she farmed out; she farmed the retouching out, too, to somebody else. It was that kind of a thing. And I was the operator.

Riess: Were you doing this at the same time you were working for Genthe?

Lange: No. Another time. I don't remember why I stopped with Genthe. I know I wanted to get all kinds of experience.





Clarence White

Riess: Was your family resigned to you being a photographer by now?

Lange: Yes. My family was small then. At that time it was my mother, my brother, and my Aunt Caroline. My mother was launched in her work in Hudson County, New Jersey, where she was assistant to the judge in the juvenile court. The financial stresses were not bad then, and my brother was half-grown. I was able to be on my own, if I could swing it. And I guess the first shocks of my being so independent and impractical were pretty well accepted. There was some precedent in the family, too, for that. But I didn't feel that I was being criticized or that I was in disfavor at that time. I'd made some fair photographs and I was surer. I've never not been sure that I was a photographer, any more than you would not be sure that you were yourself! I was a photographer--getting to be a photographer, or wanting to be a photographer, or beginning--but some phase of photographer I've always been.

Riess: You studied with Clarence White, didn't you?

Lange: Yes. I found my way into a seminar that he was giving. I don't know just how I found my way into that thing, probably the way I found my way into all the others. But his name, of



Lange: course, was well known to me by that time, and he stood for a certain kind of a photograph that no one else has produced. He had an unmistakable--style isn't the word exactly, area is a better word--an area that was his, in which he moved with great surety and skill. I'd say that he had a claim to it, a kind of stake to this world where there was a good deal of poetry and luminosity and a fine sense of the human figure. If you could liken musically the qualities of different producers of photographs, you'd say his were on the "flute" side of things.

Well, I didn't know what kind of a man he was, and I went to that seminar--this was at Columbia University--and it was in the wintertime, and the whole thing has a kind of an atmosphere, something very separate and distinct. It had no relationship with anything else excepting that. That dreary schoolroom where this thing was, late in the afternoon, in the winter. And I've always hated schoolrooms and I've always hated long corridors of school buildings. To this day I don't like them. I hate change of classes. I hate those halls and those sounds. At any rate, this was later in the afternoon so there were no changes of classes, but they were the same kind of educational halls. And then you went into this room.

Here was a kind of a young-old man who had a very



Lange: separate quality, and the importance of him to me is that I discovered a very extraordinary teacher. Why he was extraordinary has puzzled me ever since because he didn't do anything. He was an inarticulate man, almost dumb, and he'd hesitate, he'd fumble. He was very gentle and had a very sweet aura, and everything he'd start to say was, "Well, you know ... to be sure. To be sure, that's quite right ... To be sure, that's quite right." That's all I remember him ever saying. He had these students and he gave them an assignment, and they were supposed to have completed this assignment and bring it in. The rest of them did; I never did, because I never did assignments anyway. The assignment was generally to go out to a certain place--oh, something like a Sather Gate where there would be a wrought-iron gate, nothing better than that, something that you'd never really look at, just be kind of aware of some curly-cues there, an undistinguished thing--and photograph that thing! Now coming from Clarence White that was such a peculiar business. He never would photograph that gate; it was far divorced from anything that he ever did! Yet it was close by, and it was handy, so he sent these students there. They were not all young. They were middle-aged and rather earnest people. Maybe there were a dozen, maybe only eight. Well, I went out and looked at that gate,



Lange: and I decided there was no use my photographing that gate, none at all. Oh, I was aware, dimly, that there was some kind of an underlying wisdom in the man that would choose this utterly banal thing around which, or through which, he could guide them instead of telling them to photograph more flowery or more romantic things.

Riess: Would he have been pleased if one of his students returned with a person prominent in the picture, the gate subordinated?

Lange: He would and did accept everything. He was most uncritical. He always saw the print in relation to the person and then he would start to stammer and writhe around. But the point is that he gave everyone some feeling of encouragement in some peculiar way. You walked into that dreary room knowing that something was going to happen. Now what happened I don't know, but you never forgot it. I can hear his voice still.

The man was a good teacher, a great teacher, and I can still occasionally think, "I wish he were around. I'd like to show him this." Isn't that odd, that that stays with you? I don't think he mentioned technique once, how it's done, or shortcuts, or photographic manipulations. It was to him a natural instrument and I suppose he approached it something like a musical instrument which you do the best you can with when it's in your hands. And he encouraged along a little bit, nudged here and there. Peculiar, isn't it.





Lange: Made me wonder about what makes a good teacher ever since, because he was one. And he had influence, and his work had influence. It's endured many, many years. This little, gentle, inarticulate man. Curious.

Riess: Since you weren't doing assignments, how would he teach and encourage you directly?

Lange: Oh, I was just there.

Riess: You didn't bring things in?

Lange: I didn't bring things in, but he never minded. That was another thing, he never minded. I was always--oh, for a long, long time--not an active participant. I was immensely curious, and interested, even eager, to find out as much as I could about everything that I could. But I always felt and acted as though I was an outsider, a little removed. I never was in the middle of any group.

Riess: Did it bother you then?

Lange: I don't think so.

At any rate, this bumbling fellow, this Clarence White--see that Korean bowl there, that white thing [rough, large, primary amphora shape, assymetrical], that's like him, what he did--a certain chastity about him. He was a man of very great tenderness, and very little passion. He absolutely knew, you know, when it was beautiful. He photographed it that way too.



Riess: Can you define what his picture-taking area was?

Lange: I remember two things that flash in my mind. One of them is a woman's figure photographed in his studio on Twenty-third Street which I later saw a couple of times, and there was light coming in from the window and the whole thing was enveloped in a very delicate restrained light. It was through a value range of pearly grays. That's what he did. He liked those very much. And he could surround figures with light. The figures were generally in postures, but they were delicate and refined postures.

And the other photograph that I think of is women picking apples under a tree. It was a grayish day; I don't remember the sun shining in this picture; I don't remember shadows around those figures. They were the same kind of women. They were relatives, I think, sisters, cousins, or wife, or something. They weren't pretty-girl women.

Riess: He wanted figures, rather than faces?

Lange: Figures with a flow. He made some portraits too, but they were generally very gentle faces, and very quietly done. It was before the days of artificial light, which he would never have used anyway, and he used uncorrected lenses by choice, which gave a certain lack of sharp definition.

Riess: This is what is called soft-focus lens?

Lange: It's what they call soft-focus. He employed it, and in fact I



Lange: think he was the first one. But, I don't think he one day made up his mind he was going to work that way; he was just the kind of a fellow who would be in it before he knew it. You know what I'm saying? This was a man who lived a kind of an unconscious, instinctive, photographic life. He didn't ever seem to know exactly that he knew where he was going, but he was always in it.

Riess: He wouldn't be able to tell you that he used such and such a lens opening and that this was how he achieved this picture.

Lange: No, no. He'd just say, "Well, to be sure, now you have to ...". And he'd be off! But he was a fine teacher.

Riess: Do you think he saw photography as striving to be fine art?

Lange: He was a friend of Stieglitz, and I think he was rather on the art side of things. He certainly was not on the utilitarian side. He was a professional photographer but he wasn't an active commercial photographer, developing new techniques and applying them in a commercial product. I think you'd have a hard time to get him to make a portrait of you, you know. I don't know how he got along. He was on the art side of it, and impractical. And I think his friends were on the art side of things.

Riess: Was he attached to Columbia?

Lange: Yes, and this went on for three or four years. He died not long afterwards.



Lange: Well, you know, there were great commercial figures of that day. There was Baron de Meyer who was doing all the fashion photographs and the stage photographs for Vogue and Vanity Fair. Oh, there were many--Paul Outerbridge--some of them were Clarence White's students. Actually there were quite a lot of them that had had association with him.

Riess: Did he have students around him in a school, apart from these seminars you attended?

Lange: I think so. I think he eked out a living doing it. I don't really know about that.

Then I do know that one of his students, Karl Struss, who later occupied his studio on Twenty-third Street and employed the same light that Clarence White had worked with, made a photograph much more brilliant and much more emphatic than Clarence White's ever were. He was a very fine photographer; he did things unparalleled, I think, of sun on water, using soft-focus lenses. He developed a lens which he marketed called the Struss Lens, an uncorrected, undefined lens, a beauty if you got a good one. But he only made a few good ones. He graduated from that into Hollywood, and he became one of the top cinematographers. I think he's retired now, but for many years he did big films. I don't know what studio; it was one of the top ones. And I never saw any carry-over in his work, excepting that he was an awfully fine





Lange: fellow and did less trash than most. In those days he was really photographing that water beautifully, just beautifully, with a certain Clarence White feel to it.

Otherwise I don't know people whose work looks like Clarence White's, which, of course, is a great recommendation to him as a teacher, validates what I said, that a student's work didn't look like his. But he touched lives. And all that I've said of him is probably wrapped up in that phrase. He had an uncanny gift of touching people's lives, and they didn't forget it.

#### More Teachers--"The Lovable Hacks"

Riess: When you finished your schooling with Clarence White, did you start your own photography business?

Lange: No, I didn't have any business. I worked, but I didn't have a studio; I didn't have a place of business. I photographed, and I got myself equipment to photograph with. I got myself a big camera; I got myself two lenses. And I worked day and night. Day and night. I have had periods when I have worked, really worked. That was one of them. I learned darkroom techniques.

Many of the experiences I have had have run along parallel.



Lange: At the same time that I was with Genthe working Saturdays and some afternoons and some nights I met an itinerant photographer, one who came to the door. You know, I've said to Paul, "People are always asking me, 'Where did you learn your photography?'" And it was only last summer that it came to me all of a sudden the procession of teachers that I've had who were lovable old hacks. They really taught it to me. I can think of five to whom I am really deeply indebted, who put themselves way out. And they're apt, these characters that you meet, to kind of get buried in the warp and woof of your life. You forget them as you forget, I think very often, people to whom you're grateful, unimportant people from everyone else's point of view, like this itinerant; and there was a man by the name of Lou Tyler, who came later, who was really a somebody; and Charles H. Davis, who was a broken-down fellow who'd had a great theatrical career in photography; and then there was a fellow by the name of Percy who used to sign his prints, "Percy Neymann, Ph.D." [laughter], a paint chemist who helped me enormously.

Well, this one, this itinerant, came to the door once in my mother's house--we were living in Englewood--and he had his samples under his arm. These samples were not very much better than what you'd expect. You know the kind: "Well, you can have a dozen of these for two and a half in this kind



Lange: of an easel mount." And he made others that were glossy with a deckle edge--postcard variety--that were his cheapest number. He had the whole range, up to big portraits with that chromo look, with a little color. The color was a little more tasteful than most, but not very much.

Well, I found out this fellow had no darkroom and a week later he was ensconced in a little outbuilding that was in back of our house, once a chicken coop, which he made over into a darkroom. I learned a lot about how you build a darkroom and what you have to have, and I helped him block the light out; we had to clean it and we had to get it ready for him. When he unpacked his stuff I discovered he had been all over Europe, this old fellow, and he had a much better, much richer background than I had expected; I met his wife, who was a kind of "citizen of the world," [laughter], an international figure and very proud of the three years they had lived in Italy and so on. All this you would never guess of this itinerant, whom I got to know very well. He was very patient and he helped me develop my negatives and taught me many things, old-fashioned techniques they were.

I remember he used to set up his wet negatives in Italian folding negative racks, drying racks. I'd never seen any like that, or heard of them. And he gave me one. For years I had that rack and I used that rack until glass plates



Lange: went out. I was very fond of it. I seem to collect things from people that became more to me than actually the real thing was. That Italian drying rack always meant that whole episode to me. I don't know how long back that was, no idea of the time, but I do know that he helped me and that when I did get that  $6\frac{1}{2}$  x  $8\frac{1}{2}$  view camera which I brought here with me, I knew how to operate it. I'd learned that in a lot of places.

Riess: When did you come in contact with the four others?

Lange: Oh, Charles H. Davis I met just before I came here, the winter before. Charles H. Davis photographed opera singers (he did all the Metropolitan Opera singers) and he did people of fashion, and his photographs were very perfect and completely empty! But he made a great thing of it. He had a studio in New York and was very successful and he made a lot of money and had a big home on Seventy-eighth Street. I remember his telling me--I knew him after his successes--how after he'd been "under the lights" all day (that was his expression for photographing in the studio), after he'd been "under the lights" all day, he'd go home at night and the first thing he'd do would be to go from floor to floor and turn on every light in the house. He was a fellow with a good deal of self, well, more than self-confidence, he was prideful, very prideful.

And what happened to him, I don't know. It had to do





Lange: with his third or fourth wife suing him for something or other. At any rate, she took everything from him, including the studio, lock, stock, and barrel, and left him high and dry. He found himself a little diggings downtown, over a saloon, where I knew him. I can still remember the smell of the beer coming up through the floor. And his head dark-room man, Charlie, went with him, and he and Charlie tried to start all over again. In between there something awful had happened to him, what I don't know, but his work was dreadful.

Charles H. Davis' great competitor, incidentally, had been Napoleon Sarony [d. 1896]. You see photographs often with an old studio name on them, a kind of writing in script, well Sarony did that and Sarony too was "the official photographer" of all the stage and the opera and the concert people.\*

How'd I ever meet him? I don't remember. I became a kind of a pet of his. And he demonstrated to me how you "pose the model." Well, I had never been in a place where they posed the model.

Riess: Genthe didn't.

---

\*"Showman and picturesque figure, Sarony printed his flowing signature in red ink on every size photograph that left his gallery, and across the facade of the five-story structure he painted his name in huge script." From The Picture History of Photography by Peter Pollack. Harry N. Abrams, Inc., New York, 1958, page 240.



Lange: No. When you "pose the model" the head is placed, and then you hold it, and then each finger is positioned. The fingers were very important to him, and he said, "The knees are the eyes of the body," so your knees and your fingers, and your head, were all posed and then he would induce the atmosphere, and then he'd photograph. Then he would start with the next one! And he taught me this. He used to love to put on the gramophone, records from the opera. And I remember I learned to like "Pagliacci" in those sessions, because he loved it.

Riess: All this atmosphere, above the saloon?

Lange: He took a floor above the saloon. They used to have family entrances to saloons, and he took over the family entrance to the saloon, barred it off so that he had an entrance, and he had this whole floor where he had--with a good deal of style--his laboratory, and all his drapes, and all his leftover grandeur, and he and Charlie. And once in a while he would get a commission, sometimes from people for whom he had worked in earlier days--those were great days--and he used to have to carry it off. He did, too. He wore a toupee. And he had neat, small feet, and a certain physical elegance about him. He wore a double-breasted gray vest, and when he had one of these things coming on, these sessions that meant a very great deal, he would pull himself all together. He didn't drink; he wasn't above the saloon on account of the liquor! But the atmosphere was certainly something



Lange: that he had to overcome. And now that I think back on it I would say it was--not tragic, I reserve the word tragic--but it was heartbreaking to see.

Well, I became a sort of pet of his; he was very lonely, and he used to take me out to dinner at night, always to the same place, the Lion D'Or, where he would order a very fine dinner and sometimes some of his theater people and his opera people would be there and then I saw how he carried it off. I could see. He was an older man. My mother was fond of him. Sometimes he'd take her out occasionally. He used to like her too. But he liked me very much, though he had no faith in me as a photographer; probably he felt that I didn't like the kind of photography that he did. I remember his saying to me, "You don't know what it is to make a good negative!" Since then I've said that too, to some people who've come to me with portfolios.

Riess: Why would you say that rather than, "You don't know how to make a good picture, or a good photograph"?

Lange: What you have in your negative is transmitted to your print and if you have to do a lot of things in between, wouldn't it be much better to make the negative good in the first place? But Charles H. Davis' idea of a good negative I've never been able to find out. Everything was galvanized into the negative, you see, everything. It was really a hard-boiled



Lange: commercial product, but he loved it, really adored it.

Riess: Did people like being posed this way?

Lange: Well, I think they thought they were getting much more for their money than people who nowadays are photographed without knowing it! Now it seems too easy! If he would spend two hours and work with every fold--it was a time when they had drapes, when the photographer had the paraphernalia and the tulle and the elaborate backgrounds and the carved furniture, the whole business--the results all looked alike, but he didn't think so. He taught me some things in reverse. I learned the trade, you see, through many people. I guess I was sort of a sponge in some respects, but I was able to learn from such diverse people and though it may seem that I'm criticizing, belittling them, or ridiculing them--there's a certain amount of comedy in all of this--I really don't.

If you want to be a photographer now, there are many professional schools you can go to and learn the process from beginning to end, and the application of the process. I really invented my own photographic schooling as I went along, stumbled into most of it, but I must have been going after it all the time or it wouldn't have come to me.

Riess: What were your early photographs like?

Lange: You know, Steichen has asked me for them, many times. My family destroyed them. When I left home there was a whole big cupboard





Lange: that had all these boxes with these names on them--people and things I had done. And I left them there and I never saw them again. It was years before I went east again, maybe eight years, and in the meanwhile they went from that cupboard to the basement and then they would move to the basement of an apartment house, and then they went to the basement of another apartment house, and then you know how things go. I mentioned once before that my mother threw something else away, the lithographic stone, but she also threw the negatives away.

My grandmother--who I told you was a very fine dress-maker, irascible but good--had a walnut-topped oval table that she worked on. Do you know what a pattern wheel is? She used to cut her own patterns, and there was a little tool, a pattern wheel, which she used to cut them out. It made little prickles. And this entire walnut-topped table was one map of these things, something like a modern design, and I used to like that table, being myself somewhat of a workman. I like the processes of work. I like making a package. And I like doing things where when you're finished there's something that's there, that exists, you know. I loved that table. But my mother threw it away. And my negatives went the same way. She didn't attach importance to them, or perhaps she did. To me, now, I would like to look at them.

You ask what they were like: they were almost all portraits



Lange: or attempts to make a photograph of somebody. They were very uneven. I made one of a granduncle of mine, I remember, that I would like to see again. That's the only one that really sticks in my mind. I've forgotten the people even that I did, those that I did independently. But that one of my granduncle I would like to see again. I photographed my own family, I photographed some friends, and I photographed people whom we knew, and then children. It was a very restricted range of people because I was just trying it out and terrified to develop it. Terror had I failed, the darkroom terrors. Very much depended on it. Those darkroom terrors, they still remain. It still is a gambler's game, photography. I have a streak of that gambler. Unless you work within a formula!

Riess: You expect a lot of each picture.

Lange: Everything. Everything. Expecially when we used bigger plates, and every one was deliberate, and then you went to the next one. Now, with 35 millimeter most people reckon by the yard. "There surely will be something," you know, "there surely will be something." But then you stood in a different relationship to your camera. It was one, two, three. Here's the camera, and in your hand you had the bulb, and you held your breath and opened and closed that lens. A time exposure. A very good way to make a portrait. We'll be coming back to it.



Riess: Why?

Lange: Well, because it calls for different and I think more deliberate responses to the subject. For one thing, no subject can hold anything that is false for them for long. It can't be done. You can try, but it's ghastly. So you have to wait until certain decisions are made by the subject--what he's going to give to the camera, which is a very important decision; and the photographer--what he's going to choose to take. It is a much longer inner process than putting the camera between you and the subject and, as I say, reeling them off by the yard in every imaginable aspect, and all made between the second, or between the split sections of the seconds. That is much more electric and nervous; it never quite arrives at the place; it's always on the way to something. That isn't always so, of course, many people handle the 35 millimeter well. They grow up with it and they use it for many years and they learn to employ that instrument.

But the bigger camera with the lengthier exposures gave us a foundation that there's a good deal of scrambling around for these days, a good deal. You look in the camera annuals and you'll know it. Everything has fallen in between, hasn't quite arrived, isn't quite achieved. Look at the old Camera photographs, Hill, Julia Margaret Cameron, whose recordings of those human beings you can look at and into. Well, that's what we get.



Lange: We also had a different kind of photographic emulsion in those days. While I don't say that what we have now is inferior, I do say that things have been lost and I think we are going to retrace our steps, and should. Some people should. Everyone should not try to work with the miniature fast cameras and the fast films--emphasis put in every part of the performance on speed. I was just reading some new development factors and figures today that have to do with a new film. And the great advantage of the film is that it develops in five minutes while the film that it supplants took seven minutes! And people take that seriously!

Riess: Maybe it would be useful in newspaper photography.

Lange: Well, even so. And those who work in the darkroom all day in a big plant would get a hundred more rolls of film through at the end of the day, but at some sacrifice. The entire thing is gauged to speed. A young printer who I had working here for me last spring worked two days and he made a thousand prints. He was a skillful worker, really fast! But I don't think that is a necessary approach to good photography, to heighten and speed up everything, including the taking of the pictures. Grab shots! The annuals are full of grab shots!

Well, at any rate, Charles H. Davis didn't do that. I learned how to do that later. But when I came here I did have, by that time, a camera, an assurance that wherever I wanted to





Lange: go I could probably earn my living. Otherwise I wouldn't have come here. I had an uncertain technique, but an outlook. I knew that I would never develop a commercial product like Charles H. Davis', that I had my own to make, and I was pretty sure that I was working in a direction. I don't know just what that direction was; I don't know to this day quite. I had launched myself, educated myself in a scrappy, choppy, unorthodox way, but I don't know a better way, if you could go through it, than that. I knew something about what a resonant, good photographic print is. I have print sense, which some people don't ever have, like some people never have perfect pitch, or a color sense. Almost something that can't be cultivated, print sense is something like that. If you have it, you've got something. I had print sense.

Riess: What exactly does that mean?

Lange: I'm speaking of the technical matter of producing your print. A fine print. Now Charles H. Davis, the old maestro, he banked his full confidence on the negative. That was it for him. He would say, "Made twenty negatives this morning!" Well, he had negative sense. Prints to him were a mechanical outgrowth.

I bank on prints. I like a good negative, of course, because it will make good prints. But there is something about a fine print--sometimes in reproduction also, and I'm speaking of photographic black and white prints now--that is, in its range of tone, in its print quality, its print color, its print



Lange: vibration, impregnated with a life of its own. You can compare it with a full, fine chord of music. It has richness, it has depth. It can be very, very quiet and very mild, but nevertheless it speaks. That's as well as I can say it. It may be in only three or four tones, but those tones ring.

### Gifts and Giving

Riess: Had you political interests or social consciousness at this age?

Lange: I must have because I remember listening to Woodrow Wilson in person. I remember hearing him say, "In terms of common parlance," and that made such an impression on me, that anyone would choose such a phrase. I remember thinking that he looked like my father, and I had great respect for him. I also remember being in Madison Square Garden by myself at a mass meeting and seeing Theodore Roosevelt in his black Prince Albert coat, this log of a man, thick through, weight and heft. What a shock it was that night--and I'll never forget it--when he raised his finger (he had a way of shaking one finger when he spoke) and out came a squeaky voice, which no one had told me about. It was like when much later my little boys were



Lange: in New Mexico for the first time, in the winter, and they had been looking forward to the snow and when it came they ran out in it in their pajamas and we had forgotten to tell them that it was cold! They had only seen it in pictures and it was like salt. Well, no one had ever said that Theodore Roosevelt had a high, squeaky voice. And seeing pictures of him now in newsreels you'd think of force and physical energy in the man, but that voice! That was a great disappointment to me.

At that time my mother was in the court of domestic relations of Hudson County. These were the early days, the formative period, and I think this was the third juvenile court in the country, with one in New York and one in Colorado. All the judgeships were political plums then-- maybe they still are. Hudson County, New Jersey, is notoriously a corrupt place. It later became Frank Hague's domain, and Mother was there during the Frank Hague regime also. But I heard politics, local politics. I heard about the atmosphere of the juvenile court and about the difficulties of establishing a social institution there.

Personally, I don't think I ever voted before I came here. When did we get the vote? Nineteen-twenty. But the first year that I was here I must have had a strong interest because I stood on a street corner of Powell and Post, the side entrance



Lange: of the St. Francis Hotel, to see Woodrow Wilson again. It was his last trip when he was making his fight for the League of Nations. He came out of that side entrance and got into an open car and stood up for a moment, and he had on a silk hat, and the black overcoat with the satin lapels that men of high office in those days wore. He stood up and I remember that noble wasted face, really wasted. I could see then that it was true, what they had been saying, that he was so very, very ill. And it was being denied, you know, by his party.

These days when I look at Henry Cabot Lodge and remember his father and what his father did to Wilson, I think of that face. You can see from what I say that I don't tell you the atmosphere of the time, but I tell you what I saw. This is the way it goes with me.

Professional social workers I didn't know, excepting that my mother was one, but she wasn't a regular. I've always had a feeling about professional social workers something like my feeling about professional educators. One of our daughters is a psychiatric social worker now; her outlook on it is very different from the days when I remember my mother going on streetcars and making night interviews, alone, in all kinds of wretched old Polish tenements in the winter, standing in the windy, snowy streetcorners at night until late because sometimes she would have to wait until the drunken father came home. She





Lange: would then make her personal report to the judge--no paperwork and no supervisors. Her work, her social outlook, was more primitive, less based on exact knowledge of people, only on what she thought about it. Well, social work has changed.

I found myself later sometimes having to knock at a door when I was working and I used to remind myself of my own mother many a time. I used to like to go with her, to see her walk up the stairs, knock at a door, and then "nobody" would be in. She had an uncanny way of knowing if they were in and not answering, or whether they weren't in. She'd listen and she'd know. She'd stand there and she would knock and knock.

Riess: What are some other visual memories you have?

Lange: An experience that affected me throughout my life was seeing Isadora Duncan. I saw her every performance that I could possibly find a way to. And I had never been taken into the upper reaches of human existence before then. Some people get this through Shakespeare, don't they? These performances in this particular year were held at the Metropolitan Opera House; they went about two weeks and I think they were in the spring. They were really her great performances. I have heard and read references to the great performances of Isadora Duncan with these half-grown young women who were her institution-- I wouldn't say school; this was a group of people who lived together, traveled together--I've often wondered what happened



Lange: to them when this thing ended. It ended.

It was something unparalleled and unforgettable to many people, not just to myself. But to me it was the greatest thing that ever happened. I still live with that, not as a theatrical performance, but as an extension of human possibility. I saw it there. This woman had a quality that could electrify thousands of people at once by doing nothing, really. A minimum of physical motion. My, how strangely she walked. And sometimes she just stood. With the full Metropolitan Orchestra. She was rather sloppy-looking, rather fat, with very heavy upper legs, yet with a peculiar grace, not grace as I had preconceived it, but different.

She was a person who made a real contribution in that she gave a new form of something. It wasn't based on other dancers' work. You were on unfamiliar ground. There wasn't any business of it being "like something else," at least not for me. I was unprepared. But I certainly have been enriched by it.

I've never been able to photograph a dancer. I've photographed children on the top of hills, running, jumping, which reminded me somewhat, you know, but I never have been able to get interested in photographing a dancer. A lot of stage things I've never been interested in doing. You know the theater, the entertainment world, when you are in the



Lange: professional photograph business, is a very quick way of gaining fame or recognition, by doing theater people. Well, I never did it. I've seen, and come in contact with, some pretty wonderful ones and I guess I didn't get magnetized by the second-raters, but I've seen these people.

There were about seven girls with Isadora Duncan, fifteen to eighteen years old, and all clothed the same way. It wasn't Greek; there were no garments; they were just minimally clothed--gauze, chiffon, that kind of thing. No props, no lights, no change of costume, nothing.

And some of that music, still, I mean if I hear it I am aware I don't want to listen to it really. Some things in Schubert that I don't want to hear. It hurts me that it's gone, out of life, and not enough people experienced it. That's ridiculous, isn't it. It isn't nostalgia, but it cut very deep. I was very impressionable. I went by myself; nobody took me there. I got there somehow.

Riess: Was Genthe photographing her then?

Lange: He had already photographed her. She came to the studio one time, when I was there, with those girls. She was a very coarse-looking woman. She had too much makeup on.

And I'm not sure she was entirely sober. But I didn't mind.

Also he took me--or someone took me--to a place where they were all living, this whole troop, in an apartment on



Lange: Seventy-second Street while they were in this engagement.

They slept on mattresses on the waxed floor, and there was no furniture. That made a great impression on me. I don't like clutter; it comes from that; I saw what they meant; I knew what that kind of life, and that sort of a level, could be. I saw it there, you see.

Riess: What were the interchanges between them like?

Lange: I remember hardly anything about what they said. And I don't think I was there very long, but I certainly was looking.

I never showed up in school at that time. That was where I was, and that was the high point, and not only to me. I think this that she introduced originated in her, and it never quite died. No Martha Grahams or any of these people ever touched it. It had nothing to do with physical prowess. And the music just enveloped this, and the flow of the music--well, I remember in one thing that I saw them do a good many times, that Schubert thing, she stood absolutely motionless, and one by one these beautiful children went across that stage toward her. And each one so different, and all undisciplined. You knew that no one had told them what to do. There was no step, or no count, or any training. It was really in space. Beautiful.

Riess: You were lucky.

Lange: I was lucky. There were other things in which I was lucky too.





Lange: But that was very important to me. There were people who were important to me, individual people who were important to me, also, whom I left behind, and they always live there, on that side of the curtain of the past, never on the other side, people from whom I learned quality, such as Aunt Emily.

I had an aunt who was a nurse in a hospital. She wasn't really an aunt, she was one of those people in your family who are on the edges and we called her Aunt Emily--her name was Emily Sanderfield. I learned from her serenity. A most obscure woman, a nurse in a private hospital--in those days they had private hospitals--working for a Viennese doctor like a prisoner in a little room in that big brownstone on Lexington Avenue. I saw her rarely; once in a while I would go there--that dark quiet place--and she would come. I don't remember speaking to her, what her face looked like when she spoke. Oh, what a nurse she must have been. She had healing in her, you know. Big, plain face, head to one side. I remember how red and big her hands were. Probably she had had them in strong things, you know. Great red, big hands. And peaceful, peaceful. No one else was like that, no other person that I'd met.

And then there was another one that I left behind there, who was half-myth, but he was a sculptor, who fell very much in love with me as a seventeen-year-old girl. And he was a good



Lange: sculptor, and I didn't know what to think of it. Well, this one was left behind too.

Riess: You say he was half a myth.

Lange: Half a myth, because I didn't know what was going on, really. He was a good deal older than I was.

..... Let me finish with this, let me get through here. You see, what I am doing is hanging on. I'm loath to really come out of this past and go on to California because of so much that I haven't said, the whole atmosphere of that little part of the eastern coast to an emerging young woman that I haven't touched on, actually.

There was a club that I used to be taken to every Sunday evening because the man who was president of the club, called the Pleiades Club, was a--well, I don't know what you'd



Lange: say he was of mine, not a boyfriend, certainly he wasn't a lover of mine--but I was the focus of his attention for a couple of years, completely, one hundred per cent, three letters a day kind of thing. And he's still living, and a couple of years ago I got a letter in that familiar handwriting from him. It was a very odd kind of a thing. If I were to go back over these people--from my Aunt Emily I got serenity, and from this man I got a sense of real devotion. You couldn't break that off very easily. There wasn't anything that he could give to me that he didn't try to give to me, even things he thought I needed. I remember he took me to a farewell dinner of Sothern and Marlowe when they left the Shakespearean stage, and I heard Marlowe read the Shakespeare sonnets. Such things he did for me, this man.

Riess: Was he older?

Lange: He was old. Forty maybe, thirty-five. [Laughter] I don't know.

Riess: Where did you meet him?

Lange: My companion with whom I came here, whom I have not yet mentioned, went on a summer vacation with her mother and father to a little lake in New York State. There he was, in a rowboat, this man, visiting other people, who were all Pleiades Club people, and they used to gather there--they had an encampment. And that's where I met him. This was the year 1915.



Lange: I have some poetry that's dated that he sent me. I can see that handwriting. I used to get letters. Sometimes I couldn't read them.

He was also a printer and he worked very hard and he gave me a lot of things. He bought me records and he bought me a gramophone, gave it to me for Christmas. My mother permitted me to accept it. [Laughter]

Riess: And he demanded nothing of you?

Lange: Nothing, and that was a big mistake. He should have, or--I was too young, you see. I got my first evening dress to go to that Pleiades Club.

Riess: What was the Pleiades Club?

Lange: A Sunday night club. It was at the Hotel Breevort, which was one of the great New York hostelryes. Edith Whartonish, you know. Have you ever read Edith Wharton's early New York? Early New York was really fine in many ways. The Hotel Breevort is now an immense apartment house, called the Breevort. It was a French hotel--rather shabby and very upper crust--and they had Sunday night suppers. That's the kind of thing it was. It was an institution. I think it still goes on. Well, this fellow's name was John Landon and he was president these years that I used to be able to go because he took me. He came from Brooklyn and he still lives in Brooklyn and he never married. Not because of me he didn't get married, because after me there





Lange: was another girl, whom he treated just exactly the same way, just exactly the same complete devotion.

Riess: Well, what do you think it was?

Lange: I think we conjure up and invent people, and then whoever happens to be there is the recipient of our imagination. A good deal of the attraction between people, I think, is based on the fact that one is able to absorb the creation. I'm sure that--in his case--that my successor in his devotion he saw as the same kind of person as he saw me. I don't believe there was any reality in it. It wasn't really me. I must have been aware of that, too, because I always pitied him just a little.

Riess: The sculptor was later?

Lange: Somewhere along there. He used to suddenly appear. He was something, slightly a madman, and he used to appear unexpectedly. I mean I never got a letter from him, but there he was. And it would be at any hour, all hours. I remember one particular time in the summer and he was in quite a state--I don't know what it was that put him in these states, could have been liquor, but I don't know, except that when he was in one of these he would make a beeline, and my mother was very understanding of that, she was very good about him. She'd take him on; she'd take care of him; she'd let him be there. I never could quite understand it but it made an impression on me because



Lange: I knew that this was a real artist. And I knew that something was expected of me, but I didn't know what that was. I again represented something. I didn't know what it was I was supposed to be, but I was it! And that has happened to me more than once.

.....This is far afield; I'd love to pull that curtain and get those people all back there and in their place. And the whole point of remembering these people is to try to find out what it is that forms you. It isn't, I think, so much things that happened to you, episodes, as it is persons that affect you--influence is a different word than affect, I think, and sometimes people deliberately try to influence you, that isn't what I mean--but persons who affect your outlook and your sights. They introduce you to different worlds, different kinds of existence with predominant qualities. I mean that thing that I got from Emily Sanderfield, that nurse, that's a constant, and permanent, pervading concept that I have of inner serenity. Nothing could have disturbed that in that woman. Complete self-abnegation, like a nun. Complete! Well, all my life I've been wondering whether that abnegation isn't an essential thing for real serenity. Those questions rise, but they don't come out of thin air, they come because you've met the situation. And she presented that situation. This selfless woman, but what she got from it! I was a harassed



Lange: person as a child, but I sensed that calm in her and I just liked it when she opened that door and there she was. Oh, I can see that starched nurse's uniform, that wide starched belt, and hear the crackle of those clothes, though she was so silent. And those long halls, that linoleum, the staircases in those brownstone houses, that person who was in there. I think she rarely went out of that hospital. I remember the little cell-like room she had. I'd go there and there would be no place to sit down, so I'd sit on the bed. It was just like a cell, like a nun.

Personal chit-chat seems so poverty-stricken and unimportant, and yet, actually, from it come the things that get you going. Those are the things, the combination of them are what forms you. They speak, always, don't they, in the psychology books, of the influence of the parents. How about the influence, also unconscious, of all these other people, of everyone. It's always unconscious. If they try to influence you they can just stop right there. But where it's just this peculiar exchange that there is ...

Riess: What about what Isadora Duncan has given you? Does it have necessarily to be on a personal level?

Lange: Well, in her case I don't think of it as personal at all. That was to me like getting religion [laughter], which I never got in any way. I had no conception of that at all, never got that.



Lange: But I got it through Duncan. That was a human performance on a level as high as any that I've encountered. She was a truly creative person; she created new brain cells.

Jack Landon did it for me, a lot of it. My father did too. My father took me to a performance of Shakespeare when I was about ten years old. It was Midsummer Night's Dream and we went in a coach. And when we got there there wasn't a ticket left. My father stood and I sat on his shoulders all through, and the reason that he took me was that I had read Shakespeare. We had a great volume of Shakespeare, and I had read Shakespeare. And they used to laugh at me and say I couldn't have read it, and then they'd quiz me on the story. I'd read it just for the story, you know. I didn't read Shakespeare! I just had this big book, and I read these stories. And because of that my father took me. That was a magic thing to do for me, to see that. Magic! I've always been grateful to him for that. And that coach.

I remember some of the lines: "Let me see thee in thy maiden's weeds..." [Laughter] That was a line I loved. I thought that was the best line of all. I remember reading Macbeth. All in one book! It was a big one like this great unabridged dictionary. With little, fine print. Oh, I'd love to have that book. Yet I don't even think they even knew I was doing it, until they discovered it and then they questioned me,





Lange: queried me. "How about this?" and "How about that?" And laughed. There are people who read very carefully. I am a voracious reader, and a careless reader. I don't retain anymore. But I love to read, and I will reread, and I do love Shakespeare. In little bits of doses that go through my mind--oh, how they ring in my mind! What's the one--I was reading it this afternoon--"Our revels now are ended." Do you remember that from the Tempest? How does it go?

Our revels now are ended. These our actors,  
As I foretold you, were all spirits, and  
Are melted into air, into thin air.  
And, like the baseless fabric of this vision,  
The cloud-capped towers, the gorgeous palaces,  
The solemn temples, the great globe itself,  
Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve,  
And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,  
Leave not a rack behind. We are such stuff  
As dreams are made on; and our little life  
Is rounded with a sleep.

What beautiful words!



Lange: .....A few years ago I realized that the entire span of my life I have fought dreadful fatigue. I think I was born tired. I've been weary all my life, and I've always had to make a great effort to do the things that I really wanted to do, combating not having quite enough to do it with. I have friends who say, "I've never been tired in my life." And I've been tired all my life, every day of my life. I remember when I was only maybe ten years old being as tired as a human being could be, and wishing that I could sleep forever just because I was so tired. I remember seeing nuns on the street and thinking, "How fortunate they are, because they're never tired." As a child I was tired. I don't know what made me so weary.

Riess: It wasn't world-weariness.

Lange: No. It was physical. I think maybe I expended all I had always in one direction or another. That may be some reason why I always knew that I was observing more than I was participating. Maybe I didn't have left what other people had to go on. I don't know what it is, excepting that I know it's been with me, dominant. Then, and it's the same thing now that I've always had, only it's more marked now than it was.

Riess: Haven't you chosen an extremely physically wearing way of life?

Lange: Oh, yes. And if I were to tell people about this weariness who



Lange: know me they wouldn't believe what I say. "How do you do it all? How?" That's what I've always heard. Well, you do, really, what you must do. You can't deny what you must do, no matter what it costs. And with me it was always expenditure to the last ditch. I know the last ditch. I've lived on the last ditch.

Riess: So that you're always aware of this tiredness. You can't get above it.

Lange: I'm aware of it. I'm aware of other things too. I'm aware of when I feel fine. It isn't always, but it's there! I have a series of photographs, it's one of my series which I'm now going to get ready for presentation, that is called Last Ditch. It is where you just can do no more. As I say, from childhood I knew.

.....When I was in that Clarence White class I was more interested in him and what he was doing than I was in going out and photographing a gate. I didn't have any of that zeal to be an artist that many of the people with whom I have associated all my life had. I've never thought of myself in



Lange: that direction. I've always thought of myself--and in those years also--as finding ways to learn what I thought was a very interesting job, a trade.. It was a very good trade, I thought, one that I could do. It was a choice. I picked it. But I never picked the role of artist. And I never have had very much faith in that category. I never have had the slightest interest in the argument, "Is Photography An Art?"

Riess: And yet you are in "Photography as Fine Art" collections.

Lange: Yes, I am. But I never have regarded myself and neither have the artists with whom I have lived and worked, the people whose work I know best and respect most--I never heard them call themselves artists.

Riess: You're speaking of the photographers? Or painters too?

Lange: I mean painters too. With people who are interested in doing something, very interested, it is almost the degree to which they are involved that is the degree to which other people call them artists. Really involved I mean. I always have thought that this quality--I didn't always think, because I didn't think about that at all in my early years--

Riess: Whether it was art or not.

Lange: I knew that some people made pretenses at this and I knew that there were some photographs which were in that classification, but I just looked for ways of doing it very well indeed. I





Lange: liked photography so much that I wanted it to be good and later on I wanted it to be really excellent and stand by itself. But to be an Artist was something that to me was unimportant and I didn't really know what it meant. I viewed with suspicion those people to whom it was important. Generally they were second-raters.

I have a certain snobbishness about things being very first-class, very top-drawer. I like people that are top-drawer. And many of them have within them this peculiar quality, this "plus" thing that fascinates me. I don't know where it comes from. I suppose it's what many people say is the art thing. Well, to me it is the "plus" thing.

.....There are many things I've left out, of course, important things. What I would like to have touched on as I look back on what I've said is, "What formed me? What was behind me, really, when I came here?" Because when I came here that immediately became very much my past, quite far back. In some ways all those years I remember as though they happened in another century. Some people's youth is active in their minds; they relive it



Lange: and never get over it. They never survive their own youth.

Mine was as though when I came here it was very much a big, heavy curtain that I pulled.

Riess: As if it was another person.

Lange: Yes, quite another person, and the links back, excepting in my mind, were few.



## THE RECENT PAST--"PUTTING THE FABRIC TOGETHER"

Studio on Sutter Street

Lange: I have had one very close woman friend since I was twelve years old. I came to California with her in January 1918. We went through school together. She is now seventy years old, and she has been with me all my life. By that I mean that though I have not now seen her for two years, and in the last twenty years we have rarely seen each other--we do not write, excepting in personal emergencies, and then it is just a line, nothing more because we don't have to, or occasionally she'll telephone me from Honolulu if she's there, or from Los Angeles, if she's there--she has always known everything about me by being told and without being told. I have never had a closer friend than she.

I had not so many women friends, or girl friends, before I came here because, I think, I didn't do the things they did. I didn't have the outlook that they had. I've always had a certain kind of drive that very young women and adolescent girls don't, I think. I did have another friend who died about ten years ago who was my friend all through these years which started



Lange: in New York. I lived with her in New York for a few months, the only time that I lived away from home that I can remember.

Riess: What was the name of your very close friend?

Lange: We'll call her Fronsie.\* If I speak of her it's always Fronsie.

Riess: Did Fronsie skip school with you?

Lange: Yes, but not as badly as I did. She just went with me sometimes. She had sisters, and had a more normal life, in many ways, than I had. She had no particular outlets or talents at that time. She has now, since then, become a very well-known decorator with a big name, and she recently did the Royal Hawaiian Hotel. She's done several of the Hilton hotels; she's had big contracts. But she developed this, oddly, later. When we came here to San Francisco together she was--well, now, I'm getting ahead. Just let me say that I had this one, very close young woman friend. If I say girl friend, that isn't the kind of a relationship it was. She was--

Riess: Older a bit, wasn't she?

Lange: Three years older.

I have wondered since, sometimes, whether she wasn't much more tolerant and good to me than I realized at the time. Because

---

\* Florence Bates [Hayward], now living on Wilshire Blvd., Los Angeles. P.S.T





Lange: after I was married and she went on to Honolulu she began immediately to be more of a person than she had ever been until we separated. I know that I never dominated her-- she was Swedish and you couldn't budge her--but I wonder whether she didn't subscribe largely to my interests, partly out of love, and knowing my necessities. I think maybe she did. She herself is not a selfless person. Now she's a pretty impressive dame, this one! And knows just what she wants. But she didn't then.

We came here together, thinking we would go around the world. I had something that I thought I could call my trade. I wasn't absolutely sure, but I thought I had enough so I could make a living completely on my own. And she was a Western Union clerk and that company told her they would transfer her to any city in the United States or anywhere. (In fact, later on she went to Honolulu and around the world.)

I guess it was just the time that comes in most young people's lives where they just, for some reason or other, know they have to go. I wanted to go away as far as I could go. Not that I was bitterly unhappy at home, or where I was, or doing what I was doing. But it was a matter of really testing yourself out. Could you or couldn't you. We had only a few dollars--I've forgotten how many--and we got our railroad fare and had beyond that a little. I don't remember that we had a trunk. I had a camera case, and I remember a



Lange: very heavy suitcase, and Fronsie had the same. I know it took us six weeks to get here, because we had letters to strangers and time to stop and visit. Our route was by boat to New Orleans, and then by train. And we had a wonderful time. You know, there are some periods of your life where everything seems to happen all right. There are also some periods of your life where you make friends with great rapidity. It's almost a well-known place in a life span where your personal attachments multiply very fast. Well, this happened to both of us. Or, it happened to me and through me for her, I think, over that trip out here and when we got here. We were taken care of every place we stopped. At a ranch that we lived on in New Mexico with people who were extraordinarily kind to us--I don't know how all this happened, but we had a fine time.

Riess: Who did you have letters from?

Lange: Friends. I don't recall this very much. There are lots of things I could go on about about that trip, but I don't think they are really pertinent to this narrative. By that I mean that the person who arrived in California and the person that left New York hadn't been particularly directed by what happened in between. It was just a very good time.

But when we got to San Francisco everything sharply changed. It was May of the year when we arrived and we went to



Lange: the YWCA Hotel in San Francisco. The first morning we were here--we had already decided that we had to stop to work here in order to go on--we went out to breakfast at a Compton's cafeteria and Fronsie's pocket was picked, every nickel that we had! So there we were. We had change left, and I remember saying, "Well, here we are. What will we do today?"

And she said, "Let's go over and see what the University of California is like."

I demurred and said, "What do we want to go to the University of California for? We haven't got enough money. We'd better go for a job." I prevailed and I'm sorry now. It would have made such a good story, in view of later happenings, if we had given the University a whirl. But we went back to the YWCA Hotel and told them of the situation we were in and they recommended that we move immediately [laughter] to a place called the Mary Elizabeth Inn, an Episcopal home for working girls, at 1040 Bush Street in San Francisco. (It's still there.) And we took that camera, and those heavy bags-- this was still a lark, in a way, I mean we didn't take the situation really seriously at all; we knew that we could get money from home if we needed to, but we were still in the mood and the temper of that trip--we went there, and the deaconesses, in the most Christian attitude in the world, accepted us, and installed us in some cubicles. They had cubicles for the inmates



Lange: of this place. [Laughter] And rules, quite rigid.

Riess: Did they examine your background before accepting you?

Lange: I don't remember that. I don't think so. But she knew we were penniless. And here we were.

Well, as I say, there are times when you multiply your friends. This was the most unlikely place in the world to make lasting attachments, yet we did. Just last week a woman appeared at this door, an old lady now, whom I had known from there, and I've never been out of touch with her all these years. The only difference is when she comes she keeps recalling things I don't remember at all. She relives that time.

That was a place where you had to be home at ten o'clock at night. And we were finally ejected because Fronsie left on the electric iron in the laundry and it burned through, and I had been caught twice smoking. The deaconesses used to walk down the corridors sniffing. Oh, it would be easy to ridicule those deaconesses, where actually they did a very good job there, and they really gave clean and pleasant surroundings to people who needed it. They had a lot of strays there too, people who couldn't get in at ten o'clock at night-- there was the case of one who couldn't get in at ten o'clock at night so she spent the night with her boyfriend, because what else could she do? Well, the deaconesses didn't see that!





Lange: I don't think that Fronsie and I were disruptive elements, but those people who they had a little bit of difficulty with would always be at the table where we were, it was that kind of a thing. Also, by the time they ejected us we no longer had to be there, because that was for people who earned very little money, and the next morning, when we had been in San Francisco one day, I went out and got a job, and Fronsie went out and got a job at the Western Union, so we were in no time employed.

Riess: Had you any letters to people in San Francisco?

Lange: Yes, we had a few, and there was an old friend of my mother's who lived here in Berkeley, but we didn't do anything about that.

I looked up in the telephone book places where they did photo-finishing. I knew I could get a job right away. I didn't want to get into a studio job. I wanted to sense the life of the city. So I got a job in a store in San Francisco, at 712 Market Street. The name of the store was Marsh & Company. This was a store where the front door opened at eight in the morning, and stayed open. They sold luggage and stationery, and photo-finishing was done in the back. Photo-finishing's always in the back, because then people have to walk through the store, and they buy things on the way. That's the way they do it.



Lange: The boss was a very anxious and uncertain man, and the employees had to be busy every minute or else he was afraid he wasn't getting his money's worth. He had a store manager who was cross-eyed, one of those good store managers, rather lazy but he knew how to sell. The boss used to get nervous and if someone's shadow--in the back of the store when the street was light you'd always see the silhouettes of the people-- if he'd see somebody coming into the store and hesitating for a moment (this always used to make me laugh) he would go up so fast he'd just slide, and then he'd stop short and say, "Was you waited on?" [Laughter] Oh, my!

My job was to take in the developing and the printing, try to sell as many enlargements as I could, and if we were not too busy, framing. These were all things that you encouraged people to have.

Riess: And you worked at the counter?

Lange: Yes, and it was a very high counter; these cheaper stores had very high counters so there could be no pilfering. That's where I was. I don't remember where the film was developed; it was developed out. This was a quick-turnover store.

Well, I don't remember how long I was there, not very long. But Roi Partridge and Imogen Cunningham I met over that counter. And directly or indirectly, many of the people whose lives have been closest to mine, all the years that I have lived here now,



Lange: I can trace back, if I stop to trace it--and as I say indirectly in some cases--to that counter. I'm very curious about this and I'm repeating it for the third time, but this happens to people sometimes in some periods of their lives. Generally they've freed themselves from something, they're open you see. Extraordinary things happened to me over that most unpromising counter.

I had always, and this may appear through this account, been a self-learner. I have learned from everything, and I'm constantly learning. It's part curiosity, I think, trying to discover why things happen the way they do, watching everything and my own activities included. I never can say that this person or that person taught me, or that school. It's all fragments, you see, and I've been putting this fabric together all my life, but it's the obscure people who always taught me more than the people you'd think would have taught me.

Riess: Obscure as far as fame.

Lange: Yes. They've been quite the most important ones. The other people, the people to whom I could give, have been the big ones. That's curious. Where I got it and where I gave it. Does that make sense to you?

At any rate, that counter was the beginning of my life here. And that Mary Elizabeth Inn, which was equally an unpromising sort of ground, was a very rich period as far as



Lange: helping me to really get established. And it progressed very fast.

I joined the camera club because I wanted a darkroom. The camera club provided a darkroom. It also provided some-- I don't know if you know anything about camera clubs, but camera clubs are equally unpromising places [laughing] to develop a photographic career. They're generally stuffed with old fogies to whom it has been a hobby. And they are unilluminated. It's three-quarters social, with bridge parties in the evenings and so on. Well, I met some people there, my faithful friends, Lou Tyler, who later became my darkroom man and my great friend Percy Neymann, Ph.D., who used to work with me at night in his flat on Fillmore Street--a big apartment house there now--and took me home every night and got me there at ten o'clock. That was something.

And Consuela Kanaga, the first newspaper photographer I'd ever met. She was a person way ahead of her time, Consuela. She was a terribly attractive, dashing kind of a gal, who worked for the News and lived in a Portuguese hotel in North Beach, which was entirely Portuguese workingmen, except Consuela. She's a strange person. No! not a strange person, a sweet, simple person. But she had more courage! She'd go anywhere and do anything. She was perfectly able, physically, to do anything at anytime the paper told her to--they could send her to





Lange: places where an unattached woman shouldn't be sent and Consuela was never scathed. She had a tripod with a red velvet head on it, and she could carry that red velvet head! She was a dasher. She's always been my friend. Our careers have run otherwise, and she's been in New York for many years, but I see her when I'm there. She was very--generally if you use the word unconventional you mean someone who breaks the rules--she had no rules. [Laughter] Never has had.

And then there was Sidney Franklin, who was a very smart, young, rich businessman, who offered to set me up in business as a portrait photographer in San Francisco after I'd been here maybe three or four months. He was in some kind of real estate business. At any rate, he had money to invest, and he wanted to go into the photograph business. And I suppose he saw that he could make good use of me, that I could do it. I said, "All right," and that it would cost a lot of money--he didn't seem to mind that--and I found a place where I thought I would like to work, part of a beautiful building. It's an art gallery now, 540 Sutter Street, right next to Elizabeth Arden, a handsome old building there. I had half of that building, and the basement. The front of it was Hill-Tollerton. They sold etchings, and fine prints. I leased this thing, and Sidney Franklin was going to underwrite it, and then ... This is complicated...



Lange: I have a friend who is a San Francisco attorney, his name is Joe O'Connor. He was a young bachelor at that time. Joe O'Connor, whom I met through the woman who was here last week that I told you about [old Mary Elizabeth Inn resident], didn't care very much for Sidney Franklin, and he gave me three thousand dollars. That three thousand dollars wasn't his money; it was the money of an Irish friend of his who was awfully rich who was out here and having a good time and he liked me and he liked Fronsie very much and he gave the money to Joe and he said, "Here, you give it to her. She can make this by herself. She needn't share the results of her work with Sidney Franklin." So Sidney Franklin was good, and released me, and I did it on my own with the help of Jack Boumphrey's three thousand dollars.

I was in that studio for maybe six or eight years, in that location, and it went all right, it went fine. I'm very grateful for the help I had, but at that time everything fell that way. I was willing, however, to work very hard. There were years of it. That place was my life, and it became the center for many other people who used my studio in the afternoons and the night. It became a kind of clubbish place. Some of the people I never even saw! Everybody brought everybody, you know, and many of the people whom I know now came through there. I had a big, black velvet couch that they used to call the



Lange: "matrimonial bureau"--so many people, smilingly, were married because of that couch and that big fireplace. I had a Chinese girl who worked for me and every afternoon she used to light the Russian samovar and by five o'clock that place was full of all kinds of people.

Riess: She did photographic work for you too?

Lange: Yes. And she helped around the place, kept the place clean; she was maid and assistant and so on. I was there day and night and very often I didn't know what was going on upstairs.

Riess: Did your customers come in to your studio or did you go out to their homes?

Lange: I went out for special ones. I went to Seattle two or three times, made a lot of money up there.

Riess: How did you get your customers?

Lange: I have no idea. I never knew then where they were coming from. Customers in a business like that come one from the others. Also remember that people who came into that building and bought original etchings and original prints were the kind of people who, if your work had any quality, would notice it.

I didn't do anything phenomenal. I wasn't trying to. I wasn't trying to be a great photographer. I never have. I was a photographer, and I did everything that I could to make it as good as I could. And good meant to me being useful, filling a need, really pleasing the people for whom I was working. By



Lange: that I don't mean pandering to their vanity, but sincerely trying to give them what they wanted, which meant, then as now, that my personal interpretation was second to the need of the other fellow. That is something that I have been, in a way, contending with.

[Laughter] All my life, I have never been able to resist--excepting just recently in the last couple of years, and then not altogether--seeing the other fellow's needs before my own. If that sounds as if I am giving myself a compliment, I intend it opposite.

I tried very hard all my life to make a place where I would be, where what I did would count, aside from just pleasing myself, a place for it, where it would stay. That's why I think after all these years this portrait business was good, in that way. I hear it. I go places and see things of mine on the wall that I did thirty years ago. People still meet me in San Francisco and say, "I suppose you don't remember a picture that you made of ... but we still..." And sometimes when they're talking, where I didn't when they started, I know before they're through the picture they're talking about.

Nothing that I can remember that's being published today did I make in that period for its own sake; I can't think of anything that has lived that way. But they were important and useful to the people for whom I made them. I never tried the other way. I never was interested in photographing the celebrities that came my way for the publicity value. It was a





Lange: kind of a diffidence or something, that I couldn't make use of people for my own purpose, ever.

Riess: Let's talk more about that later on. [See Observations and Hopes for the Future.]

Lange: Yes. Now I told you I was in the basement working most of the time, day and night, Saturdays and Sundays, holidays. I had much to do.

Riess: All commissions, nothing on your own?

Lange: Nothing else, for years. It never occurred to me. People like Imogen Cunningham, whom I knew very well by that time, all worked for name and prestige, and sent to exhibits. But I was a tradesman. At least I so regarded myself. And I was a professional photographer who had a product that was more honest, more truthful, and in some ways more charming. At any rate there was no false front in it. I really and seriously tried, with every person I photographed, to reveal them as closely as I could.

Riess: Through getting to know them first.

Lange: As far as I could. Sometimes sittings and resittings, and resittings.

Riess: And you certainly never draped them.

Lange: Oh, no. No posturing, no dramatics. They were intimate things for family. When people have their photograph taken it always comes around some episode. I remember I photographed a young woman--oh, dear, this was an odd thing--very pretty girl, and I



Lange: couldn't find out much about her. She was very vivacious and a little bit giddy. I photographed her, and a week later her mother came to get the proofs, telling me that the girl had just joined an order. [Laughter] I didn't probe that one. And she's now in Canada. I know this, because her name was Denise Tolan. She was the daughter of ex-Congressman Tolan, of our district here. Her brother, John H. Tolan, who was in Democratic politics, told me that she's in Canada, and she is doing very hard frontier work in northern Canada, with Eskimos. Well, most people I get to know more about!

Maynard Dixon and Bohemian San Francisco

Lange: I told you I was in the basement most of the time, very busy working, and all these people were there a lot, many people. Oh, dear, if I could remember the names of all those people! I'd hear them, coming in in the evening, and some of their footsteps I knew. I'd know when Fronsie came in because I knew her step. My darkroom was just below that corridor.

One night there came some very peculiar sharp, clicking footsteps, and I wondered who that was. A couple of nights later I heard the same steps. I asked somebody, "Who is that that I



Lange: heard with those sharp heels?"

"Oh, that's Maynard Dixon. Haven't you met him?"

"No, I don't know him." Well, I did meet him up there a few evenings later. And about six or eight months after that we were married.

He was working at Foster and Kleiser, where he was top billboard designer. Roi Partridge was also there. There was a string of them: Stafford Duncan, who was a San Francisco painter and a good one; Fred W. Ludekens, a designer. It was a kind of golden age at Foster and Kleiser. That particular period they did something unique, they hired the top people whom they could to design their billboards. This is now finished. Management has changed. The man who was responsible for this was a fellow who committed suicide a few years ago, Charlie Duncan. This was a stable of people who behaved abominably. They were paid a lot of money. They showed up when they pleased, they did as they pleased. And they made wonderful billboards. That's what Maynard Dixon was doing at that time when I first met him, Oh, do you know, some of them they're still using, like Sherwin-Williams' miner with the red shirt. I see Foster and Kleiser's work, trademarks and things, all over. They had all the big accounts. These billboards were really quite fine.

Maynard worked there for maybe a year or so after we were married, and then he decided that he wasn't going to stay any



Lange: more--this was before the management changed--and he worked one day a week for them for a while and then not at all and went to his studio and decided that he would devote himself not to doing any more ads, but to being a painter. He did enough ads, though they were not billboard ads, designing ads, to keep him going. They paid him very well for everything that he did, and though he always thought he had financial stringencies, he never had real ones.

Riess: You still had your studio, and he had his.

Lange: Yes, I did.

I was very hesitant, in a way, about this marriage. I remember being in that darkroom and hearing those footsteps. He wore cowboy boots, that was it, with very high heels, Texas boots. He had slim and beautiful feet, and he was inordinately vain of those feet. They were very wonderful-looking feet and hands that man had, and those slim cowboy boots showed it, with those high arches. Well, at any rate, I used to hear those footsteps and then for awhile I was very much afraid of those footsteps and when I heard them I wouldn't go upstairs. I avoided him.

Riess: Why?

Lange: I don't know. It was a certain fear that I had. I was a little afraid of him. Not always, but in that period I was, but afraid of what, I don't know.





Riess: Was he a San Franciscan?

Lange: No, he was born in Fresno of a very distinguished lineage that went back to Williamsburg. His family migrated from Virginia--his father was a graduate of the University of Virginia--to Mississippi, where they had a plantation, and there they went through the Civil War. Maynard's father was in the Confederate army, and all his papers, and his diaries, and the buttons from his uniform, all this is now in the University of Virginia. That family migrated then from Mississippi--the plantation was at a place called Deer Creek and there was nothing left after the war--to Fresno, to the valley. Fresno, I think, was the first town in it, in the early days. It was populated by either Mexicans or people from the South who came there. Maynard's father was the first county clerk.

The family built a ranch outside Madera, called Refuge, which still exists under that name, and is still in the hands of members of that family, the Mordecais. And they run it now as a big cotton plantation, but it was cattle up to the time when cotton was introduced into California in the twenties. That ranch has been a functioning ranch. There've been many changes but, as I say, members of that family still live in it. The family graveyard is there, as in the South they have them on the plantations; that's a Southern custom and the burial plot is down there still in use, as the family members die off. Many of them



Lange: are unreconstructed; Maynard had many traces of it. How can I explain it? They still felt pretty strongly about the "damn Yankees." Later on in Maynard's life it became the "damn businessmen" but it was the same thing. That was just another way of expressing the same kind of bias.

He came to San Francisco as a quite young man, with a remarkable facility and an extraordinary visual memory, beyond anything I've ever encountered. He could capture anything, anything. That very narrow, flexible hand of his could put anything he wanted it to on a piece of paper.

I have never watched any person's life as closely, up to that time, as I watched his, what it held, how he lived it. He was at that time forty-five years old, and I was twenty-one years younger. That didn't bother me; though it bothered other friends that I would do that, it didn't bother me at all. All the years that I lived with him, which were fifteen years, I continued to reserve a small portion of my life. I think that's the best way I can put it. I reserved a portion of my life always--out of some sense that I had to--and that was my photographic area. Still the most of life and the biggest part, the largest part of my energy, and my deepest allegiances, were to Maynard's work, and my children. I have two boys whose name is Dixon. One of them lives in that house down there [1163 Euclid], John Dixon. One lives in San Francisco, Daniel Dixon. Maynard



Lange: also had a daughter by a previous marriage. His former wife lived in San Francisco. She was an inebriate, an advanced alcoholic, and this child lived with her, and needed a lot of protection through many very grave difficulties. But I was married to him for fifteen years. And that world was a world totally different from the world that I had built for myself, up to that time, although the transition wasn't hard. I knew enough by that time. I respected the work of an interesting person like that.

Riess: Maybe the fear of this absorption was one of the things that made you resist coming out of the basement in the beginning.

Lange: Yes, I think that probably was it. Maynard was a very well-known figure. He was a "San Francisco figure" and he knew how to be a "San Francisco figure." He was popular and respected and people rather spoiled him because he suited their idea of what an artist should be, how he would look, and how he would behave. And Maynard was a very bright man, had a fine brain, an original man, and a witty man, which pleased the public very much. He was the kind the legends cluster about, without his making any particular effort, wherever he went almost. The role was kind of cut out for him. And it was in large part true. But there were not many people who really knew that man. They enjoyed the figure. And I participated in that, quietly I think. I don't see myself very plainly there. But I am aware of the fact that San Francisco really spoiled him. By that I'm saying, and I



Lange: think it's a very important thing to remind people--I hope I never participate in that kind of thing--that real talents, real gifts can be minimized by what people do to them. I don't mean by the man who has the talent, but the men around him. They exploit him. And never ask really, or expect, the most. Once they start making a myth about a person, look out! They can do irreparable damage. I think San Francisco has somewhat done that. Maybe all cities.

Riess: About itself too.

Lange: About itself, the same kind of thing. You said just what I mean. The exact kind of thing that San Francisco does to San Francisco, they did to Maynard.

I was always a little aware of that. And I always felt that as his wife--and I was devoted to him when I was his wife, and he to me--I really failed him because I never really pushed hard enough so he would work with his life's blood. He could have been--oh, he gave many people a great deal of pleasure, and his works did--but he could have been a greater man. He had it in him. Once in a while, in what he'd left behind him, I see it now. Sometimes in a little drawing, a scrap of something, just as plain as it can be.

Riess: You don't think he realized it?

Lange: Yes, I'm sure he did. He never did pot boilers, he never did. He never was bogus, certainly no phony, far from it. But never quite what he could have been.





Lange: He was victimized by his own talents. And that's a dangerous thing and yet I see it happening over and over again. I can see how these things develop. What can you do about it? Not very much. People come up to me now and say, "Oh, how glad I am to meet you, I've always wanted to meet you." Right away I think "ugh." Then they go on and say, "You are one of the great photographers of the world." I am not one of the great photographers of the world, but that is what is now going around. It is being repeated and repeated and first thing you know I'll believe it. [Laughter] I know what it takes to be a great photographer but I can't explain it. So there I stand and act as though I believed it, or say some silly deprecating thing just to get by. But this is what people do to each other. If they would say, "You are really interested in photography, aren't you, Miss Lange? What do you want to do with it?" What a chance that would be! What a developing thing that is to say! Why do people do this thing which really kills you?

Riess: There's nowhere to go from there; it's deadening.

Lange: Nowhere to go, and I've seen reputations made by this kind of nonsense, and I've seen talents die because no one paid any real attention. People think they're doing something very nice for you when they hand you this kind of line, and they are not. If more people had really taken Maynard seriously, really taken him seriously-- maybe that's asking too much of human association. The only reason



Lange: it's important is that it happens all the time. And I've seen people themselves fall for these legends that are manufactured about them. I see it all the time, and it hurts. I hate to see it.

I myself should have realized my role with him in a different way than I did realize it. I myself, I think--I know now--subscribed in part. And had I been more really participating I could have encouraged him to dip his brush in his own heart's blood. He was capable of it. I know what he could have been. And someday some really astute person should collect everything that man left behind him, and edit it out. It would be a very interesting and very valuable residue. But the editing that would have to be done! One of his sons could do it, he has the judgment to do it, but I wonder if he ever will. He has his own life to build.

It is one of the things I occasionally think about, the more I hear people say that they don't want to interfere with people's lives, or don't want to influence other people. I meet so many charming people who never interfere with anything, you know, very nice companions, very popular people, taking responsibility for nothing! I think now that I should have been a more critical and less agreeable wife. I should have held him harder to his own standards, rather than trying to keep life pleasant and satisfactory



Lange: to him.

Riess: It would have meant taking a great deal of your energies away from your own work.

Lange: Not more than I wasted anyway. I had energy and health in those days. I had a family to hold together, and little boys to rear without disturbing him too much, though he was very good to us. But it was sort of myself and the little boys, and he. It wasn't so much he and I, and the little boys. I thought I was protecting him, helping him in his work. He was a very fine man, Maynard, a very fine man and...

Oh, remember Christmases we had, he was full of his crazy little jokes and quirks. On this Christmas tree in here [living room at 1163 Euclid] there is a fish, now tarnished, that is as old as he is. It was on his first Christmas tree. And on this little Christmas tree here--one of my boys put this up every year--are his cigarette papers. [Laughter] He always had those little blue packets. I don't know whether you can still buy those. This one was in the pocket of his coat when he died, and the boys always put it up. Maynard was full of all kinds of things that we'd enjoy and laugh at. And he used to sing, "Noel, noel, may all mine enemies go to hell!" [Laughter]

Riess: What would you say were Maynard Dixon's artistic influences?

Lange: He had a couple of old cowpuncher friends, whose opinion he valued very highly. One of them was Charlie Russell [Charles Marion Russell, 1865-1926], a great American legendary painter. At that time



Lange: Charlie Russell was a cowpuncher who painted, a very colossal man, much more of a colossal man than Carl Sandburg, but of that legendary type. Charlie Russell at that time was not an arrived man; he was rather a man whose outlook was not very broad. He had lived his life in the Old West, and he knew it. Maynard respected him as an American westerner and he also respected his knowledge of the West, and there would be things Maynard wasn't sure of, not only details of costuming, but of movements, of things about the landscape, matters of geography, matters of feel which Charlie Russell would help him with.

Charlie Russell was a silent man, a man who came dangerously close to being an Indian, he'd been with them so much. He'd almost lost his powers of speech because he'd gone over on that side.

The other fellow was named Ed Borein. Ed was a sort of society cowboy from Santa Barbara. But in their youth he and Maynard had traveled horseback from Los Angeles to Bozeman, Montana. I think it was three months they had been on the road together, and there was a bond between them, and Maynard enjoyed and in a way was influenced by Ed because Ed was a stickler for detail. His paintings and drawings and etchings were dreadful but his knowledge was encyclopaedic.

There were a lot of western figures who would drift through. There were Indians who Maynard knew well. He had lived with them. He was deeply, truly influenced by them.





Riess: Authenticity of detail was important to him.

Lange: Yes, he always thought he would like to do a book on American costume. He was fascinated by that, understood how it was important, the slant of the heel of a boot. And I often think when I see how the hat has changed in this modern version of the western man, how Maynard would not like that Texas hat. He did not like the influence of Texas on the Far West. That has taken over now. They wear Texas boots and Texas roll to the brim of their Stetson. It's the wrong roll. And then there were things about the guns, and things about the mounts, all manner of things that had significance, and that one had known.

Riess: How did he know the West so well?

Lange: He was born in it. He was magnetized by it. He lived it. He went to the Yosemite when he was ten years old, with his father, in a wagon, over a wagon trail. There was no one in there. Imagine. To go with your father in a wagon to Yosemite. He understood the roll of the plains. He educated himself in it. This was his world, but curiously enough, when he was with the cowboys he was the sophisticated artist, while when he was with the artists he was the cowboy. [Laughter]

Riess: Was it possible for you and Maynard Dixon to have a life that was really separate from this crowd that adored him and surrounded him?

Lange: I'm afraid I haven't given it in its true color when you say



Lange: "surrounded by a crowd." He wasn't actually surrounded. Maynard was a pretty independent man, and our life together was the life of working individuals. That business of being rather lionized and spoiled by people was incidental. It was there, an element in his life that afforded him a good deal of enjoyment as anyone enjoys having an active place in the world he lives in, you know, being greeted and enjoyed and lionized. And Maynard was witty and interesting. Those are qualities that people enjoy. Also, many artists are spoiled by stupid people, and become kind of false characters. Now I don't say it applied to Maynard as much as it has to some very minor artists whom I've known, whose role people falsify with, "Oh, are you an artist?" or something like that. Immediately something bad happens. It doesn't happen to a plumber, it doesn't happen to a nurse, it doesn't happen to a printer or to an architect, but if someone says, "Are you an artist?" you know they're unenlightened and it's the second-raters who always ride it for all its worth.

Well, this Maynard didn't do, but he did have a rather enviable place in San Francisco Bohemia. Do you know what I mean by "Bohemia"? There was an era where there was a group of people who were the bohemians in society. They were not beatniks. They came before people talked of "liberal" and "conservative." The bohemians were the free and easy livers. They were the people who lived according to their own standards, and did what they wanted



Lange: to do in the way they wanted to do it.

Riess: And they weren't necessarily artists or well-known?

Lange: No, it wasn't synonymous with being artists, but most people regarded artists as bohemians, therefore they thought artists could do as they pleased, the rules didn't apply, all that kind of nonsense and falseness, like these night lights that they throw on buildings--green, an awful green, and yellow, an awful yellow and they have them on, of all places, Grace Cathedral at night, where they're putting on a new part, and in order to help with the fund-raising drive have it night-lit with these horrible lights. People do that, and they did that more, I think, with the artists before the end of the thirties. Now it seems to me, although I may be wrong, that a painter has a rather better place in life. He goes along with the architect and the engineer and his works have definite places where they're to be shown, or else they're so presented. People used to buy pictures and stick them up on the walls all over. They don't do that anymore. They buy a picture, or make a small collection.

Riess: Sounds like maybe the WPA had something to do with the change.

Lange: It could have. However, this was the life partly of the Old West, when you had gold coins in your pockets, silver dollars, money, income, and Maynard had a very good time. He was never poor--he thought he was--but there was always enough money. He could have made a lot more money, but there was always enough money.



Riess: Was he making it mostly on the advertising work?

Lange: Well, that started him making money. But after he didn't do advertising anymore, and he did mural decorations for public buildings, and he had good jobs and a succession of them, and many people came to his studio and bought things, it wasn't hard for him. It was uncertain, and he thought it was hard, oh. boy, he though it was hard, but he was never poor.

Riess: Was the bohemian crowd the same crowd that came to your studio?

Lange: Oh, no, they were utterly different people. The people that came to my studio were more the young bloods. They were younger and having a kind of a good time, a different kind of a time.

Riess: Were Roi and Imogen the kind of people that came?

Lange: Well, no, they were warm, personal friends. They weren't people in the audience.

Riess: And that's how you saw the people who came to your studio?

Lange: My studio? Oh, Roi and Imogen used to come to my studio, yes, but they were friends of both Maynard and myself. We were very good friends, what we call family friends, you know.

Riess: Did you see Johan Hagemeyer?

Lange: He didn't figure in my life or anyone's life that I know. He was a very imitative person. And I never liked him, personally. When I say I don't like a person I don't mean that I don't agree with him, I mean I am personally repelled, as some flowers you like very much, and some you don't like at all. He's not a first-class





Lange: person, in my opinion, although because I don't like him I never knew him. That's a curious thing. The people whom we're chemically repelled by we don't really know anything about. That's a purely personal matter. I wouldn't want to touch him, skin to skin. I'd get a rash. [Laughter] So I don't know anything about him, except I know he was a slavish admirer of Edward Weston, and I detest those slavish admirers. I've seen too many of them. They bask in reflected glory. He was a natural born campfollower. Edward said something, and Johan was always behind there shaking his head in affirmation.

Riess: There are three other San Francisco people who are usually mentioned together in relation to the art association in San Francisco, Ralph Stackpole, Gertrude Albright, and Gottardo Piazzoni. Did you know them?

Lange: Now they were figures. I have only really the vaguest recollection of Gertrude Albright; she doesn't stand in my mind as representing anything, excepting that she was a faithful teacher at the art school year in and year out, and I have no doubt that she was a good teacher. When I say faithful I mean one could put their faith in her teaching. I'm sure gifted young people would be safe with her. She might not be a great revolutionary influence in their lives. That's all I can remember.

Stackpole and Piazzoni, they're different. Both men, I would say, were touched by greatness, real integrated people.



Lange: Stackpole very lovable, personable, full of charming ways and full of charming works. I came across a beautiful little drawing of his the other day, just saturated with Stackpole. I love it. I love to think of him. Not just with personal affection, but with respect and regard for--I was about to say for what he was, but I am told by a friend who has just been with him in France that he still is just the same in France, that he's doing work that's good and leading a life that's good, in a little French village, and enjoying it. But he enjoyed almost everything; he had a great talent for that.

In what little of his works that remain to be seen I don't see his work receding, belonging so tightly to the past. I look at those figures that he did before the Stock Exchange--one of my sons was a model for one of those figures and I can drive by with Leslie and say, "See that little boy there, that little stone boy, that's your father"--and those works are not dated. Stackpole was a really true man.

Piazzoni was a fine person to know. He was silent where Stackpole was voluble. He was a deep person, Piazzoni. He was an Italian peasant who loved to paint. So far as my knowledge goes, he was an uninfluenced man. Piazzoni was Piazzoni, and Piazzoni's paintings were Piazzoni's paintings. He did some very beautiful ones. His name has almost slid into oblivion, but I'm sure one day someone's going to rediscover him. He did one



Lange: wonderful rendering that no one else had ever been able to paint, those California brown hills. No one that I know could paint those hills but Piazzoni. I asked Mrs. Salz, who owned it, where this painting was, and she said she had given it to the University. They own it and it probably is dingy, and needs to be brought to life.

Always a Piazzoni was unmistakable. No one could ever say that this work didn't come out of the profundities of the man's attitudes, of his experience. He was a real painter. Day after day, day after day, he'd go into that studio of his, come out when the whistle blew at noon, go to that Italian restaurant, eat the same food, in his black hat. And always very nice to pass in the street. He didn't stop, no art gossip. He would pass you and smile. Very methodical. He had a lot of dumb children, and a dumb wife, and he lived in North Beach as though he were in the fruit and vegetable business, you know, just the same.

Riess: He wasn't lionized.

Lange: No, but he had a few patrons who saw him through. Mrs. Ansley Salz was one of them. She was a friend and a patron to him and she was able to afford to buy his works. Now who other ones may have been, I don't know. But he lived very quietly. He died quietly. And very few remember him. Some enterprising person should revive him. It's difficult to do. But, oh, I can see him so plainly.

Maynard and "Stack" and Piazzoni had studios in the same block on Montgomery Street, and saw each other every day in



Lange: passing, and were fond of each other, not in a chummy way, but they were kind of the kingpins. There was a certain bond between them, as utterly different as they were. Maynard was the most spoiled of them because he was the most popular. Piazzoni wasn't a popular man. Not many people, I think, really generally would respond to his very quiet, almost religious landscape. And "Stack," he liked a different kind of a life. But Maynard was part of the town in that so many people liked the kind of thing that he did. He represented some version of the West with which they identified themselves. Not so much his personal west, but Our West, you know, of which he was a sort of a symbol. And he dressed that way and he talked that way and in large part he really was that way.

Riess: Could you name some more of the bohemians?

Lange: Well, there was George Sterling, and there was a newspaper woman by the name of Annie Laurie, and there was Sydney Joseph and Emily Joseph, and Charlie Duncan.

Riess: He's the man who was in charge of the artists at Foster and Kleiser?

Lange: Yes, he was the wonder-boy. Funny, there's a kind of a blank that sets in here. Why is it I can't recall? It would be good to remember who all those people were--oh, we used to have big parties. Stackpole, of course, was in that group, and Fremont Older, and Charles Erskine Scott Wood.





Riess: Was Sara Bard Field there?

Lange: Well, if you mention him you mention her, but she was in the background of him. Lucian Labaudt was in that group too. He was a painter and dressmaker. The Labaudt galleries in San Francisco are named after him.

Riess: This group wasn't at all organized, just friends?

Lange: Oh, not at all. They were, some of them, not even friends, but they were people who saw each other because they lived in the same world. They were not buddies or close companions, but they lived in the same environment, I'd say. And the common denominator of them was the city of San Francisco.

There was the architect, Timothy Pfleuger, the one who brought Diego Rivera up here. If you were to go to Coit Tower you would see all of those names that are signed there, Madame Jehanne Salinger, the mother of Pierre Salinger, the President's press secretary, Frank Van Sloun, Nelson Poole, Albert Bender.

Riess: Yes, I meant to ask you about him. I've heard a lot about his generosity.

Lange: That was the way he lived and that legend persists after his death. He had a very remarkable gift for associating with people. One time he met me on the street and he said to me--you know, he was little, plain, almost to the point of deformity, and short, and he had a defect of speech--he put his hand in his pocket and he



Lange: said, "Dorothea, I touch life--many angles and many levels."

His conversation was always epigrammatic. One time I passed him on the street in Chinatown, before my first child was born, and he was talking to somebody--he always was talking to somebody--and he put out his hand and stopped me for a moment and said, "Dorothea, you go in importance." [Laughter]

And he always had presents in his pockets. If you met him anywhere he would fish into his pockets as though he'd been looking for you all day and he'd give you some quite beautiful thing, never trash, a necklace or a button, or something or other. He was sustained by all these transactions of his.

His art patronage actually was a kind of a joke. (I don't suppose this will be in other people's memories of him.) The painters all knew that he was working them to death. He did, and many things that are in the Albert M. Bender collections around here are things that he just extorted out of the painters. Not plain and simple immoral extortion, but he would come and ask them to give him something for such and such and such and no one could refuse him. They couldn't refuse him because he was the one who prodded other people to buy works of art; he had many wealthy friends, and he was kind of "little friend of the artist." That was his role in life. A little man, but a great friend of the artist, and he encouraged many people to buy things. But he



Lange: personally--wherever you see "The Albert M. Bender Collection"--he either got them at cut-rate prices or he didn't pay for them at all. He got away with murder. Unique.

Riess: Why do you think he did that?

Lange: Well, I would say that that was the life he liked. He had created an existence for himself in that city: very good businessman, an insurance man, everyone took out their insurance from him; he was a professional Irishman; and he led this life of association with the arts simultaneously and I guess he liked the combination. He was also a man with fine taste. That saved him. If he had been a vulgarian it would have been bad, but he was a man of innately fine taste. He was a man probably you would say of many--well, like a house of many rooms.

He lived, as long as we had known him, with a very fine woman, a very graceful painter, no earthmover, but a woman who painted beautifully. Her name--there are scholarships and collections in her name--was Anne Bremer. That was Albert's love, and they lived together many, many years, in the same apartment, surrounded by beautiful things. And I think her presence made him aware perhaps of what he wouldn't have otherwise known. (I remember the first painting by Lhote I ever saw they had in their dining-room. There was a very strong Oriental atmosphere about the place.) He had that behind him and that relationship, I think, had a wonderful quality. It was a stabilizing thing. She was shy, she could hardly speak, and she



Lange: hated to go out. And he was the most gregarious man in the world. He had also a very nice sense of humor. Over his desk he had a cartoon, which someone had given him--maybe it was on a menu or something--and it said, "Here's To Albert And Other Benders." Well, that legend persists.

He also rather fancied being a patron. He harmed a few people in this respect. He inoculated Ansel Adams with the idea that an artist had to develop his patrons, and Ansel became a "little brother of the rich" there, under Albert's guidance. Ansel became somewhat their entertainer and it wasn't good for him. Albert did that and he was very influential in Ansel's development. Ansel loves him. He was a lovable man, but a very mixed man. Made you feel good though.

He bought things of mine in the times when no one was buying photographs. Now they're buying photographs as things, but at that time no one was thinking of photographs and portfolios and collections and so on. But he did.

Riess: Were you taking non-portrait photographs then?

Lange: I don't remember what. I don't know exactly what that time was. Well, I was beginning, and the first group of things I ever sold to anyone he bought, and gave to the Museum of Modern Art.

He was also one of the few people of that time that didn't ramble away, he never went to Europe, he was not a cosmopolitan. He was a San Franciscan, he never went on a vacation, excepting





Lange: maybe a quick dart down to Carmel to see somebody's paintings or something; he was always here. Now most of the people who can afford to do such things like to go to New York and buy or to Paris and buy. It sets them up in prestige. I see things that have happened in San Francisco since then and I can trace back where they happened. Now whenever I see an exhibit in the museum that says, "From the permanent collection of Mr. and Mrs. Walter A. Haas," I know it's directly attributable to Albert Bender. He started Mrs. Stern buying paintings and the Sterns got caught up with the Gertrude Stein-Paris-"expatriate" group. But Albert Bender was at the end of this line; that was the other end of the line. Mrs. Haas has now got Picassos, and Matisses. As far as I know she has nothing but certified art. Albert Bender didn't always have certified art. He took a plunger once in a while.

Riess: He took a plunger to encourage the artist?

Lange: He was always doing good, very self-consciously doing good. And he also didn't mind talking to his rich patrons about helping a poor artist. I've known poor artists who've writhed under that picture, whether it was true or not.

Among that bohemian group there were also a few genuine number-one bums, like this fellow who still survives, John Garth. He was the same then as now. I'm speaking of his character because I don't think you can do bad art and be a good person.



Lange: His art shows what he is--a shallow, preposterous, vain, stupid man.

There were many others. Why can't I think of them? You know, sometimes you put a lid on things. Either you put a lid on, or the times shift abruptly. But there are no connections left for me, and I don't think I'm the only one who feels that way. Things have sharply shifted, values have changed.

Riess: You don't see these people now?

Lange: They don't live, most of them. And if they do, they live in another world. They've taken their place, as I have, in an altogether different world. And I know once in a while I'll meet one and they'll say, "What are you doing?" Well, I have no answer to that because the very fact that they ask me what I'm doing shows how far apart we've gotten and I can't answer it in a minute. I'm so associated in their minds with a little piece of time there and what I've gone on to do has never reached them, you know. Probably the same holds the other way.

Riess: They have gone on and done things too.

Lange: Well, of course I think I'm the only one! [Laughter] I don't really mean that, but people do kind of hold to their little niches, don't they, and yet I didn't. We're speaking of the twenties and the early thirties and that, of course, is a long time ago. San Francisco has in some ways changed. Where I see certain echoes of the San Francisco of that time is when you go Friday afternoon to the symphony. There you see some of



Lange: the people who were in and out of the art world as patrons, as interested ones. Have I spoken before of this group? I think I have. The San Francisco merchant princes. My first patrons. In all the accounts you read, and all the magazine junk that's coming out now on San Francisco "the Paris"--you know how they do now, repeating and repeating and repeating the same kind of comment about it--San Francisco is having a kind of a vogue. Well, it is a synthetic thing. There's just enough truth in it, the way they handle it, to make more people do more articles.

Riess: It feeds on itself.

Lange: Yes, that's what I'm trying to say. But I wish someone, when they went about this, would develop that very important thread in the development of the city's innate character, that is, this group of people who as a group contributed very, very much to the warmth and beauty of the place. Now in most communities that have grown up or are growing up, the rich people in that community are somewhat isolated, or they are elements in the community that are behind walls or regarded as non-participants. (I may be wrong in this, but that's my impression.) But in San Francisco this group of rich people lived a very warm inter-family life. They were large families who knew each other, and had a very strong community sense and that warm, responsive love for many things--children and education and buildings and pictures, music, philanthropy--was their private personal life and their public



Lange: life together. There are vestiges of it; some of them still live in the same houses. They gave string quartets in their living rooms or in their drawing rooms, and they educated talent: Yehudi Menuhin is one they did, Issac Stern is another. They did these things. They gave money freely.

Riess: They didn't make the mistake of lionizing?

Lange: In Yehudi's case, no, because he was protected by an eccentric father. Things have gone very wrong in Yehudi Menuhin's life as I read it, but it wasn't due to being spoiled as a child, although he was very highly regarded. He was eight or ten years old when he gave his first performance! As Isaac Stern was. But also they have encouraged many singers and other people and they were very great helpers in the building of an interesting city. Yet they haven't had recognition as far as I know. The Comstock Lode people, the early silver kings, they're the ones that get talked about.

Riess: Yes, in a book like Barnaby Conrad's.

Lange: Don't let us speak of it! I writhe at that. This was before the days of cafe society, before the days of the Barnaby Conrads.

Riess: Herb Caen?

Lange: No, I don't think so. I think Herb Caen is a fellow who has pretty good and pretty balanced vistas. How he does it every day!--and he doesn't do it every day--but Herb Caen is a fellow who in the present can look backward and forward and put things together





Lange: pretty well. He's a California boy, you know. He was brought up in Sacramento, and I don't think he's ever lost that. He's no import. I personally like him. I'm not speaking of the man, but of what he does.

Riess: He has a television program now, "Baghdad by the Bay."

Lange: Oh, I've seen that too. He doesn't represent himself at all on that. He just sits there, and he isn't good in combination with William Winter. He can't get along with him. But I don't think of Herb Caen and that. And I also don't think Herb Caen does well in his books. But what he accomplishes every day, the look, the angle, his slant, his quick intuitive, his lightning-quick perception. I feel old, happy memories when I read it, and I feel that he's a different man than if he were a Boston or a Chicago man who came out here during the twenties. There are certain things that creep into that column that only a native Californian would know and have there, certain things he loves that imported people don't know.

In the days we're speaking of, in the twenties there, Arthur Caylor was the man that everybody read. His wasn't a clever chitchat column, but it was a column about what was going on, people, events, controversial matters. It still is in the San Francisco News Call-Bulletin, but he's forgotten. What Arthur Caylor said every day was discussed just as what Frankenstein [Alfred Frankenstein, San Francisco Chronicle critic] says about



Lange: the symphony is discussed and "Did you read Herb Caen yesterday?"  
The same thing.

### Three Southwestern Expeditions

Riess: Is it correct to say that Maynard Dixon began to be a painter in 1920?

Lange: Up to that time he had been doing designing in any media, for many purposes, advertising drawing a lot of it. Then in 1920 he decided he was going to be a painter. But what he really meant when he said he was going to be a painter (he'd work in watercolors, perhaps, or sometimes in black and white) was that he was going to devote himself to serious images that stood by themselves, that were for their own sake. And he was going to devote his whole life to it. He didn't use the word artist, though. Painter, not artist. Yes, that's about the time he did it.

Riess: Would you tell me about traveling in the Southwest with Maynard?

Lange: Maynard and I were married in 1920. And it was his life's practice to go on painting expeditions as often as he could. San Francisco was his base, and he would go on sketching trips--that's what they were. He would announce that he was going on a sketching trip in six weeks. Well, it took him forever! He was one of those people



Lange: who never could get off! We were always meeting people who'd say, "I thought you were in New Mexico." And Maynard would say, "I'm going next week." Next month he'd still be around! It was interminable. Then he was always going "for a month or six weeks," but he never came back inside of four months. His trips were practically disappearances as far as the San Francisco life was concerned. He was just either there, or he was gone. And he was a great worker wherever he was. He was an industrious man who had good hands, good tools, and he could turn his hands to anything.

It was only on a few of these trips that I was able to go, because before I had children I had activities I couldn't afford to leave, commitments, I mean. And after I had children, it wasn't easy to do. And besides that, I was never quite sure enough of what our livelihood would be, and I wanted to--this sounds as though I'm putting a very good light on my own motives, but as I look back it's true--I wanted to help him. See, I helped him the wrong way; I helped him by protecting him from economic difficulties, where I shouldn't have done that; I should have helped him in other ways. It wasn't necessary, but I guess it was for his security, and my thought was that if there wasn't any money my work would keep us afloat, would keep us going. You know, it constantly comes up. The things you do, when you want to do what's right, so often are so wrong. [Laughter]



Lange: I shouldn't have done that.

I knew that this man though actually while he loved me and was very, very good to me, still didn't share the depths of his life with me. When he went, that was what was good for him to do; he didn't need me. At that time I didn't know what it was to live with a person who shared their life with you.

Riess: And so you didn't feel a lack.

Lange: No, I didn't. I missed him when he was gone. I was glad when he came back. It was more exciting, more interesting when he came back.

But I wasn't really involved in the vitals of the man, not in the vitals. Well, maybe we don't always have to touch the vitals, but now I know what it is to live with someone with whom you really live, who will share, or wants to share. That's a terrific thing. Perhaps the reason that I was never able to give Maynard an uncomfortable time, which he should have had, at some junctures, was that I never felt courageous enough or felt the need. I wasn't brave enough. Courage is the greatest thing. All these things we need to live with-- "Good will toward men," "Peace on earth"--are sublime, but courage is it. Makes trouble, but to live with courage opens up distant worlds. I don't know so many people who do.

Riess: It opens up the possibility of encountering some part of the





Riess: other person which might disturb your own well-being, so there is a fear attached to this stirring-up.

Lange: That's it. I know. It destroys a certain peace and harmony, you know, that's always held before us as being so desirable, and is so desirable. Well, especially with an artist it's a ticklish business.

Riess: In his studio did he work from the sketches done on these trips?

Lange: Yes, that was his modus operandi. He would bring back a lot of things, all sketched, never anything that was done excepting as direct response to what surrounded him.

Riess: Have those sketches been saved?

Lange: They're sold. They're all over. There's very little left. I actually don't know where it all went. Those sketches made direct have been very popular and people have collected them and enjoyed them. They're easy to live with too. I wish I had here to show you a wonderful drawing that he made, on a piece of onion-skin paper, of a landscape in which he made the color-notes. Dan has it. As a portrait of him, it's just great. I have a very nice portfolio of his that I enjoy: with the little boys, instead of telling them a story, he would draw them a story, because he was so visual. They'd start it and he would draw it, and they would add. That kind of thing he was often doing, and did very well. I have a whole book of



Lange: these things that are so enjoyable. I accidentally scooped up a few, never carefully making a selection, and I use them with the grandchildren now, and they love them.

Riess: Can they tell what the story is just by looking at the pictures?

Lange: Some of them they can, the rest they make up stories around.

He also did a children's book which is out of print now, but which many people enjoyed very much, called Injun Babies,\* very moral little tales of Indian babies who got into trouble. They were actually letters that he wrote to his daughter, Constance, when he was separated from her and off on a trip and she was in a precarious situation with her mother. I have no copy here, or I'd show it to you. It's old now, but it was an awfully nice thing. The Indian girl, A-wáy-she-go was a runaway; and O-só-sti-ki was a girl who got into the honey bees; and Me-nô-kan was a boy who always said he couldn't do things, and so on they go. Very charming stories.

Riess: You did go on some of the sketching trips to the Southwest with Maynard, didn't you?

Lange: I went on a few of the big ones. They all were big ones, but I didn't go on those ones where Maynard said he was going to go for two or three weeks, because I always thought it was going

---

\*G.P. Putnam's Sons, New York, 1923.



Lange: to be two or three weeks instead of two or three months, and there were other reasons. And after 1925, of course, I had little children.

I went on one in 1923 to Arizona and we were gone four months, and we lived at a trading post eighty miles away from a railroad at a place called Kayente. Now it is accessible to automobiles, but at that time you could go in only once a week in a Ford when the mail went in. Toward the end of the time we moved to another post, a trading post in the Navajo reservation, called Redlake.

You can gather from this account that I was not a traveled person, that I always had rather immediate duties and had never before made expeditions like this. We went into a country which was endless, and timeless, and way out and off from the pressures that I thought were part of life. The earth, and the heavens, even the change of seasons, I'd never really experienced until that time. Then I became aware.

On the second trip we were gone two months and we were camped at the base of Walpi Mesa, guests there of a very well-known California millionaire, Anita Baldwin. Anita Baldwin was a strange person. She was a recluse, but she had a lively history. She was the only daughter of Baldwin. He was quite a swashbuckler and left many millions in real estate and mines and hotels and horses and oh lord! many illegitimate children.



Lange: Anita was the legitimate one and she adored him. She was a strange one and yet a very beautiful, very wonderful creature if you came up on one side of her.

Anita and Maynard were quite good friends, and she would come up to San Francisco, maybe twice a year, and visit him in his studio. She was kind to me and tolerated me, but their friendship way antedated me. She would take a lot from him. She was very silent and he used to tease her and treat her like a friend--which I don't think she had much of because she didn't really know how to be one. She would do unexpected things. She was always surprising.

One of the unexpected things she did was to ask us to go to the Indian country with her, because she had an idea that she wanted to write an Indian opera. She had, in her quiet, secret way, indulged herself in writing music, and she had this impulse--I don't know how strong this thing was in her and I never knew what came of it, though I don't think much. She asked Maynard and me to go with her. Well, that was quite something. We were to be gone two months; we were to camp there. And we were to leave for the trip in two weeks. I don't know how we did it, but we did it.

She said we had nothing to think about at all; that everything would be attended to and we were just to meet her in Los Angeles, where she lived. She sent me a check for \$250





Lange: to buy a pair of riding boots and I made that \$250 stretch over quite a few things! I remember I had a pair of riding boots, old and scuffed, but they would suffice. At any rate, we went to Los Angeles, to her house and spent the night there. We were to leave the next day, but not a word was said about the trip ahead. Plans for what we were going to do? It was as though we were just there for a dinner party and to spend the night. Initially, she had a personal bodyguard. And he was always armed, that was one of her eccentricities. She also had a small pearl-handled revolver in her handbag, which was always in her lap, and the reason for this she told me--I asked her once long afterwards--was that the value of the jewelry that she customarily wore warranted the presence of a bodyguard and a gun in the handbag. But what a way to live! You can imagine.

Well, the next morning we set out for "parts unknown" in Arizona in a private railway car with two cooks, two chefs, two stewards, the bodyguard, and Maynard and I and Anita, with all the blinds drawn, so no one could look in. There we sat. This railway car was very ornately decorated in all kinds of bizarre motifs. It was very dull traveling, I remember, hot going down there.

Riess: You couldn't open the blinds or windows?

Lange: It wasn't permitted, because we traveled incognito.



Riess: At sixty miles an hours.

Lange: Yes, but incognito. When we would get to a main station, like Santa Fe, we went into a siding, and we weren't allowed to get off the train because someone might discover who we were. I found out what it's like to be very very rich so that you are bombarded and rather notorious--that combination--and what it is like to have so much fear that nothing could be enjoyed.

Well, we got to Flagstaff at two in the morning. All the plans had been made by her purchasing agent, and meeting us on the freight stand were cases and cases and cases with her initials on them in which was our camping stuff. And nobody, not even Anita, knew what was in it. We were to travel from Flagstaff to our campsite which was to be at the foot of Walpi Mesa, a good long way, and it was raining. We sat in the car, and the steward came to say a man was there to see us. It was a fellow by the name of Bill Williams, who was a truck driver, and with him was a boy by the name of Eddy, who was another truck driver. Bill Williams and Eddy had been contracted for to drive us in to our campsite, and they had an old White truck, a real "Arizona equoid." Eddy drove one truck, Bill drove the other. That Bill Williams was a real Arizona cowboy, the very best; he took everything in his stride. But when he saw this mountain of things--I don't know whether you've ever traveled in that country, but you travel light and cars



Lange: half the time can't get in because when the rain comes the roads wash away and you have to wait--Bill Williams looked at that stuff and said, "Do we have to pack this in?"

Well, Anita and I found ourselves sitting in the little truck with Eddy, and the big truck, loaded to the heavens, wobbled down the road ahead of us in the pouring rain bearing the bodyguard, Bill, Maynard, and the load. Off we set in the middle of the night into this wilderness area, which is what it was at that time. And the rains got worse and worse and the washes washed and the rivers got higher and higher until finally there was one that Bill Williams came back from looking at and said, "We can't get across. We have to wait till morning."

So we camped and waited till morning, but the river was still very high and in order to get on Bill said, "We've got to pack the stuff over on our backs." So the men packed box by box over. And Anita, stony-faced, sitting next to me, watching all this, said not a word, not a laugh, nothing. Finally we heard Eddy say, "Now we gotta pack the old woman over." And Anita gathered herself together and opened her umbrella and went over like a queen, carried over by two men making a saddle of their hands. Never a word, not a sound of complaint. She was very adequate. Nothing could ruffle her.

When we got there those things were unpacked, and you



Lange: wouldn't believe what there was in those boxes. The lavish camping equipment! All the tents--and there were about ten of them--were shaped like Chinese pagodas. The food was the most elaborate canned stuff, and I was the cook. No preparations in any way, just cans. This purchasing agent had just gone down--like going over an Abercrombie and Fitch catalogue--and had just ordered. Caviar! And there we were to be for a month. Well, in every camping expedition there's always a settling-down period. We had one, while I learned to cook for the combination of tastes of Bill Williams, Eddy, that body-guard, and Anita. It was a weird experience.

Among the nightly events were the visits of the Indians who lived at the top of the mesa. She paid them to come down and sing and every night they came down, en masse, singers, old men, young men. We could hear them starting up there when it got dark. We could hear drums as they'd come down the trail and often they sang all night.

Of course, she way overpaid them, so that they became her Indians. That's bad. She also did an outrageous thing, which she didn't mean to do. Somebody had told her that the Indians liked ocean sand, so she sent in a big box of white ocean sand, which is sacred to them and which they use in sand paintings and in many things. But she brought in too much. And peacock feathers are very important, very special in their mythology. But by the time we'd been there a month every little





Lange: kid had peacock feathers. That's what she did. That was typical of her.

The snake dance came during the month we were there. All the photographers and the people that attend that snake dance annually took pictures not of the Indians, but of us! We were the interest there! Oh lord! Maynard ducked it nicely. As always, he did his work well, and he was fond of Anita and she trusted him. I think he must have been a great relief to her. People do toady to someone who has such immense wealth and such a reputation for throwing it away. A lot of people are wealthy, but she had a reputation of doing anything that came into her head, you know, often not judging very well. The things she might have done she didn't see.

Well, it was over finally, and we went home. We had a very eventful trip home, again with storms, in which she behaved marvelously, because she had to sit up two nights. I won't go into all this trip back. But we came out by way of Gallup, where the railway car was to meet us, and when we got there the stewards were drunk, the cooks were gone, and nobody had done a thing in that car so the dust was an inch thick! Imagine how it would get, sitting in a railway siding. And instead of being able to go and buy a ticket and go home in a Pullman after this camping, we had to sit in Gallup for a day waiting for the car to be cleaned, equipped, and the



Lange: commissary taken care of. And the stewards had to get rid of their hangovers. The cooks showed up finally and we went on. She never said a word. It was just like facing the facts of life. But rigid, you know, with no give. It was kind of like a formula. This delay was the result of certain things that she insisted on, you know, so she couldn't really protest the end results.

I then found that we were to detour and stop at the Grand Canyon on the way back, for some reason, and we went into the Harvey House there where they sell Indian objects. It isn't a curio store, it's better than that. I don't know how it is now, but then George Harvey had a reputation for having one of the finest collections of Indian art there was. Some of it was for sale; most of it was exhibited down there at the Harvey House. Anita walked in and there was a young Navajo salesman who smelled money, I guess, and in order to ingratiate himself and be awfully pleasant he proceeded to tell us the saga of some party that was camping up in the Hopi country, and told us a whole yarn, from beginning to end, about ourselves. Anita just stood there and looked at him and listened to this description of herself as she appeared at the snake dance-- because she wore kind of pear-shaped jodphurs and a long chiffon veil and an Egyptian helmet! Well, when he got all through she said just, "Yes." And then she walked around that



Lange: place and she said, "I would like to have this and I would like to take this, and this," and she bought eight thousand dollars worth of things in about ten minutes, and then walked out, and never told him what he'd done.\*

She, by the way, did buy from Maynard, at three or four different times, large paintings, and she bought them I would say with some discretion. And never, never did she buy anything merely to help him out. It was very good that way. The last one she bought when it was only half done, and I've always been puzzled about that because it was one of the most ambitious things, in concept, that he ever did. To me it was much finer when it was half-done than when it was done. That's characterisitc of me. I generally have more faith in something that isn't finished. In anything, I enjoy it better before it's signed and delivered. There's such a finality about it then. But if it's half-done it means, who knows what's ahead? It's still alive. This particular painting I've always been curious about. I don't know whether he did accomplish it, or whether he didn't. Generally Anita bought paintings that were very colorful and strong in pattern and design. She liked that; that's what she answered to. When she died she left, or her

---

\*In later revision of the manuscript, Dorothea Lange said, "Too much about Anita. It wasn't that important." [Ed.]



Lange: son Baldwin gave, three paintings to the Los Angeles Museum.

In all these years I've never gone down to see them. But that last painting is the one I'd like to see.

The Brooklyn Museum has it. Three years ago I went to the Brooklyn Museum to try to buy it from them because I wanted to give it to my boys. A painting owned by a museum which has a large collection spends most of its hours in the caves. They bring it out when they show their permanent collection or when combinations of things are shown. It is a custodianship of a sort, but it is also a morgue. This particular painting is quite fine. Knowing the innards of his work as I know them, this represented him well. I'm glad that painting exists. But they wouldn't sell it to me.

Riess: Who did she marry?

Lange: She married a man by the name of McLaurie, who wasn't good to her. McLaurie left her with two children. But after she was separated from him she took the name Baldwin, and her son's name is Baldwin Baldwin. You see it occasionally. He goes in for all kinds of very sporty things. He was a spoiled and petulant young man. I always though he had something in him, but his mother was really too soft with him.

Oh, she had a turbulence. She did all kinds of things, many that had to do with horse-racing. The Santa Anita racetrack is where the old house was, and named for her. She gave all





Lange: her stables to the United States government after World War I. They made her an honorary colonel and she had her portrait painted in uniform!

That, anyway, was the second trip. The third trip was in 1930 or 1931 when we lived in Taos, New Mexico, for eight months with the two little boys.

Riess: This was the first time you had taken them?

Lange: Yes.

Riess: Did you put them in a school there?

Lange: No. We lived in a Mexican house on the edge of a pueblo, old Taos-style, and we stayed there way into the winter. This was at the onset of the Depression. We weren't there because of the Depression but because Maynard wanted to paint and there was enough money to see us through. The outside world was full of uncertainty and unrest and trouble and we got in that car and we went and stayed there.

Riess: He painted then, as well as sketching?

Lange: Yes, that was a long enough session. Mabel Dodge Luhan, the queen of the Southwest at that time, who had many houses and many homes and studios that she gave to people--she was married to Tony Luhan, the Pueblo Indian, and she was a person of notoriety, publicity, fame, all those things, had written several books, and she was a sort of an inspirational person--she had a big studio she let Maynard have, although we didn't live in it.



Lange: He went there every day to paint. And I took care of the family. Constance, Maynard's daughter, was with us. We lived the life that the visiting artists lived then in that little hamlet. It was a hamlet then. Now it is a mecca for tourists, especially vacationers from Texas and Oklahoma. All the people who knew old Taos decry new Taos.

There I saw for the first time, in the beginning of winter, this thing that was living by barter. Indians, Mexicans, poor whites, natives, all would come to that square in Taos on Saturday afternoons and bring their produce, their red beans and pinto beans, their piñon nuts, their dried corn, some weaving, flour, eggs, lamb, hides, and there they bartered. I remember well all those wagons, and those horses with the horse blankets over them, and the people all bundled up. When it began to get dark they would still be bartering. We used to shop there too, but we would buy for money.

That period in Taos was a very good time for me. I learned many enriching things. I don't remember Maynard's output very well. I don't know how much he came back with or what it was for him, but I knew he liked it. Why did we leave? The snow got very deep. We were living in two rooms. I don't remember that the living got too hard, but I remember that it was impossible for Maynard to work in the big studio in winter. He used to paint with three layers of clothes and two pair of



Lange: gloves. We left in deep snow one glittering January day, not very experienced drivers, the first ones to go down the canyon where if we had gone off we would have gone down to the Rio Grande River. We broke that trail. That was one of the most adventuresome things. I went to the Andes last summer [Ecuador, 1960, P.S.T], and over the Andes Mountains into the Amazon Basin, but it wasn't anything like going down from that plateau that Taos is down to Santa Fe, seventy-five miles in deep snow with your life in your hands. A beautiful day. I'll never forget it.

There's another thing in Taos I'll always remember. A man in a Ford used to drive by almost every morning. I saw this very sober, serious man driving with a purpose down the road and I wondered who he was. I thought he was an artist, but he went by always at the same time, and at the same time of night he would come back. "Who is that man?" It was Paul Strand. And it was the first time I had observed a person in my own trade who took his work that way. He had private purposes that he was pursuing, and he was so methodical and so intent on it that he looked neither to the right nor the left. He went down that road and he came back at night. I've seen many of the photographs that he produced then and that was one of his good periods. Those photographs are still being used. I always feel that I know something about them



Lange: because I remember his going back and forth. I didn't know who he was, I only thought, "That is a serious man. What is he doing?" I didn't until then really know about photographers who went off for themselves. All the photographers I'd known always were with a lot of other people, but somehow this was a lone man, a solitary. Later on when I knew Paul Strand in New York he told me he knew I was there. But he never spoke to me.

Riess: What were you photographing?

Lange: I did almost nothing. I have to hesitate before I say that I was too busy. Maybe I kept myself too busy. But that thing that Paul Strand was able to do, I wasn't able to do. Women rarely can, unless they're not living a woman's life. I don't know whether I was temperamentally sufficiently mature at that time to have done it. At any rate, I didn't have the chance. I photographed once in a while when I could, but just a little.

Riess: The environment?

Lange: Yes. I photographed some of the architecture, the buildings, but people have done that much better before and after me.

Riess: Could you help Maynard in his work, recording details, by doing this sort of photography?

Lange: I could be of help to Maynard mostly by keeping everything smooth and being happy and making it an enjoyable time and taking care of the three children. I baked and cooked and you know when there's deep snow on the ground you're kept





Lange: busy. The gloves, the galoshes, the wet clothes--you put them on and you take them off. And I used to drive him to where he was working, and drive him back those short winter days. In the summer time we had guests because we had a big place out of town there. I couldn't work then, really. When I say I couldn't work...of course, if I had stated my terms with life I could have, and to this day I would say the same.

Riess: Did Maynard change in this environment? Could you feel closer to him because the pressures of life in San Francisco were gone in this free, open place?

Lange: Well to some degree, yes. He was always able to live a simple life. Not all people can. He could, and liked it. Maynard savoured the fundamentals. But remember that outside the world was just in smithereens, economically. And we knew we had to go back into it again, not knowing what was going to happen. So that was present, even though we had pulled out of it temporarily. I think that there were insecurities present that influenced his direction, in that perhaps he could have used that time to more effect. I don't remember, really, what we came back with. Perhaps if I dug into my mind I could remember. I have the feeling now that it was a good time for us as people, for the little boys, for me, and for Maynard, it was a good time, but I don't know that it was one of his best painting periods. It could have been. His best painting period



Lange: came later, maybe as a result of it. These are very difficult things to know, or remember.

Riess: But it was a better time for the family itself.

Lange: Yes. Things changed very much for Maynard for the next year or two years because when we came back we were confronted immediately with the terrors of the Depression at that time. Not that we didn't have enough to eat, but everyone was so shocked and panicky. No one knew what was ahead. I had put the boys in school. I thought that financially I'd better.

Riess: But wasn't boarding school more expensive?

Lange: Not more expensive than running a house and two studios.

We put the boys in a day school in San Anselmo where they had arrangements for boarding pupils. John was only four and Dan was only seven and this was very, very hard for me to do. Even now when I speak of it I can feel the pain. I carry these things inside, and it hurts me in the same spot that it did then.

We didn't rent a house. I lived in my studio and Maynard lived in his, three buildings away, at 728 Montgomery Street. It was a famous studio building, just last year converted, but up to last year it remained perfectly the same. They took out those beautiful walnut balustrades. Everybody used to slide down them. Not only children! And Maynard was in this most famous studio of them all. You went up one flight, then there



Lange: was a long landing, then up another flight, and it was at the end. That studio was fine for him.

When we came back I lived at 802 Montgomery Street, which was about half a block away, on the corner, in a building which has also been converted. Addie Kent was on one side of me there; Albert Barrows was there; Jacques Schnier was there. I had that studio before we went to Taos. My brother rented it for me while I was gone, and he wrote me a letter--he was very proud of himself that he had done this and it would help out--that he had rented it for thirty-five dollars a month. He thought that would be a great surprise when we came back to have this money. Well, so it was, because when I went into that studio--oh, no I'd known before that because friends had sent me the newspaper clippings--the fellow to whom he had rented it, some kind of maniac, tried to commit suicide there, unsuccessfully. He cut his throat and his wrists, and the indications of what he'd tried to do were there. The police got him and he was very drunk and so on. But it was all in the paper, including my name, and also, before this fellow did this, he had gone on a rampage with Prussian blue paint, and to this day I don't like Prussian blue as a color. He had taken it and he had just daubed wherever he felt like it. I had a portfolio of drawings, original drawings, some of them Diego Rivera had given me, and this maniac has improved on the drawings



Lange: in Prussian blue. Can you imagine an example of vandalism worse? Irreplaceable things. I picked up that portfolio and I looked through it once, and I just burned it. There was nothing that I could salvage. I'm a great collector of wonderful odds and ends, of things in the graphic arts, and this was my own little private collection. And they went!





INTO THE PRESENT, FUTURE--"THE LIFE THAT BEATS"

Corner Window

Lange: Although my mind was over in San Anselmo most of the time and I didn't like to be separated from the children, it drove me to work, and I worked then as I would not have done, I am sure, if I had gone back into my habitual life. There in my studio on Montgomery Street I was surrounded by evidences of the Depression. I was on the corner where the sun came in and I remember well standing at that one window and just watching the flow of life. Up from the waterfront it came to that particular corner, that junction of many different things. There was the financial district to the left, Chinatown straight ahead, and the Barbary Coast and the Italian town. The unemployed would drift up there, would stop, and I could just see they did not know where next. After that the flow of the channel broke because of the hill ahead.

The studio room was one flight up and I looked down as long as I could and then one day I said to myself, "I'd better make this happen," and that started me. I made a print and put it on the wall to see what reaction I would get, and I



Lange: remember well the customers' common reaction was, "Yes, but what are you going to do with it?" I hadn't the slightest idea.

Now I have many visitors, young photographers with portfolios under their arm, many who I know are confronted with, "What are you going to do with it?" And remembering that, I feel justified in saying, "Don't let that question stop you, because ways often open that are unpredictable, if you pursue it far enough. Don't relinquish it." Most young photographers don't because they want too quickly to make a name for themselves. Things are very often apt to be regarded as a vehicle for making a name for yourself. But the way it happened with me, I was compelled to photograph as a direct response to what was around me.

I realize that in an account such as I'm giving, because it's supposed to be history, names are kind of welcomed and they're important. They are the connective tissue between one account and another. And they make a tapestry out of something that might just be a fragment. However, I'm sure that actually artists don't influence artists, unless they're promoters. Artists are controlled by the life that beats in them, like the ocean beats in on the shore. They're almost pursued; there's something constantly acting upon them from



Lange: the outside world that shapes their existence. But it isn't other artists' work, or other artists; it's what belongs to the artist as a solitary. So so many accounts of artists have a bogus quality to me because that part's left out, and only their social relationships are told, which is, I think, an erroneous way of telling it. The social relationships sometimes bolster their existence, but are also something that's apt to interfere with their development. I've seen quite often where it encroaches and takes too much place.

Well, that window and a few weeks at Fallen Leaf in 1934 when I made decisions, really got me going in the direction of the kind of photography for which at the time there was no name. They call it "documentary" now, and though it isn't a good name, it sticks to it. I don't like it, but I haven't been able to come up with a substitute. Beaumont Newhall plagues me with this because he is the best photographic historian we have and he doesn't like the word "documentary" either. He thinks it's too late to change it but maybe we could if we could come up with the elusive right one. But that was the very beginning of documentary photography. People often tell me I was the first one and of course that's nonsense. When you're in a thing you find there were people there a hundred years ago! But the impulse that I had didn't stem from anyone else. It wasn't that I felt that since so and so



Lange: has done this somewhere else I could do it here. I went out just absolutely in the blind staggers. I had something to do. And I've really kept to it pretty much without an interruption. Certainly I've never been stopped in it because of lack of opportunity. The only thing that's kept me from doing better at it has been that I didn't do as well as I might have. But the opportunities have been many and therefore I feel safe when I tell the young man with the portfolio to push it, to stay with it, to develop it.

Riess: Do you think that if you hadn't been in this location at this time you wouldn't have done the photography that you did?

Lange: No, all I'm saying about that window is that it stays in my memory because I see it and I remember what has happened in my life through moments that I remember visually. I do say, however, that if the boys hadn't been taken from me by circumstances I might have said to myself, "I would do this, but I can't because..." as many women say to themselves over and over again, which is one reason why men have the advantage. I was driven by the fact that I was under personal turmoil to do something.

Riess: Did you go to Fallen Leaf before or after this beginning?

Lange: That was after; it was the following summer. The boys were with us, and the Partridge twins were with us, and we lived on Anita Baldwin's estate up there, in a hunting lodge across





Lange: the lake. She gave it to us for the summer, and we had a good summer there. Absolutely no one was permitted on that estate, not a human soul but us. You had to go through four gates, and there were all kinds of signs about trespassers, and all this business, and when you got in it was wonderful. Maynard built a sweathouse there and the Partridge boys ran around naked all summer--all these skinny kids with red hair. Oh boy, we had a fine time. And I started to photograph some of the natural forms that I liked very much. I tried to photograph the young pine trees there, and I tried to photograph some stumps, and I tried to photograph in the late afternoon the way the sunlight comes through some big-leaved plants with a horrible name, skunk cabbage, with big pale leaves and the afternoon sun showing all the veins. I tried to photograph those things because I liked them, but I just couldn't do it. And I then decided that when I went back to the city I would only photograph the people that my life touched. I discovered that that was my area. Difficult as it was, I could freely move in that area, whereas I was not free when I was trying to photograph those things which were not mine.

Nowadays I am asked often to pick out "eight of my photographs" which best represent my work, and no group that I ever make up really comes close to me without the inclusion of one of the photographs that I made in the early days when I first



Lange: got out on the street. There are two that I made then that appear over and over again, and I'm willing that they should. They were made when I was just gathering my forces and that took a little bit because I wasn't accustomed to jostling about in groups of tormented, depressed and angry men, with a camera. Now I could do it much more easily because I've learned a lot about doing it, and I've confidence in people that they will trust in me.

At that time I was afraid of what was behind me--not in front of me. And even now, if I go into any public place, I want to be where I know what's behind me. I never want to sit in the middle of a restaurant because I'm very, very sensitive about my back. Really it's my camera I was so afraid about. I thought someone might grab it from the back and take it away or hit me, from the back. I was not always so sensitive about my back; I became that way when I worked in crowds of people with the camera. Curious, isn't it?

Riess: How about your experience as a girl stepping over Bowery bums. Didn't that serve as preparation?

Lange: That helped. I might never have tried it at all without that background. You quickly forget yourself in your desire to do something that needs to be done. And people know that you are not taking anything away from them.

I assigned myself the task of photographing the May Day



Lange: demonstrations at Civic Center. I knew there was a great deal of trouble abroad, and that there were going to be demonstrations at the Civic Center by the unemployed, and I said to myself, "I can't afford (money) to do this and I shouldn't, but I want to. But if I'm going to go and photograph this, then I've got to set limits on how much. I've got to photograph it, develop it, print it, get it out of my system, in twenty-four hours. I can't let it spill over." The fact that I felt the need to portion my work means that it must have been spilling over and taking more of my time and energy than I could afford. I photographed those demonstrations and the next day they were on the wall, done and mounted, and those pictures are still in use. That was May Day of 1933. Last year I made a portfolio which the New York Public Library bought from me, hundreds of photographs that I made in the Depression years outside of the government things. I was surprised when I made the selection and edited them out, how many times I went back and got out another one I'd made in that twenty-four hour period.

I also photographed that 1934 longshore strike. I remember being up at Fallen Leaf and thinking back at the longshore strike, thinking, "What am I doing up here?" "I should be down there." That was the time when the communists were recruiting. We hear very much since the McCarthy days of



Lange: people who've been pilloried for becoming communists in that period in history. That was the period when that was happening. I remember people coming to where I was living in those years, strangers who'd make an appointment and come and visit you and broach this business, asking you then to come with them to a meeting where you would be interested to meet so-and-so or so-and-so.

Riess: Were these party meetings, or communist front organizations?

Lange: These were party meetings. You wouldn't be told at the first visit that they were party meetings. You would be somewhat flattered and cajoled and it was dangled before you as something that a person like you would be interested in. Of course, having made photographs of this I would be valuable. So I had many encounters with this thing which has since become so familiar and which so many people of very good intentions, the best intentions, the best people, couldn't say "no" to. And the reason I didn't go any further with it was because Maynard was so "leery." He was less socially moved than I. Maynard was a Californian to the extent that he believed in the lynch laws. He believed in taking the law in your own hands if you didn't like it. The days of the vigilantes were still very alive to him. He really thought it was the way to do; I disagreed with this. But in this business of going in with groups and joining what wasn't really called "undercover communism"





Lange: at all. I don't remember any particular thing he said but I know he dissuaded me.

Think what would have happened to me had I! That was very important in those years. I have friends who did. In fact, I'm not sure that it wasn't the right thing to do in those days. I'm not sure that there wasn't very much to be said for participating in groups of people who were ready to take action. It's a blot on the history of our country that that thing was so perverted. The fear and the paralysis that it has caused is one of the worst things, and I think we are paying for it over and over and over again.

Riess: What could you visualize happening to these pictures that you were taking? Did you think of exhibitions?

Lange: No, I never thought exhibition-wise. I have to force myself to do it now, even.

Riess: You were still doing portraits to make money, weren't you?

Lange: Yes, I was taking portraits to finance this other work, and to take care of the boys, or rather to contribute toward taking care of the boys. Maynard and I didn't make any divisions, but I did everything that I could, and he did what he could. We never had any kind of reckoning on that, but I knew that one work had to take care of the other work. And it was a kind of release to me, I guess, in a way. I don't know, though, what I thought would happen to these pictures. I remember



Lange: thinking along in those years how good it would be if I could get a job and devote myself completely to doing that kind of work without the strain of trying to maintain it on other work, like the portrait business, the strain of doing two kinds of work.

I guess it wasn't long before people became interested in that. By 1935, I think, I went to work doing it wholly. I was employed as a typist by the state relief administration, because then they couldn't put me on as [i.e. had no provision for me as] a photographer. And I only worked for them photographing migratory workers for about six months; after that I worked intermittently for the federal government until 1945, almost only for the federal government; and then I went to the hospital. The next nine years, as far as work is concerned I have almost nothing. It's a blank, because I just barely made it, and since then I have been, I would say handicapped, which I would be anyway because you know you can't do quite as much in your sixties as you could in your forties, but I'm more handicapped than just that. I have serious limitations health-wise, and there's no way out of it.

In impulses and outlook I've not changed; what has changed is the attitude of the public to such efforts, because photo-journalism arose in those years. There was no such thing as photo-journalism before about 1935. The picture magazines



Lange: came into existence then, and certainly that is allied with documentary photography. And the enormous development of the camera in the hands of amateurs is allied with it. The medium, the instrument, has developed many, many uses, and people's awareness of the power of the visual image and the visual record in many ways has been kindled. My labors in the years we were speaking of were just at the beginning of this great burst, and I came in on the crest of that, and contributed to it also.

#### Documentary Photography "Begins"

Lange: Survey Graphic wrote and asked me for some of those photographs of the May Day communist demonstrations to accompany an article, and I sent them two or three. They printed one, full-page, with their own caption underneath, which was: "Workers of the World, Unite!" The photograph of a fellow talking vehemently into a microphone; it was a big and rather handsome page, with this dark figure, his mouth stretched and open, and this caption. It wasn't my caption and it, of course, gave the picture a turn which a good documentary photographer is very punctilious about...

I was just discovering then what good documentary



Lange: photography was. There have been a few figures who have made collections, Lewis W. Hine, and Jacob Riis and a few others, but they didn't do documentary photographs. They made photographs that they kept together. They were series and sequences. The documentary thing is a little different because it's filed and cross-filed in its pure state, and it's buttressed by written material and by all manner of things which keep it unified and solid. I thought I had made a discovery, and in a way I had. Photo-journalism didn't exist then, you see. Now I can see connections, as very often happens in any field. Sometimes you hear people say, "I was the first..." forgetting that these things, historically, arise almost simultaneously in different sections of the country, different parts of the globe. It does seem as if whatever the thing is that the world is ready for next happens. You think you have chosen, yourself, but you haven't; it's a part of your time. I've seen it more than once. And in this connection, with the development of what they call photo-journalism--

Riess: Life magazine started it--

Lange: Yes, but what started Life magazine? Life magazine didn't start something. Somebody started Life magazine. Why did that person start that? What was the source of that idea? out of what soil did that develop? Well, I know a little about it, but the thing I'd like to say now is that out of some attempts





Lange: at doing documentary photography, photo-journalism began. I think there is a connection. Photo-journalism, however, developed very fast. It now exists as a tool of journalism.

Riess: It was something that could be marketed right away.

Lange: Yes. And it has gone fast. Documentary photography has not. It has been slow and good examples of it are very few. Mostly it's something that people love to talk about and very few do. I don't know if it has been taking hold really, and I don't think if it's not taking hold it's because it's been proven futile or not successful; it's just so difficult and the rewards are sparse because it is not in demand. Photo-journalism, sometimes superb, is quicker and easier and catchier. I myself feel somewhat of a failure because had I been willing (able?) to devote myself to do what is necessary to do in the way of years of work and effort and developing that field, I might have pushed it further, a whole lot further. Often I feel this keenly, that I might have and didn't (couldn't?).

Riess: By producing more?

Lange: Oh, by doing all the things it takes if you want to do something very well indeed. That's damned hard in any field of endeavor. There are people who work at it and then there are people who really do it, and they are rare. I realize more and more what it takes to be a really good photographer. You just go in over your head, not just up to your neck, which I--you know, we all



Lange: have very good reasons why we don't do things. I don't know what I could have done; I didn't do it.

You know, you think choices are made for you; well, they're made for you because you make them. [Laughter] Only I know. And the only reason for mentioning it now is that it applies to everyone, and in the arts perhaps particularly. Only the practitioner knows, because he has the insight, what is possible, and how he hasn't even approached it.

Riess: What a burden! Maybe nobody ever lives up to themselves.

Lange: No, I don't think that's true. I think that I would put it that there are very many people who don't have the conception, and therefore they never get beyond it. They are relieved of the burdens because they don't have the vision of the possibility. The man who has the vision of the possibility is the man who could do it.

Lange: And you think that most artists have this vision of the possibility?

Lange: I think many unhappy people are people who have the conception. They have enough stretch in them so that they see what is possible. That immediately puts it to them: Yes or No. Freely put. But the others, they never see it. They are innocent and they live effortless lives meeting their little troubles as they come in a very noble way. But this other burden isn't on them.

Now in my case the thing is that the business of uniting the conception of the documentary photograph with the photograph



Lange: that also carries within it another thing, a quality that the artist responds to, is the only way to make a documentary photograph. You see how difficult this is? A documentary photograph is not a factual photograph per se. It is a photograph which carries the full meaning and significance of the episode or the circumstance or the situation that can only be revealed--because you can't really recapture it--by this other quality. Now there is no real warfare at all between the artist and the documentary photographer. He has to be both. But he isn't showing--as the artist does who works in abstraction, or who works rather more divorced from conditions--just "how he feels," but it is more that the documentary photographer has to say "what is it really?" You see that there is a difference. That is a very, very hard job. I'll show you a beautiful thing... [Returns with an AP Wirephoto of Mrs. Patrice Lumumba and Lumumba's sister mourning the death of Lumumba, dated probably 7th or 8th of March 1961.] Isn't that marvelous? Now if one were documenting the Congo crisis and one could do it in such elemental terms, that would be a great documentary series, you see.

Riess: That's an amazing photograph because there is no perspective depth.

Lange: Yes. It's all on one plane, which is emotionally correct for that, in that because it has no local setting it speaks to you in terms of everyone's experience. It isn't encumbered by the local



Lange: details.

Well, I don't know if all this on documentary photography is pertinent to what we're doing here, but if my recollections and the development of photography in my working years is pertinent, this is.

### Into the Field

Riess: You began to go on field trips with Dr. Paul Taylor in 1935?

Lange: Yes. I went on two expeditions, two short field trips, where it was in one case a three-week job, and in another a month's job, to do specific things. I was on Dr. Taylor's crew: he had a crew of people who were working in the field, some of them students; I went as a photographer. He arranged that I should be paid to do it. I've forgotten how much it was, but doing that led to my going into a full-time job. Paul Taylor had a grant, I think from the state, to make this survey.\*

---

\*I was Field Director of the Division of Rural Rehabilitation, California State Emergency Relief Administration. The first trip was to Nipomo, in February 1935, for the pea harvest. This was one of the "shorter" trips. P.S.T.





Lange:           The second time we went out into the Imperial Valley there were six or eight of us. I remember how amused I was that we started at six o'clock in the morning and he never thought that anybody should have anything to eat. [Laughter] The first couple of times we went out we went on shorter trips, long weekends, and there we first discovered that this man didn't know anything about what people require in the way of food and drink and lodging--very unimportant to him. So we lived without it until finally we called a halt on him.

          I remember on one of the trips we went to San Luis Obispo and somebody who had to do with the state health board [State Division of Immigration & Housing. P.S.T.] was on that trip with us. We were sitting in the lobby of the hotel there and Paul was standing over by the hotel desk, writing and writing and writing, and he stood there for a couple of hours, and this man kept saying to me, "You see how methodical he is? See? He leaves nothing to chance." Actually, what Paul's report revealed wasn't very good for this fellow. He was methodical all right.

          I also remember in that same hotel--we were on a per diem--all these men ordering dinners that cost \$1.75. I thought it was sheer self-indulgence. [Laughter] For \$1 you'd get a pretty good dinner. That'll give you an idea of how long ago this was and how many changes there have been. To work with migratory laborers and then go into a hotel and order a dinner that cost



Lange: for one person \$1.75 was inhuman.

Riess: What were the farm laborers getting then?

Lange: I don't remember, but it was very little, and with those people you can't figure it really by the day because the work is irregular. Sometimes they go into the fields at noon because in the morning the fields are too wet with dew. And sometimes it's picked by three o'clock. In cotton sometimes they get full, regular days, but the other crop work is full of twists and vagaries.

Riess: What were the rest on Dr. Taylor's team doing?

Lange: Well, I have a wretched memory. I just don't put these things together. There was Tom Vasey, a field researcher, and a student of Paul's. I remember him saying, the first day we were out in a car--we'd stopped at a gas station--Paul asked the fellow who put the gas in the car some question about the country around-- as we drove off Tom said, "He was a good informant." [Laughter] I thought, "What language! What kind of people are these? 'He was a good informant.'" That really surprised me. I knew then that I was with people who were in a different world than mine.

Riess: Yes, where information is gotten from an "informant."

Lange: There was another man, whose name slips me at the moment, who had a similar role. And there was a young Mexican woman, who lived in San Bernardino, who was there because we were working with many Mexicans, especially in Imperial, and she went down by herself to make interviews with the field workers. She went off



Lange: in the morning and came back at night, and she was a wonderful creature.

Riess: Did you go with her to photograph?

Lange: I never went with her, because she worked in a very close and intimate relationship. She didn't speak of "informants." I think what she came out with at the end was life-histories. She got a lot of them from the women, because the men were working.

Now, of course, the subject faces me again, with this very great revival of interest in agricultural labor, migratory labor. The new element in the picture now is labor organization. Oh, we had it then and I dealt in it, but it was very pathetic, weak, and spasmodic and dying. And it still is, really, except the AFofL CIO has now entered into it and if they see it through to organize the workers, that will be the first change in the status of these people since I stopped working in it. Any improvements that are in it are improvements that came through our efforts.

Riess: Housing.

Lange: Yes, camps, which have gone through all kinds of stages of neglect and revival and so on. But that was initiated then, and most of it didn't stick.\* But serious organization belongs to

---

\*1. Ref. to "Perspective on Housing of Migratory Agricultural Labor," by P.S. Taylor, in Land Economics.

2. First two project books by D.L. and P.S.T. are in the Library of Congress. Third book in the Oakland Museum Dorothea Lange Collection.



Lange: last year and, I hope, this.

I'm very much concerned with it, and if I could I would get really involved in it. I think I spoke of this before. At any rate, I've been thinking about it lots, and what I'm going to do, if the AFofL will pay for it, is to, myself, organize and recruit the people to go in and photograph it, because it hasn't been done, as far as I know. There's been no visual record of organizing from the bottom and seeing it through. My, I can just imagine the thousands of dollars the Rockefeller Foundation and the Ford Foundation will give twenty years from now to Ph.D.s to do research, when here is the material. Here we're at grips with it and we are not accomplishing the source material for lack of a few dollars, and maybe for lack of a few people who will get together and see to it that it is done. I would do that. I could. There's one photographer I'm underwriting, just to make sure, personally. What I did in that was underwritten by the United States government, and I'll just pass it on, in a very small way.

Riess: I did see some good photographs of workers and conditions in the Imperial Valley on a poster recently. Apparently somebody has been interested.

Lange: I've seen quite a few that people have made. You know, it's a subject that of course is not too difficult, and it has a very, very great hold on people because it's simple drama.





Riess: It is not difficult to photograph?

Lange: Everything is difficult to photograph well.

But people get involved in it. The things that are easy to photograph are the things that people get very much involved in. Then they can photograph them. But what surprises me is that when they present this story of agricultural labor, people don't really see the big story which is behind it, which is the story of our natural resources. That is the real story of agricultural labor, and they will photograph the conditions but they don't go behind and put them in their right place. That's where the documentary job has got to be done, to show, for instance, what we in California have done in passing the water bill. The same people who vote for those water bonds will then go down and deplore and collect clothing and attend meetings, with the best will in the world, but not much head. That part isn't so easy.

I've forgotten to mention that we also did the self-help co-ops, the UXA [Unemployed Exchange Association] cooperatives. It was the barter movement, when people were trying to exchange goods and services without cash.

(That was the time that Clark Kerr was working on his doctorate on that subject. [Productive Enterprises of the Unemployed, Clark Kerr, Ph.D. Thesis, University of California at Berkeley, 1949, four volumes, 1268 pages.] He took his



Lange: doctorate under Paul and was at our house a lot and I remember that he finished that thesis--a year or so later--and it was a pile so high [four thick volumes high per copy] at our back door. It would have filled a big carton. It was a big job. And he did it on self-help co-ops of which this barter movement was part.)

We went up into the country above Oroville where a group of these barter people had a place up in the foothills where they lived and were running a sawmill. The dream was that the sawmill would support those people and would support a lot of them down in Oakland who would in exchange send up things they needed, and so on. This has been tried many times when people are really up against it. This was a most heart-breaking effort.

I remember that whole business of being up there as something very sad and dreary and doomed.

Riess: Did the people themselves feel that then?

Lange: No, that was the worst. You know, there always are a few enthusiastic souls in such things who carry the others along with them in spite of everything that goes wrong. Yet they were so very much on the bottom that they lacked everything to do with. There was nothing to hand. It was all in the hope, and in the glimmer of a possibility of success. In the meanwhile there wasn't too much to eat and what there was was old carrots and turnips. Not enough oil to run the engine, not enough shingles



Lange: for the roof, not enough of anything excepting courage on the part of a few. It was a sad thing, that was. But we photographed that. I have some of those photographs. I didn't do it very well. I could do it now, but I went up there thinking I could photograph something that would help them and get more people interested. I did it optimistically, you see, and I didn't know enough at that time. I did it the way a photo-journalist would if he had an ax to grind. I didn't realize what I do now. Had I, I'd have a real document, a real record. But I have none because I didn't really see it.

I remember Paul sitting there in their community house-- an abandoned sawmill, so it had that atmosphere--interviewing and speaking to these people. I had never heard a social scientist conduct an interview. I knew about people going and asking questions and filling in questionnaires, but an interview I had never heard. And I was very interested in the way in which he got the broad answers to questions without people really realizing how much they were telling him. Everybody else went to bed while he was still sitting there in that cold, miserable place talking with those people. They didn't know they were being interviewed, although he wrote and wrote. He always writes when he interviews.

Riess: You in your photography and he in his interviewing found people eager to talk?



Lange: Oh, don't you think that most people are eager to talk, really?

If people are talking about themselves and their own experience and their own involvement, they are eager to talk. If they're talking about the other fellow, they're ready to go to bed.

[Laughter] No, getting people to talk is no problem, as you must know very well, but keeping them on the track, that's different.\*

### Photography for the Government

#### Farm Security Administration

Lange: I am told that the Farm Security Administration photographic division existed because of a report I had done when I worked

---

\* I first saw D.L.'s work in 1934 in Willard van Dyke's exhibition at 683 Brockhurst, Oakland. Through Willard, by telephone, I arranged that her photographs should illustrate my article in the Survey Graphic on San Francisco and the general strike.

The expedition of the UXA sawmill was the first time that I met D.L. in person. The party was arranged through van Dyke, and included Imogen Cunningham, Mary Jeanette Edwards, Preston Holder, and myself. My own interest was in encouraging the photographing of a social phenomenon; the interest of the others was in finding opportunity to photograph people in social situations without fear that their motives would be misunderstood and their approaches resisted.

A photographic exhibition was developed from this expedition, was exhibited in Haviland Hall (UCB) and is in the archives of The Bancroft Library.

Following his exhibition of D.L.'s photographs at 683 Brockhurst, and their common experience in photographing the UXA, van Dyke wrote an article remarkable for its insight at this early date in evaluating D.L. as a photographer. (The Photographs of Dorothea Lange, Camera Craft, V. 41, no. 10: 461-467, October 1934.) P.S.T.





Lange: for the state relief administration. When my report went to Washington to be used it was seen by someone and, as a result, the whole Farm Security Administration photographic team was established. It was all based on this report I did.\*

Riess: What was the report, and who saw it?

Lange: Well, actually there were two reports: one was on rural slum housing and one was on migratory labor. The one on migratory labor was done to try to get money to establish camps which would have rudimentary facilities and supervision.

Riess: These would be federal camps?

Lange: Camps with federal money. That is, at first the idea was not federal

---

\*"Thus while Dorothea Lange was the first person to photograph the migratory workers, and while John Steinbeck was the first novelist of importance to write about the migratory workers, and while I was the first movie man to make a picture about the drought, there was no correspondence or even conversation among any of the three of us in those first years of work..."

"It is fortunate for all concerned that by chance Roy Stryker was brought from Columbia University in 1933 by Rex Tugwell to write a history of Resettlement. Instead of writing a history, he very intelligently set up a photographic division to do his reporting for him, and first crack out of the blue, he received a portfolio of still pictures from Lange, reporting all too starkly the rattle-trap jalopies, the tent villages, and the dazed faces of the Texans and Oklahomans in the vanguard of the now famous migration.: DOROTHEA LANGE: Camera with a Purpose. Pictures by Dorothea Lange, text by Pare Lorentz. U.S. Camera 1941, Volume 1 "AMERICA" Edited by T.J. Maloney, Pictures judged by Edward Steichen. Pages 94, 95.

See also FSA HISTORY. Interview with Roy Stryker. Autumn 1952. Held in apartment of John Vachon, participated in by several photographers who had served on Stryker's staff. Typed record. Horne & Shall, Inc. 15 East 41st Street, New York 17 N.Y. 80 pages. (Oakland Museum)



Lange: camps, but camps with federal money that later became federal camps. That report got the first \$20,000 to establish those camps.

Riess: A picture report.

Lange: Yes, and that idea just went like wildfire. It seemed as though this field had been just waiting. Rex Tugwell got Roy Stryker from Columbia University (they had been colleagues at Columbia) and told him to come to Washington to make a graphic history of American economic growth.

Riess: Was it Tugwell who saw the report and got things moving?

Lange: Exactly the channel, from whom to whom, I don't know. Certainly Tugwell was important because he was the administrator for the Resettlement Administration, which became the Farm Security Administration.

Well, that Farm Security Administration under Roy Stryker was a very unusual thing. Now it's really famous and becoming more so all the time. It amuses me, really, because I have watched a legend--you're too young to have watched a legend grow--I've watched that legend grow and it's now become a full-blown legend.

Riess: Makes you feel like a legendary figure?

Lange: Not I so much, but Stryker. They're going to have a monument to him one of these days, in bronze! I read all these histories of the photographic section, and my memories of the actual thing that it was then, and the way the participants in it think it was!...



Lange: it's very funny. Anyway, they used my report on migratory labor, as an example of the kind of thing they were talking about, to get the section budgeted. That was a way of getting it done that occurred to them, I think, in a subway in New York. And the way things went in that New Deal time, two weeks later it was established and was called the historical section of the Resettlement Administration. [In later revision Dorothea Lange said, "This section is irresponsible and needs to be restated."]

Riess: I read that one of the reasons for setting up this section was their conviction that the press couldn't be depended on for proper and sufficient coverage of the administration's work.

Lange: Well, that was one of the reasons that they gave to Congress, to get their money. Their real reasons were a little different. Stryker was a very good fellow for fending off Congress and protecting the section and staff from the wrath of people who said that in these times this was no way to spend money. But they had loads and loads of reasons.

Actually, during those years those photographs were very little used.\* The thing that really fascinates me is to see how in the passage of time the validity of that file becomes more and more apparent. Its real value we had hunches of at the

---

\*"Little used? Gee whiz!" P.S.T.



Lange: time; to justify it while we were doing it, Stryker used to try to make those photographs practical, get them into newspapers and magazines and so on, but he wasn't good at it. And as the thing grew, it became a very expensive business. It wasn't in the beginning, but as things go in Washington, the budget became big. While it was a small section, still they had a pretty good lab going and they had a lab man and they got this and they got that, and a lot of file clerks. Paul Vanderbilt was the fellow who put the files in order. Thank God for him! But while it grew, the use of it was something that we all had (at least I had) some qualms about. Stryker, however, stuck by that idea in its broadest sense and he found ways of defending it.

One hard time we had was the time when they discovered that one of the photographers had moved a skull and that opened the whole thing up in Congress. What was this that was going on? Why were these people running around the country taking pictures? And what was this business of contriving situations in order to suit propaganda purposes? And that was quite a thing. People laugh at it now. We laugh at it when we get together, but it wasn't funny then.

Roy was good at that job. (Later on, he moved to Standard Oil and he got a tremendous job, the same sort of task.) He'd sit at the desk (FSA) and he'd point down the corridor and





Lange: "they" were all his enemies. He was guardian at the gate. He was the defender of the files, inviolable; and they were locked up at night. It was a holy crusade. The telephone would ring in his office--he had three or four telephones--he'd pick it up and say, "Stryker speaking!" And he was just ready for whoever it was. [laughter], any congressman or someone wanting to come in and see what they had on his state of Arkansas or someplace.

What was always the hardest was to fend off the projects. They tried to get us to photograph these projects of the Resettlement Administration that were being established all over the country. That certainly seemed like a very reasonable thing, since we were on the road anyway. But to photograph the projects you could do nothing else and the photographs were most often useless because the projects were going up. They weren't in their full swing and they weren't functioning. You'd be photographing the half-built buildings all the time, with the project manager and all his staff standing there looking at the camera, you know. And the project manager would get hold of you as you came up and he would have it all lined up, all the things that to him were vital; but they weren't vital in the sense of what were the real underpinnings.

We used to get letters from Stryker saying, "For God's sake, when you're in Ohio stop at least at such and such a project. The fellow is all right. Handle him as well as you



Lange: can, and spend a day at it. We've got to keep him quiet." So we would do that. It seemed at the time high-handed, but it was right that we shouldn't because the record standing there in the Library of Congress would have been nothing but files and files of projects. Nothing is worse.

Riess: Were you out on your own, or did the photographers travel as a team?

Lange: It varied. Not a team out of Washington, but you'd pick them up on the road. Sometimes if you needed help, if you got lost--I don't mean geographically lost--you went to the regional office, and someone who understood the conditions in the area would go with you for three or four days and always would like to go. Or you'd pick up a state car and driver. Sometimes I'd have a typist-steno with me if I wanted to get a lot of notes, for a few days. That's the kind of thing. It was on and off.

Riess: Part of your job was getting the notes?

Lange: Always. You were responsible for that, no matter how you got them.

Riess: And you studied the conditions yourself beforehand through reports? You might, for instance, be located here in California, receive an assignment in some other area, then do a lot of reading before setting out?

Lange: Well, that isn't really the way I did it actually. Mostly if



Lange: I had reading to do I would do it in the area. I couldn't retain it otherwise. But the contradiction was that the reading that was most fruitful and the best was the reading that I did after I had been there. That worked much better than doing the reading before.

It's a somewhat questionable thing to read ahead of time in a situation like that, because then you're not going under your own power. It is often very interesting to find out later how right your instincts were if you followed all the influences that were brought to bear on you while you were working in a region. I can't just now give you an example, but it did happen more than once that we unearthed and discovered what had been either neglected, or not known, in various parts of the country, things that no one else seemed to have observed in particular, yet things that were too important not to make a point of.

Riess: For instance, people being taken unfair advantage of?

Lange: Things that weren't working.

Riess: Administration things that weren't working?

Lange: During those years farm mechanization was just starting, and it was not a matter of general public knowledge that it was starting. The extension of big farming was happening in those years. It doesn't seem possible, but very few people knew it.

Riess: Not even the ones who were being hurt?

Lange: They were voiceless, you see, and we were the people who met



Lange: them.

The influx into California after the dust storms of April 1934, I made the first report on. The first wave of those people arrived in southern California on a weekend. It was as sharp and sudden as that when I was there.

Riess: Not just a trickling of people.

Lange: Enough so that it was noticeable. And we said, "What is this? What is this?" And from that time on it came like a deluge. But that Sunday in April of 1935 was a Sunday that I well remember because no one noticed what was happening, no one recognized it. A month later they were trying to close the border. There were so many that they were talking about it, but they never did really close the border, though they stopped everybody. That was the big agitation then. Should they, or should they not let them in? Well, that's the atmosphere of the work of those days, and you can see why I feel restive when I see what is going on in the field now, here in California, which means that those people will be or will not be organized. And it isn't that I'm not doing it that makes me restive so much as that there is no provision made anywhere for anyone to record this in photographs. There hasn't been a big photographic project since this one that we're talking about.

Riess: It's strange. Things usually progress. This just stopped.

Lange: No young photographers have had the training and the education and





Lange: the experience that we had. That whole team are all people who have been able to use it very well. And they are still the top in the field. That's deplorable. The younger people should have had the same chance that we did. Somewhere some project should take on ten American photographers and put them to work on something.\* And nobody is doing it. The Ford Foundation is just shoveling out money for all kinds of things that are on the edges. But this is right in the middle! And nothing is being done to record this history of farm labor organization.

Riess: After your marriage to Dr. Taylor [December 1935], did you and he travel together on field and photographing trips?

Lange: The first five years, until the war interrupted, he went on some of the big field trips with me. He had assignments where the regions were parallel so we were together a lot of the time. It wasn't that he was with me all of the time. He'd be with me maybe a month and then he had to go back to Washington and he would rejoin me in the summers. And a good deal of the discipline that I needed in order to get hold of such an assignment--some of them had a very broad base--he gave me on those trips. So I never quite did what some of the photographers on that job, some of the best ones--I say best because what came out of it at the end was decidedly important--did, the

---

\*This refers to Project One. See Appendix.



Lange: haphazard shooting. I learned a good deal from Paul about being a social observer.

Riess: I wanted to ask you about haphazard shooting, and particularly in the situation of the FSA team. Why do photographers take so many pictures of the same subject instead of pinpointing what it is they want to show and tell in a few shots?

Lange: It's highly desirable to make more than one shot on the same subject. There isn't always time. In fact, there is rarely time to work deliberately. When you get going, you have to shoot fast. Like asking a person to write their letters in triplicate--you can't do it, but I certainly wouldn't seriously criticize a photographer who works completely without plan, and photographs that to which he instinctively responds. In fact, that's a pretty good guide--that to which you respond. I have all my Asian work that I'm going into now, cutting right into the middle of it, and I find that it proves that a very good way to work--I'm careful not to say "the only way to work" because there is none--a very good way to work is open yourself as wide as you can, which in itself is a difficult thing to do, just to be yourself like a piece of unexposed, sensitized material. To know ahead of time what you're looking for means you're then only photographing your own preconceptions, which is very limiting, and often false.

It's a very difficult thing to be exposed to the new



Lange: and strange worlds that you know nothing about, and find your way. That's a big job. It's hard, without relying on past performances and finding your own little rut, which comforts you. It's a hard thing to be lost.

Riess: And so you watch and wait...

Lange: You force yourself to watch and wait. You accept all the discomfort and the disharmony. Being out of your depth is a very uncomfortable thing. In travel, for instance, you force yourself onto strange streets, among strangers. It may be very hot. It may be painfully cold. It may be sandy and windy and you say, "What am I doing here? What drives me to do this hard thing?" You ask yourself that question. You could be so comfortable, doing other things, somewhere else. You know?

Riess: You didn't feel out of your element for long when you were doing the Farm Security Administration photography, did you?

Lange: Sometimes I did. Oh, the end of the day was a great relief, always. "That's behind me." But at the moment when you're thoroughly involved, when you're doing it, it's the greatest real satisfaction.

Riess: At the moment of photographing, not the moment of developing?

Lange: Never then. But at the moment when you say, "I think maybe...I think that was all right...maybe that will be it." And you know when you're working fairly well. You have a stretch. But as I say, every day as it passes you say, after it's done



Lange: "It's over. I did the best I could. I didn't do very well but I did the best I could...There's nothing on the film. I'm sure there's nothing on it, nothing worth recording..." What I'm trying to say is, photography for the people who play around with it is very exhilarating and a lot of fun. If you take it seriously, it's very difficult. There's no end to the difficulties.

#### Office of War Information

Riess: What work did you do for the Office of War Information?

Lange: It was during the war, and I photographed minority groups within the United States for use overseas in the magazine the OWI published, called, I think, America. I'm not sure of the name, but at any rate it had one of those large formats.

Riess: Circulated to make them understand us.

Lange: Yes, and when I worked on the Italian-Americans it went to Italy and when I worked on the Spanish-Americans it went to Spain. French-Americans, and so on. This project was transferred to the State Department from the War Information Department during the last half-year of the war.

Also in 1945 I photographed the drawing up of the Charter





Lange: of the United Nations under the Office of War Information. And it was at not quite the end of that that I was stopped for years. I had no business to do it, I knew it, but I did it anyway. That finished me physically. During wartime my work was very difficult because I had to get clearances for everything I did from the army and they were very difficult to get.

Riess: The war offices wouldn't smooth it all out ahead of time.

Lange: The couldn't. It all had to be done locally, from the Presidio. And, for instance, when I was working on Italian-Americans I couldn't photograph the locale from the top of Telegraph Hill. I couldn't describe it geographically without having a soldier with me and bringing the negatives and the proofs back to the Presidio for them to check on. I couldn't photograph from the roof of a building or out a window because of all the extra war restrictions that there were. It was difficult and laborious. If you're working for a private agency like working for a magazine on an assignment and they tell you that you can't do this and you can't do that, you do it, generally. I don't mean you photograph people whom you shouldn't, but you jump hurdles and take chances. Working for the government you couldn't, and so it took an awfully long time.

Riess: With the censorship at this low level.

Lange: They had their orders, you see, but oh my! Especially that



Lange: Telegraph Hill thing, I remember how hard they made that.

And then there were things like this: in photographing Italian-Americans here was the shopping and food and chickens and bolognas and macaroni and fruit and all this life, but we had to minimize that because they didn't want the photograph to look as though during the war we had a surfeit and plenty to go to people who were suffering the ravages of war. That seemed like, oh, the big American bragging. See how difficult this was?

Riess: It was propaganda work.

Lange: It was propaganda, but the line, in the hands of conscientious people, is a fine line. Everything is propaganda for what you believe in, actually, isn't it? Yes, it is. I don't see that it could be otherwise. The harder and the more deeply you believe in anything, the more in a sense you're a propagandist. Conviction, propaganda, faith. I don't know, I never have been able to come to the conclusion that that's a bad word. I feel the same way about that word as I feel about the word "politician." I rebel when I hear a politician described as a base and ignoble person. I know what they mean, all right, but I think it's a misuse of that word. We need that word. Publicist is not the word, public servant is not the word. We need the word in the language. And we need the word propaganda. It isn't advertising, certainly. But at any rate, that's what



Lange: the Office of War Information work was.

Riess: Did you have to send your films in to the government, or did you develop them and edit them first?

Lange: It depended upon how fast they had to be delivered. They permitted me to develop the negatives and make pilot prints whenever possible. It wasn't always possible. But the negatives had to go to them finally. I have none of that work. They went in documented envelopes, with typed explanatory captions and individual captions. There was just lots of paper work that went with it.

Riess: Had you assistance in gathering this information?

Lange: No, I never had that in OWI. Sometimes they permitted me to hire someone who would carry the cameras because there were distances, often. And that could go on my expense account.

Riess: How about getting signed releases and names and so on. Was this necessary in doing government work?

Lange: I never have paid any attention to it. I always carried them with me, for years and years, and never used them.

Riess: In the event the person photographed wanted some reassurance, you had them.

Lange: In that event and also in the event that I was questioned. It was further fortification, besides letters. But it's like working under suspicion and you have to have the confidence of the people you're working amongst. If it depends upon authenti-



Lange: cation and if it depends upon clearances and so on, it doesn't work. I don't know why that is, but it is so.

Now, working for a magazine, there are times when they have to have the clearance in their files, to protect them. What I did a few times--not many--was retrace my own steps afterwards. I got into some pretty funny situations in Oakland when I was working on the "Public Defender" for Life magazine [1955]. I had to go into one dive that I'll never forget, in the colored quarter of Oakland, looking for a man who is the person I photographed called "the witness" and I had to find him. I found him all right. I had two policemen with me. And he was just charming about it. We rode around Oakland in a police-wagon while I explained to him just what this was about. That would have made an interesting tape, me explaining to this big, black homosexual why I wanted his picture, and his responses. It finally came round that if it was for the general welfare, he was all for the general welfare. [Laughter] Oh my, that was wonderful.

Riess: What were you going to do on the Guggenheim Fellowship you were awarded in 1941?

Lange: I was going to do three co-operative religious communities, but that was interrupted by the war. I had to go to work for OWI and I never got finished and I was never able to take it up again. By the time I got through working for the OWI I came out in a





Lange: different place. The war was over and I didn't want to go back into photographing those things. So many changes were on us, and such rapid changes in American life that that was like going back into photographing something that was a relic.

Riess: Had these cooperative religious communities held together throughout the war?

Lange: Yes.

Riess: What were they?

Lange: There was the Shaker community, which was disintegrating. There was the Amana society and the Hutterite society. The Hutterites are in South Dakota and the Amanas are in Iowa. The Amana society is a very prosperous community, seven villages. And the Hutterites are very prosperous, but very much more rigid. Very stark and bleak and very demanding of their people. They really kept them in bondage. And then I did the Amish too, in Weatherford, Oklahoma and Arthur, Illinois.

Riess: The Shakers are dying out by not reproducing.

Lange: Yes, that is now pretty well gone. They do such marvelous furniture, really beautiful in some ways. The Amana people make good furniture. But they permitted a couple of people to come in and redesign it for them for the market. So they use very fine craftsmanship and very fine wood but it gets now to have a kind of a touch to it that obliterates what it was originally. They are enterprising. They've gone into mechanical manufacturing.



Lange: They do the Amana freezer, and it's a good freezer. Whatever they do is substantial.

#### War Relocation Authority

Riess: What was your approach when you photographed for the War Relocation Authority, the relocation of one family from start to finish?

Lange: Not any one family. What I photographed was the procedure, the process of processing. I photographed the normal life insofar as I could, in three parts of California. That was possible because this performance went over quite a period of time. The San Francisco people were moved early. As soon as War Relocation was established I started. I don't at all remember now how it came about that I did this. Who got me into it? It was through someone that I'd worked for in government before, but I don't remember that.

Riess: Had Stryker something to do with it?

Lange: Well, it could be that he had a connection. It could be that he was still administering in Farm Security and that some of his photographers did a little on it. They'd be apt to be photographing the relocation if they were in existence in 1942.



Riess: FSA, OWI, and WRA were all in existence at least until 1945, and OWI and WRA began in 1942, and so they must have overlapped.

Lange: Yes, I worked for the WRA, under Dr. Milton Eisenhower, who was here for part of that time [March-June 1942]. I don't remember the name of the next administrator--he didn't last long--and then there was Dillon S. Myer who was able to see it through [to June 1946], and encompass it. It was very difficult.

Riess: The headquarters was here in San Francisco?

Lange: Yes. Anyway, I photographed all over this part of California. I didn't photograph in southern California. They had people who had been news people doing it there. Clem Albers. I photographed, for instance, the Japanese quarter of San Francisco, the businesses as they were operating, and the people as they were going to their YWCAs and YMCAs and churches and in their Nisei headquarters, all the baffled, bewildered people, whose own people took it on themselves to describe it to them, to explain it to them.

When the business of their having shots and inoculations came, again their own people took it over. They refused army doctors. Their own doctors did it. Everything that was possible that they could do themselves, they did--asked the minimum, took huge sacrifices, made practically no demands. This was very unusual, almost unbelievable, and this I photographed, the long lines on the streets waiting, for instance, for



Lange: the inoculations, down Post Street and around the corner, little, dark people.

And then I photographed when they all were gathered together at the assembly centers--the actual, practical, arrangements that had to be made. Oceans of desks and oceans of people with papers were interviewing heads of families, all the questions on their relatives and so on. It was all under the army, though it wasn't army people who were doing it, but social workers of all kinds who were called in. Arrangements had to be made for each family, either for the disposal of their goods or for storage.

Amongst these you would see those who you wouldn't know were Japanese--one-sixty-fourth blood!

Riess: Were these people with one-sixty-fourth Japanese blood voluntarily going, or had they been herded in?

Lange: No, they came under the proclamation. All these proclamations, all over town, on the telephone poles. I have some of them--big proclamations telling the people where to go, announcing the fact. And then when the day of removal came they all had to be at a certain place. Part of the people in San Francisco had to be at Van Ness Avenue in one of the great big automobile salesrooms, you know. Many of those were empty at the time and they took them over. These people came, with all their luggage and their best clothes and their children dressed as





Lange: though they were going to an important event. New clothes. That was characteristic. But always off in a little group by themselves were the teenage boys. They were the ones that really hurt me the most, the teenage boys who didn't know what they were. The older people have more of a way of being very dignified in such a situation and not asking questions. But these Americanized boys, they were loud and they were rowdy and they were frightened.

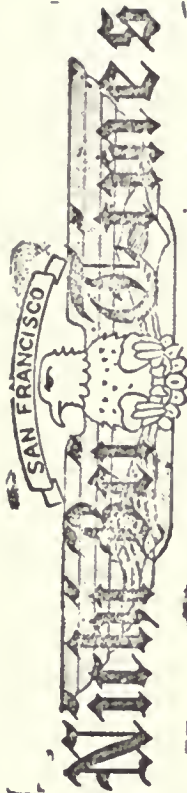
Then I photographed them on the buses, on the trains and I photographed their arrival in the assembly centers, and the first days there as these places settled down to routine life and the beginnings of organization, which they did themselves, in the assembly centers. And then they were moved again, into the interior, and I photographed only one of the interior centers, Manzanar, in Owens Valley. I went there three times, I think.

Riess: When they were settled and organized in the interior centers, were they able to make money somehow? Could they have small factories, or businesses within the camp confines?

Lange: If they did anything like that--and I never saw it--they did it way at the end. And they were not allowed to compete in any way, not even in the making of souvenirs, with the American business.

Riess: I remember seeing pictures of a hospital arrangement and even





Entered as Second Class Matter May 11, 1944, at the Post Office, San Francisco, California, under act of March 3, 1879.

## JAPANESE AMERICAN DAILY

Number 5813

1375 Eddy St., P.O. Box 3098, San Francisco, Calif. 94119. Business: WA. 1-6820, Editorial: WA. 1-6822

Thursday, October 14, 1965

### WRA Photographer Who Aided Relocation Dies

Dorothea Lange, noted San Francisco photographer, who photographed the evacuation for the government and later the WRA camps and relocation program, died here Monday. She was 70.

Noted for her creative and documentary photography, she had just completed a show that spanned her half-century plus career for an exhibition to open in January at Manhattan's Museum of Modern Art.

Her photographs of the issei and nisei were widely used by the WRA to publicize the relocation program in the Mid-west and East to help those wishing to leave wartime centers.



Riess: training nurses. It looked like amazing organization.

Lange: It was, but it was an organization for people who had no activity but the activity that they made for themselves. Static. They made a lot of it, though none of it extended outside the watchtowers. In a few camps they went out to work in agriculture, but there was a lot of hostility, and many uncomfortable questions were raised. They had been told that it would be possible, that they would be able to earn money, but it didn't go very well.

What really brought all round was the "Go for Broke Overseas" Niseis that made the war record, Hawaiians. That really was something. I photographed them when they came back, too. Some of them came to our house--they were great fellows--brought there by people, Japanese-Americans, whom I had met during this transaction. I have friends among them, quite close friends, who stem from those days.

Riess: Where are the Japanese evacuation pictures?

Lange: They were impounded during the war. Army permission was necessary for their release. They had wanted a record, but not a public record, and they were not mine. I was under bond. I had to sign when I was finished, under oath, before a notary.\*

---

\*WRA negatives are in the National Archives, Washington, D.C. I am told the "impounded" negatives also are there and are so classified. P.S.T.



Riess: They were so incriminating?

Lange: Some of them were. Not all of them.

Riess: Ansel Adams has done a book, Born Free and Equal,\* of pictures of Manzanar, which says it was authorized by the War Relocation Authority.

Lange: They didn't authorize it, they okayed it.

Riess: His book says that the whole thing was justifiable.

Lange: It was shameful. That's Ansel. He doesn't have much sense about these things. He was one of those at the beginning of the war who said--they'd had Japanese in their home always as house help and that was characteristic of his household--he said he saw the point. "You never get to know them," and all this. He gave the regular line, you know, but he wasn't vicious about it. He's ignorant on these matters. He isn't acutely aware of social change.

Riess: As a result I think it made his book uninteresting.

Lange: It was far for him to go, far. He felt pretty proud of himself for being such a liberal [laughter] on that book. It wasn't a success. The man who underwrote it, Tom Maloney, and put it out, put it out not as Ansel wanted it, not good enough reproductions and not good enough style. Maloney had promised to really produce it and take care of its marketing, which he

---

\* Born Free and Equal by Ansel Adams - photographs of the loyal Japanese-Americans at Manzanar Relocation Center, Inyo County, California. New York, U. S. Camera: 1944. Authorized by the War Relocation Authority.





Lange: didn't do, so this has been a sore point with Ansel. But it was the only thing of its kind that he's ever tried to do and he's pretty proud of himself on that one. He doesn't know how far short it is, not yet.

Riess: He had a theory of the part the environment played--the presence of great mountains with all their permanence and serenity--in helping to make the relocation as easy as possible.

Lange: Well, they had the meanest dust storms there and not a blade of grass. And the springs are so cruel; when those people arrived there they couldn't keep the tarpaper on the shacks. Oh, my. There were some pretty terrible chapters of that history.

I was employed a year and a half to do that, and it was very, very difficult. I had a lot of trouble, too, with the army. I had a man following me all the time.

Riess: Even though you were a government employee.

Lange: Well, the War Relocation Authority themselves were out of sympathy with the army in some respects at that time.

The whole thing, the feelings and tempers and people's attitudes, were very complex and very heated at that time. People certainly lost their heads, including our at that time attorney-general, Earl Warren, and it was a black thing on his record when he lost his head and made some very rash statements, which have never really caught up with him but



Lange: of which I'm sure he's aware.\*

Now that that's so long ago and past now it is heartening--and I don't know just what it proves, but it proves something to me, such as "truth will out." [Laughter] American people generally, I think, are willing to concede we made a hell of a mistake. And I see it in print, over and over again, from unexpected sources. In the Congressional Record it comes up every once in a while, as an example of what happens to us if we lose our heads. It's that example they point to. I think it's rather encouraging, as a sign of our mental health, that we admit a mistake. What was, of course, horrifying, was to do this thing completely on the basis of what blood may be coursing through a person's veins, nothing else. Nothing to do with your affiliations or friendships or associations. Just blood.

There was undoubtedly much that was wrong and unjust about the imprisonment at Tule Lake, but those camps represented different groups. The day after Pearl Harbor they swiftly moved into all Japanese communities and scooped up those who could possibly be under suspicion, heads of organizations, and that was justifiable under the circumstances. But where there's

---

\* Testimony by Earl Warren, Attorney General of California, at hearing before House Select Committee investigation national defense migration, 77 Congress, 2 session, pursuant to H.Res. 113 ... Part 29, pages 10973-11023 .



Lange: no suspicion, that's different.

I knew a young Japanese-American in San Francisco, a very prominent and popular young man, still is. He was a graduate of UC, one of these enthusiastic and loyal alumni. My, he'll never get over the experience that he had, saves all his notebooks, keeps in touch with his professors. It just meant a lot to him. During this period I was on the street with him. He was taking me somewhere, and we met an old high-school teacher of his. He greeted her and they stopped and spoke, and I remember seeing a look go over her face and she said, "Oh, but not you, Dave, they don't mean you, Dave!" She didn't realize that he was going too. To that degree people lost their heads entirely. I think of that "Not you, Dave" many times. I had a postcard from him today from Geneva where he and his wife are at a conference for youth in democracy. He's a delegate. His life--he lost a child in the camp at Topaz, from exposure--his life is dedicated to the memory of that child. But absolutely no resentment, none. Dave will not permit it. Where is that resentment? Is it non-existent? I don't know. I don't understand it, which is another way of saying that I don't understand those people.

I didn't get to Tule Lake, where the obstreperous ones were. I wanted to go there. They were all kinds and they



Lange: had them in a real regime but I was never sent there or permitted to go. They had riots, you see.

It seems long ago and now...I was in the Buddhist church the other day and I found myself for the first time since those years, excepting when I was in Tokyo, in my own country surrounded by these little black heads in rows and rows. (The woman who had died, whose funeral I was attending, I had met in Japan. She was killed here.) But it brought it all back to me. And I had to do the things that were in the service too, I had to go through the rituals. It brought how long ago that seems and how they have by some use of some kind of a principle smoothed this and practically obliterated it, practically.

I photographed aging women in Manzanar who were casting their first vote. They had a campaign for camp managers and camp officers, and here were these women casting their first vote with the greatest seriousness. They had classes for voting, classes for those who couldn't speak English. They had many, many classes. There was much talent in those camps, too, people who were competent to teach and to do.





Taking and Printing a Picture

Riess: Do you think there is a point to questioning you about cameras and filters and lights and papers and technical subjects?

Lange: There must be some reason for the question because you get it all the time. I myself, when I meet a photographer, have some curiosity about what equipment he would use by preference. That isn't to say that he uses that camera always, because there are other reasons for using small cameras or using only big cameras. I find that my mind runs to about three different types of instrument and if I can go equipped to work--if it's practical--I would take three basic cameras. I'm not a one-camera person. And those three would be a view camera, a 4x5; if I could manage it, I would make it an 8x10. [End of Interview Session]

Riess: You said last week that ideally you would take three cameras with you if you went on an assignment.

Lange: I'm apt to answer you one thing today and answer you differently tomorrow, because I get very critical of a camera. This morning I destroyed ten days' work, ten days of really working--not what some people would call work, and I'm always



Lange: amazed at what some people can do physically--I've been at it for ten days and I've had a printer in for three of those days when we worked all day and I used much material, and this morning I destroyed it because I failed. It's washed up and what I wanted to do I know I'm not going to be able to do. That's a disappointment to me. It's the fourth episode of the Asian thing, which I felt I really needed, and as I said I've worked at it day and night and I haven't been able to get it out of my mind to put this together. If I had been able to put it together out of materials I had, I would have done something quite unlike anything I've done before, which I very much would like to have done.

Since, however, I don't have to meet an assignment-- I would deliver it on assignment, and no one would know that I had failed--I destroyed it. I am at the moment very critical of one of the cameras that is in a way responsible. It could be me, but it could be that that camera will not do the thing that I was looking for in those negatives. There's a sharpness of edge that isn't in them. They're too mushy.

Riess: Which section was this?

Lange: Oh, I don't even want to talk about it. I have to forget that one. It was hard to do that this morning. But when you asked me about cameras--we vary, we shift. I would take with me a 4x5 long bellows extension Graflex on any trip, provided



Lange: I had the strength and heft to manage it because it's about as awkward a camera as can be, heavy and bulky and awkward. It curtails your freedom. The other extreme is the 35 millimeter which, if you are going to use it, I believe that you should never use anything else. I think you have to say to yourself, "I am a 35 millimeter person and there I stay," because it doesn't seem to work to use it otherwise. It is then never your base camera and it becomes your fill-in. You begin to fill-in and the structural line of the job is weakened. Now that probably doesn't make much sense to you, but what the 35 millimeter can deliver is almost always within a certain stylistic frame. You accept that and there's plenty you can do within it.

Riess: This means adding wide-angle and telephoto lenses and so on.

Lange: Yes. All the things that go with it, the full range of accessories. But you say to yourself, "For five years I will use it and I won't use anything else." But to have it in the car with you "just in case" or to have it around your neck while you're using another camera, and go from one to another, becomes a matter of adapting your style to too many different kinds of things. It jumbles you. It rocks you-- which means that you're always looking for the perfect camera.

Today I've been going through that. What am I going



Lange: to do when I want to go to Egypt? What am I going to take? I could take just that Graflex, which would be plenty, and nothing else. I would be cutting myself off from a lot of things. But the prospect of taking the Graflex and the 35 does not sit right with me. I've tried that and I know it's no good, just as I know it's no good to work in color and black and white together. But how many do it! I don't see how they do that; that's beyond me; I've done it, but I've done it on a job. You don't work well that way. You're just filling requirements.

Riess: I understand you don't often develop your own prints.

Lange: No, but as I've said, I have print sense. [See p. 56] I'll give you an example. This is a cover of an issue of Aperture that's just come out; this is the advance copy of something I just finished; the exhibit is in San Francisco now. Now here was a beautiful print [looking at cover of "Death of a Valley, Aperture 8:3, 1960]. I'm not kicking at the engraver. But it hurts me when I see this cover picture, knowing what was in that print, because my print from which he made this engraving was three steps down in value from this, much darker. All these grasses [the grassy path upon which the couple walk] are printed through in mine, so that they are not white areas here, but they lead on through. Well, you see, that fellow got into trouble when he made that engraving. And if you look





Lange: closely [at mountain horizon line] what he had to do is the unspeakable thing of drawing a line here because he had not printed it to get this. All this in my print has values; therefore he hadn't made the separation. And look at this [the field beyond]--it was all printed through with little things that shimmer, all through here this grass just shimmers... Oh, it carries all right, most people wouldn't mind.

Riess: I've noticed in the very familiar FSA picture you took of the migrant mother with her children that sometimes a white spot glares from her forehead and arm, other times not, but it differs to some degree in each reproduction of it.

Lange: That's the Library of Congress. They own the negative and they don't let the negative out and when people ask for it they make the prints. Oh, what dreadful prints they make. I've made them guide prints of it, asking--because I don't have any control of it--that they follow the guide print. Well, they'll try, and then they lose the guide print. That's just an example. The rest of these [thumbing through the book]--this should have been darker, this was originally almost black, that's as good as the original.

Riess: Do you ever like the engraver's production better?

Lange: Yes...some newspaper prints. I'm surprised at how much a different kind of a print will change a thing, sometimes



Lange: beyond what your original intention was. It's interesting to see.

Riess: How permanent is a negative?

Lange: Well, there is a difference of opinion. Color films are not permanent. Time fades them. Many people don't realize that, and think they have a permanent record. There was a period where the film was coated on a different base. They found that that was impermanent because it dried out and the acetate base cracked, besides being highly inflammable. So that's been abandoned.

If everything is perfectly made before you get it, and then perfectly processed when you get it, and then stored right when you're through with it, in the right kind of containers, which is important too, and then put into the right kind of vault, which is air-conditioned and so on, which of course no one's [negatives are] worth...Ansel Adams, I think, keeps his work in a safe-deposit vault in a bank. Now he's going to move to Carmel. It's the most fascinating thing. Here Ansel is going to move to Carmel and some corporation is building for him an establishment which will be his permanent home, the home of his work, galleries, work-rooms, vaults for storage, institutionalizing his work and his output. And this is all to cost a hundred thousand dollars.



Lange:           And then--I was thinking of it yesterday--there's another man, my friend John Collier, who has as much to give photographically as Ansel, in an utterly different way, only he looks entirely in the other direction. He is a poverty-stricken man. I don't mean spiritually poor, by any means. But such a thing could never happen to John. He has been this way all his life. If a tire gives out on his car, it's a calamity. And maybe it takes a month until things get settled again. But Ansel is exactly the opposite, has always been able to attract, to magnetize, money and people with money. And he is so oriented. Now it's a curious thing.

Riess: Yes, and my image of Ansel is of a bearded man in an old station wagon, going into the mountains.

Lange: That's not the right picture. But isn't it an interesting thing to watch people's careers and see how they are, what they are, and how they always attract, somehow or other, the same combinations of circumstances, only sometimes more intensively in some periods than in others. But so much clusters around a career which emanates from the depths of the person, of which they may be entirely unaware. Now I'm sure, I swear, that Ansel doesn't know that he goes where the money is. Just like a homing pigeon. How does he do it?



Riess: Was that photograph cropped? ["Texas," can be seen on p. 83 of American Society of Magazine Photographers Annual 1957.]

Lange: No, that's full. Some people don't permit themselves to crop, you know. They consider it an admission of failure.

Riess: Yes, I would think that would be one of the disciplines that you would impose on yourself. Yet, why?

Lange: Oh, there's no accepted code of excellence. That's something that people like to talk about. There is a purist group that insists that one conceive of the thing in its entirety at the moment and nothing less than that is permissible. And then there is a group like Eisenstaedt, for whom the great discovery of photography came on the day when he found out that you could take an infinitesimally little piece of a negative and magnify an eyelash or an eye or the hairs on the back of the hand, which to him was an immense discovery and, I think, a valid one. Some people never discover the possibilities of exposing to more than normal view something that you would otherwise not see.

In my Asian group I'm repeating some of the same photographs or parts of the same one, in this whole opus that I'm doing, but I'm using them in different ways. Admittedly it's the same negative, showing what you can do with the same material. Different applications.

Riess: It's like the motion picture idea.





Lange: Why not do that, when the medium permits it? I think it should be explored to the limit, though I don't know what the limit of that method is.

So, you can crop, often knowing when you do a thing that you're going to have to crop because there'd be confusions in it, awkward portions, or a lamppost would be sticking out though you can't at the moment of photographing change point of view. You know you're going to have to crop. Most cropping is for the purpose of simplification, isolation from environmental factors that contribute nothing to it. Sometimes it very much changes the picture. In fact, that lower head, that Arkansas fellow there [picture on wall], in one series that I made, I left the whole street in behind him because it was called for in the context of that group of pictures.

Riess: I'm always stopped in a book of FSA photographs by pictures of men or women against a background of the sky, thinking that they are by you. And usually they are.

Lange: Sometimes I come across photographs that I don't know if I made. I look and I see that I made them, but I can't recall it, or any of the circumstances.

Riess: Yes, and I don't really remember very many pictures that you have taken that include both head and feet.

Lange: I'm doing them now. You find yourself changing. I've just



Lange: finished one section of my Asian thing, and everything it it is absolutely direct. There isn't an oblique thing in it. And then I found myself doing another section in which there isn't a single direct thing. It all goes this way and that way. I didn't know I was doing that, but then I saw that I had done it.

Riess: And when you were taking the pictures?

Lange: I must have felt that way about it at the time because I have the pictures.

#### Captioning and Exhibiting

Riess: Do you feel the need for caption comment to your pictures?

Have you ever really felt that it was more than an extra?

Lange: It depends on the nature of the job. For myself there's hardly anything that I've done that couldn't be enhanced and fortified by the right kind of comment. In fact, with some of my pictures that are used the most, I constantly am putting into the envelope with that negative, or if I don't have the negative, with the prints, things that pertain to it, directly or indirectly, things that happen historically that I know will increase the value of the picture to others that I may have made twenty years ago.

Riess: And these additions might change with the years.

Lange: Yes. Time magazine this week had a piece commemorating the twentieth anniversary of the evacuation of the Japanese-Americans in which they spoke of it being on our national



Lange: conscience, and quoting some of the people whose statements I so well remember at the time, showing them in the light of history as having been gravely mistaken. Such material is very interesting to put along with what you did at the time. I collect every snatch that I can on migratory labor, which is very much in the news now, everywhere, and put it with the things that I made twenty or twenty-five years ago, which I might have made yesterday. This is a mighty interesting thing. Not many things don't change in twenty years, not many things. This collapsed effort of unionization, you see, too.

All photographs--not only those that are so-called "documentary," and every photograph really is documentary and belongs in some place, has a place in history--can be fortified by words. I don't mean that they should have poetic captions. Any photographer looking out at the world he lives in does many things that will be valuable, even the commercial boys down on Shattuck Avenue, the fellows who do the wedding and school pictures. That's all documentary material of greatest interest, in so many ways:

Riess: Sometimes a photographer will say, in lieu of caption, "These photographs speak for themselves." The implication seems to be that he is asking more of the person viewing the photograph, asking that he give more of himself.



Lange: Well, I don't like the kind of written material that tells a person what to look for, or that explains the photograph. I like the kind of material that gives more background, that fortifies it without directing the person's mind. It just gives him more with which to look at the picture. A caption such as "Winter in New England" only tells you that it's New England. The picture should indicate that it's winter. That caption shouldn't be necessary. But you could say: "This part of the country is, contrary to the rest of the country, losing its population." You could say: "People are leaving this part of the United States which was really the cradle of democratic principles bred there in the very early days of our country." Such things could give you a different look into winter in New England. They need not be your own ideas. They could be things which as you go along you collect and put in your file. This is speaking ideally. And when you leave that file, you leave a body of work there which is not all original but it would have foundations to it. I would like to do that, but of course I can't because I don't have time to do anything but a kind of a haphazard thing. But I can conceive of a photographic file--by an artist, not by a photo-historian--where words were used in that way.

Now my Asian things, with the title "Remembrance of Asia,"





Lange: are all of what I got in Asia, nothing that is done country by country like a travelogue. It is things that have come to my mind about Asia, based on what I saw there, which recall it to me. It is the thing by itself, when I remember it. And I have that general title which I want to use for it. It will be in five or six episodes, or sections. One of them is a letter that I wrote to my older son and his wife from the train. It was an all-day train trip and I wrote this letter off and on, all day. The third section in "Remembrance of Asia" is this letter which brings it back to me very vividly, and I didn't think anything very much of it excepting they took it up and used it so much, and Dan insisted that I try to do this. I hadn't deliberately illustrated that letter, but I have eight things that I'm using in connection with it. I couldn't illustrate the letter because I couldn't photograph from that train. The windows were dirty and it was an impossibility. But there are things [photographs] that go with it, though there will be no other words but the letter.

And there's another section which is eyes of Asian children, just eyes, nothing else. They won't need any words. But my first section will need a few. I don't know just where they're going to come from, but I have time.

Then I'm going to do a section on villagers, all kinds of villagers. You hear a lot about villagers, not particularly



Lange: localized, and they don't have to be, they should be so heavily Asian that it doesn't make any difference; the section would be on the village as a characteristic of Asian life. I'd want it understood by Americans, and there there would have to be some words.

Riess: You have said that you felt now you could, if able, do your best work. How, then, would you now do an article like the Life picture-story on the Irish? [March 21, 1955]

Lange: Well, what happened with that was that I just came back with a big harvest, and I had an idea how I would like to have done it, but what you do generally is just come back with a big harvest of pictures and they are dumped on a desk in the office and then the make-up man and the art layout man and the editor and the picture-editor will hash out what--they like this and they like that and they like this and they like that--and then the layout man goes off in a huddle and tries to make some kind of a layout which has sense.

Riess: Then it's quite out of one's control?

Lange: Well, it isn't entirely out of your control because if they did something that was false you'd say, "No, you can't do that." Sometimes they do it anyway, but I mean to say that it's just a different use of the same material.

Something like that takes--they sent a man over to Ireland to get all those names, which I didn't get. Yes, they



Lange: sent both a man and a girl, the two of them, over to Ireland, and they traipsed all over those two counties with the pictures to identify the people. Life magazine does very fantastic things. But I wanted to make the article entirely a picture of Ireland in the rain, every one of them in the rain. I thought it was well-done, though, from their point of view. They didn't come out with anything that was bad.

Riess: How did you get into the work with Steichen on the "Family of Man" exhibition? Did you move to New York for it?

Lange: Let me see when I first heard of it. I'd have to dredge that out. It was maybe 1951 that it started. And when did it finally go up? 1955? I remember that I went east in September of 1952 to work with Steichen on a show I was going to have at the Museum of Modern Art and when I got there he was so engrossed with the "Family of Man" that he forgot all about what I came for and [laughter] a couple of years ago he sat down and gave me hell for not having consulted him on that show. He said to me, "You know, I've been wanting to tell you this for years. I never could quite understand what you did when you came east. You never consulted me on that show." And you know he really believed that, when what he did was to absolutely turn me down. I couldn't get his attention. He went to Europe in the middle of the time that I was there in order to make speeches all over Europe to corral material for the "Family of Man." He made that



Lange: trip twice to Europe and, as an example of how oddly things go, there's a persuasive man who can go anywhere and command attention, and he got no response at all. Every one was very glad to gather together and listen to what he wanted and his description--and he can certainly engender interest and excitement--but the net result was zero. Not zero, nothing is zero, but certainly not enough to justify what he put into it.

Riess: So how did he get the quantities of material together?

Lange: Well, it was a dredging process. It was digging in to get them, not making a big public call for them. They had to be found. Many of the pictures in that show I had a hand in collecting.

Riess: By going to Europe?

Lange: No, no, no. I just found them, and got them. Wrote to where they were or this or that, just the way you do, not any concerted effort. But every idea I had I used. I sent him in a lot of things from newspapers and my own clippings, things that I remember I had seen. And a good deal came out of that. One thing would lead to another, you see. Then he hired Wayne Miller to go through magazine files. And it was a very confusing and complicated process, not much rhyme or reason to it. He [Steichen] came out here twice and twice I collected under one roof all the photographers that I knew or had heard of, not just the few.





Lange: There was a time when it looked as though there wasn't going to be any show. It looked as though he was going to have to hire people to go out and make pictures. There were times when it looked like one great big failure.

One day, in fact, he said to me in New York, "I know now that I can now proceed. I know that I am going to have a show. I have enough up on the wall upstairs," in a little room which was under lock and key, "I have enough up there so that I'm now confident." And he gave me the key and I went up to look--there was a little room tucked up on the top floor of the museum and it was a kind of little storeroom--and I went in there and I looked and my heart fell, because I didn't see it. And I was sure that he was whistling in the dark.

Riess: This was before things were enlarged and arranged?

Lange: Oh, yes. Oh, that only came at the very end, the last two weeks. Some of the prints on the wall at the opening of the Family of Man were--you put your hand on them and the paste would squeeze out. [Laughter] They had just been done that afternoon. That's his method. He worked up to a terrific climax where everybody doesn't sleep for three or four days and they work day and night and they live on black coffee and he gets it done. But on the afternoon of the day when the show was opening that night they were still making prints, and many of the prints were wretched. Very poor as prints. But Steichen took it in his



Lange: stride and that's the way it came out.

Riess: He didn't try to revise and improve it after the opening?

Lange: No, no, he's no fellow to dither around with things. I might have. I might have kept on working. He has the great quality of accepting imperfection as being part of a thing. Nothing need be perfect. It isn't called for, and maybe not even desirable. I'm worried by imperfection; I can't let go until it's as good as I know it can be under the circumstances. He lets go short of that point because his spiritual drive encompasses it, confidence that sometimes a good thing is good almost because it's so bad and yet good in spite of it, he knows that.

Now I don't think that the new show, the big show that the Urban League was going to do, is ever going to come off. It's of the same scope and it's on race relations. I don't think it's ever going to happen.

Riess: Is Steichen in charge of that show too?

Lange: Well, they had a lot of money and they persuaded him. And they've gone part way, selected most of the pictures and paid for them. But I don't think it's going to happen, and the reason is that I think things are happening too fast in race relations. It's no time to do that one, as a comprehensive, overall thing.

Riess: It's the time to be taking the pictures.

Lange: Yes, but not making the show.



Observations and Hopes for the Future

Lange: I may be in Egypt next year, for eight months. Paul is going to Egypt and so I'll be photographing in Africa if I photograph. I'm not, myself, entirely willing to go, not now. I don't really feel like going into a continent like that continent and trying to work there. It's staggering to me. Oh, I might do a couple of assignments there, but I'd much rather work in my own country.

Riess: There are many projects you want to finish, aren't there?

Lange: Oh, yes, and I've got to try to get them mostly done before I go. That's this year, this winter. But it looks as though it's going to be Alexandria in the spring.

In the last couple of years I've been working on a rather different level. My illness had something to do with it, and I now feel that



Lange: I have a right, that it's more important that I now say how I feel about something than it ever was before. I have always been sort of a channel for other people. But I am aware of when the change happened, and it was sharp. It is the difference between being a conscious and an unconscious artist. I've denied the role of artist. It embarrassed me, and I didn't know what they were talking about. And as far as the argument about whether photography is or is not an art, I've thought that it was a useless and a stupid argument. Anyone who spent their time and energy getting involved in this, well, they gave themselves away. I always thought that what people called "art" was a by-product, something that happens, a "plus-something" that happens when your work is done, if it's done well enough, and intensely enough, you know. I still think that's true. But there comes a time when you have a right to ask someone to stop and look at something because this is what you think is important, you think is important. Do you see? If someone says, "I suppose you're an artist?" I will say, "I may be." I'll say that, where five years ago I would have said, "No."

Riess: How about putting it in terms of more or less creative?

Lange: Creative? I don't know what it means. I think we are creative in every blessed thing we do, all of us. We may create havoc! [Laughter] Oh, I may use the word loosely sometimes. Like Charlie Eames is a creative fellow because he can twist a piece of paper into something that no one else can twist it into,





Lange: you know. Creative is a kind of a fancy word; it doesn't really plumb the depths of the real performance, the performance of a genuine artist. He's come to the place where he Is. I go over some of the things that I have done in this Sutter Street period and I see plainly that I'm exactly the same person, doing the same things in different forms, saying the same things. It's amusing sometimes to me to look at my own early endeavors and, "There she is, there she is again!" It's built-in. Some things are built in.

Riess: Then what are you adding in your recent work?

Lange: Perspective, for one thing. And the whole matter is now unified. I know now what I can speak about best because I have been there. I've been through the wind-tunnel. [Laughter]

Although I suppose there are a lot of people who say this. I remember one shocking thing that happened to me with a painter who showed us all the pot-boilers, and apologized for them, and then he said, "Now I'm going to show you my real work." And it was just the same. We deceive ourselves. But I'm quite sure as far as I'm concerned that in this respect I'm not deceiving myself. And it's not that I'm following along with what people tell me. I know where I am all right and where I am still failing. Same old failures, too, same ones. But it's a kind of an equation, out of which there is a product, and that's unmistakable, and you can't evade it. And the outlines of that product became clearer after in my case never letting go of it.



Lange: Maybe I might have at times. Never really letting go of it. Now I know why. Now I know why. It wasn't just stubbornness.

Of course, as you go along there are different things that are important to you. At the moment I have no thing to answer to, no one to answer to, no one else's eyes and mind to think of, as I'm doing this job that I'm doing, but my own. I don't know whether I said this before to you, but that makes a very much more difficult job, a much more engrossing thing to do, because it reveals not only what you saw but your own purpose, your purpose and not the purpose of the editor or the director of the institute for whom you're working, or to fit in with other things. In fact its usefulness becomes obscure but its purpose doesn't. And that's different. And I think I could now do my best work. Dürer, you know, way back in fourteen hundred and something, said, "I draw from the secrets of my heart." And that's what I have, in the end. That's what it comes to and that's the best. Provided, of course, you've got an educated heart and a sense of some kind of general responsibility. The secret places of the heart are the real mainsprings of one's action.

Riess: It sounds almost as if it is out of your control.

Lange: It's hard to reach it, hard to reach it...Before then you do things which you know will be recognizable and understandable. And you have in your mind the common denominator as a kind of a leveling place, beyond which you can't stray too far or else



Lange: you will be defying or denying these laws of communication that we hear so much about--this effort to make communication a science and to put down prescriptions for it which amount to things that must have an element in them which is understandable to all. Well, that's very important. You have to go to that school. You don't dare deny it, but then, after that--this is my present theory--you come to the place where you say, "It doesn't make any difference" whether many people see what you meant when you chose this little thing, this obscure photograph which has in it some turn that the big, brilliant, much more obvious and much more attractive thing, much more vigorous, with wider appeal, doesn't. You focus on that other. And it leads you to odd places but it's fun. I'm enjoying very much what I'm doing now.

Riess: It doesn't matter to you whether you leave something that people will readily understand.

Lange: It doesn't really matter because you know enough to know that that is true. And actually it's your contribution. And you know it's true, and you know that it will take its place. In short, you're not afraid any more. That's what it amounts to. You're not begging anyone to accept it. That's gone. And you've done your duty on the other side of things. I don't know whether this makes any sense.

Riess: Photographers often talk about their role as one of interpreting the everyday, forcing people to a second, more revealing glance at life, but what you're speaking of is even a step beyond that.



Lange: It's the addition of that certain little thing that only you can do. Now that isn't to say that that makes you a great artist. But it puts you in the company of those who say that if they didn't do it, no one would be saying it right now. Later on, someone else may come. These things have a way of repeating themselves. It's the essential uniqueness that comes out of the inside of your own nature. Now you can't just go out and say, "I'm going to express myself." It's not like that. It's not finding a turn that nobody else has done so far, for the sake of itself. It's not that. It's something that you have to have earned. In your own sight you have to have earned the right. I think that's true. At least, for myself I have to feel I have earned it. I don't ask it of others. There is no one channel. But I'm just speaking of myself at the moment.

Riess: Perhaps you couldn't recognize it if you hadn't earned it.

Lange: Perhaps that's true. That may be the explanation. But I repeat, I could now, I believe, at a time when I have such feeble energies, I could now do my best work, I know.

I cannot do this or that, I say, and how much I would really like to devote myself to really living the kind of life that I know it takes. I only know enough about it to know what it takes. This is either impossible for me, or I am not sufficiently ruthless to do it. I have to do this, that and the





Lange: other. I would disappoint my family very much if I devoted myself to photography. I'd have to step out. And as far as my husband is concerned, he would understand it, but he wouldn't know how to adjust to it, really. You might say, and I say to myself, that it isn't the amount of time it takes. But you know that tomorrow morning you have to see somebody who's coming from Asia, just for an hour, and tomorrow afternoon at five-thirty you have to go to a cocktail party and a dinner in honor of someone--those things you have to do.

But what it takes to pursue my purposes is uninterrupted time, or time that you interrupt when you want to interrupt it. It means living an utterly different way of life, inexplicable to some people. My closest friends will call me in the middle of the morning and say, "Oh, are you busy? I'll just take a minute, but...would you do me a great favor...and, so on and so on." I had thought maybe I would be a little stiffer about it, with myself and with others. But I don't think it's going to be possible. I think that's pretty well decided. I would like to do it. But it would be this kind of thing. And I'm not focusing this entirely on myself, I'm speaking of the difference between the role of the woman as artist and the man. There is a sharp difference, a gulf. The woman's position is immeasurably more complicated. There are not very many first-class woman producers, not many. That is producers of outside



Lange: things. They produce in other ways. Where they can do both, it's a conflict. I would like to try. I would like to have one year. I'd like to take one year, almost ask it of myself, "Could I have one year?" Just one, when I would not have to take into account anything but my own inner demands. Maybe everybody would like that...but I can't.

Riess: It seems like the thing one owes oneself, but very hard to do anything about.

Lange: It's almost impossible. Almost.

. . . . .

You know what today is? Today is the first day of Autumn. Have you felt it? Today it started. The summer ended this afternoon at two o'clock. All of a sudden. The air got still, a different smell, a kind of a funny, brooding quiet. Today it happened. I was out and I was just so aware of it. Can you feel it? And the cracks in my garden are wide. Today's the day.



## INDEX

- Adams, Ansel, 115,190,191,200,201  
 Albers, Clem, 186  
 Albright, Gertrude Partington, 108  
 Amana society, 184  
 AFofL,CIO, and farm workers, 162
- Baldwin, Anita, 126-136,147  
 Baldwin, Baldwin, 135  
 Barrows, Albert, 142  
 Bender, Albert, 112-116  
 Borein, Ed, 103  
 Bremer, Anne, 114  
 Briuere, Martha, 24,25
- Caen, Herb, 119-121  
 California State Relief Administration, 153,159-162  
 Caylor, Arthur, 120  
 Collier, John, 201  
 Communism, 150,151  
 Conrad, Barnaby, 119  
 Co-operative religious communities, 183-185  
 Co-operatives, unemployed exchange, 164-166  
 Cunningham, Imogen, 85,92,107,167
- Davis, Charles H., 45,47-51,55,56  
Death of a Valley, 198,199  
 deMeyer, Baron, 43  
 the Depression, 144  
 Dixon, Constance, 98,125,136  
 Dixon, Daniel, 97,101,102,109,124,136ff-144,147,152  
 Dixon Family (Mordecais), 96,97  
 Dixon, John, 97,101,102,109,136ff-144,147,152  
 Dixon, Leslie, 21,22,109  
 Dixon, Maynard, 93-111,121-143,147,151,152  
 documentary photography, 146-159,204-209  
 Duncan, Charlie, 94,111  
 Duncan, Isadora, 60-63,70,71
- Eames, Charles, 214  
 Edwards, Mary Jeanette, 167  
 801 Montgomery Street studio, 142,144



Eisenhower, Milton, 186  
Eisenstaedt, Alfred, 202

Fallen Leaf Lake, 146-148

Family of Man, 209-212

Farm Security Administration, 167-178

Farm Security Administration, photographic division, 170-178,185,199  
203

540 Sutter Street studio, 88,89

Ford Foundation, 163,176

Foster and Kleiser, 94,111

Frankenstein, Alfred, 120,121

Franklin, Sidney, 88,89

Garth, John, 116,117

Genthe, Arnold, 28-33,35,45,62

Guggenheim Foundation grant, 183

Haas, Mr. and Mrs. Walter A., 116

Hagemeyer, Johan, 107,108

Hague, Frank, 58

Harvey House, 133,134

Haywood, Florence Bates, 66,78-84,89,93

Hill-Tollerton, 85

Hine, Lewis W., 155

Holder, Preston, 167

Hutterite society, 184

Imperial Valley, 160,162,163

Injun Babies, 125

Irish Country People, 208,209

Japanese relocation, 185-194,204,205, Manzanar camp,188-191,194, Tule  
Lake camp, 192-194

Jews, 13-15,18,118,119

Joseph, Sydney, 111

Joseph, Emily, 111

Kanaga, Consuela, 87,88

Kazanjian Studios, 32,33

Kent, Adeline, 142

Kerr, Clark, 164,165

Labaudt, Lucien, 112

Labor, agricultural, 159-164

Landon, John, 65-68,71





Lange, Dorothea: grandmother, 1-3,5,23,52; Aunt Caroline, 4,5; mother, 1-3,5-8,12-15,27,36,52,58,59,67,68; father, 2,71; elementary school, 11-15; high school, 23-27; Barnard, 28; and Jewish people, 13-15,18; lameness, 17-19; teachers, 28-57; comes to San Francisco, 78-86; her Sutter Street studio, 86-93; marriage to Maynard Dixon, 93ff-111,121 ff-143; "documentary photographer," 146-159; government work (see by individual agencies, also), 159-194; photographic techniques, 195-204

Lange, Dorothea, photographer: cameras, 195-198; printing, 198-200, cropping, 202,204; captioning, 204-209 (See also Table of Contents)

Last Ditch, 74

Laurie, Annie, 111

Library of Congress, 173,199

Life Magazine, 155,183,208,209

Lodge, Henry Cabot, 59

Longshore Strike, 1934, 150

Lorenz, Pare, 168

Ludekens, Fred W., 94

Luhan, Mabel Dodge, 136

Maloney, Tom, 190

Marsh and Co., 84-86

Mary Elizabeth Inn, 82-84,86,89

May Day Demonstrations, 1933, 150,154

McCarthy, Senator Joseph, 150-152

Menuhin, Yehudi, 119

migrant mother, 199

migratory labor, 168, 174,175 (also, 159-164)

Miller, Wayne, 210

Museum of Modern Art, 115 (See also Family of Man)

Myer, Dillon S., 186

Newhall, Beaumont, 146

New York Public Library, 150

Neyman, Percy, Ph.D., 45,87

O'Connor, Joe, 89

Office of War Information (OWI), 179-183

Older, Fremont, 111

Outerbridge, Paul, 43

Partridge, Roi, 85,94,107

Partridge, Ron, 147,148

Pfleuger, Timothy, 112

photojournalism, 154-156



Piazzoni, Gottardo, 108-111  
 Pleiades Club, 65-68  
 Poole, Nelson, 112  
Project One, 176  
Public Defender, 183  
  
Remembrance of Asia, 177,195,196,202-204,206-208  
 Resettlement Administration, 168-170,172  
 Riis, Jacob, 155  
 Rivera, Diego, 112,142,143  
 Roosevelt, Theodore, 57,58  
 Russell, Charles Marion, 102,103  
  
 Salinger, Jehanne, 112  
 Salz, Mrs. Ansley, 110  
 Sanderfield, Emily, 64,66,69,70  
 San Francisco bohemia, 105-117  
 San Francisco Japanese community (See Japanese relocation)  
 San Francisco Jewish community, 18,19,118,119  
 San Francisco myths, and mythmaking, 98-100,104,118,119  
 Sarony, Napoleon, 48  
 Schnier, Jacques, 142  
 728 Montgomery Street studio, 141,142  
 Shakers, 184  
 Shakespeare, William, performances of his work, 71,72  
 Spencer-Beatty, 33-35  
 Stackpole, Ralph, 108-111  
 Steichen, Edward, 51,209-212  
 Stein, Gertrude, 116  
 Sterling, George, 111  
 Stern, Isaac, 119  
 Stokowski, Leopold, 22,23  
 Strand, Paul, 138,139  
 Struss, Karl, 43,44  
 Stryker, Roy, 168-173,185  
Survey Graphic, 154,167  
  
 Taos, New Mexico, 136  
 Taylor, Paul, 159-167,176,213,219  
Time Magazine, 204,205  
 Tolan, Denise, 93  
 Tolan, John, 93  
 Tugwell, Rex, 168,169  
 Tyler, Lou, 45,87



Unemployed Exchange Co-operatives (UXA), 164-166  
United Nations Charter, 179,180

Vanderbilt, Paul, 171

VanDyke, Willard, 167

VanSloun, Frank, 112

Vasey, Tom, 161

War Relocation Authority (WRA), 185

Warren, Earl, 191,192

Weston, Edward, 108

White, Clarence, 36-44,74,75

Wilson, Woodrow, 57,59

Winter, William, 120

Wood, Charles Erskine Scott, 111,112



## APPENDICES

	Page
A. A Memorial Service for Dorothea Lange	227
B. Obituary by Wayne Miller for Magnum	245
C. "A Photography Center," a proposal by Dorothea Lange, July 1965 (Includes Project 1)	247
D. San Francisco <u>Chronicle</u> Obituary	251
E. Some notations of the last days and hours of Dorothea Lange Taylor	252
F. Letter from Paul Taylor to Dr. W.L. Rogers	253
G. Letter from Paul Taylor to Miss Brenda Lyon	254
H. Interview by <u>The Berkeley Review</u> , January 1960	255
I. "Recording Life-in-Process," an assessment of Dorothea Lange's photography by Margaret Weiss in <u>Saturday Review</u> , March 5, 1966	257





## A MEMORIAL SERVICE

FOR

DOROTHEA LANGE

\*

Organ (John T. Burke)

Selections from Handel  
Bach's Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring

Sentences

Prayer

Scripture Readings

A Prologue (Conrad Bonifazi)

Three Tributes

Allan Temko (Dorothea Lange as Artist)

Daniel Rhodes Dixon (Dorothea Lange within her family)

Christina B. Gardner (Dorothea Lange as Woman and Photographer)

The California Wind Quintet

Mozart's Adagio and Allegro, arranged by Ross Taylor

Prayer

Benediction

Organ

Martin Luther's Eine Feste Burg

Chapel of the Pacific School  
of Religion Berkeley  
October 30, 1965



A MEMORIAL SERVICE FOR  
DOROTHEA LANGE 1895-1965

\*

Organ

Selections from Handel (Concerto grosso)  
Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring (Bach)

Sentences

The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath  
are the everlasting arms. (Deut.33.27)

The souls of the righteous are in the hand of  
God and no torment shall touch them. In the  
sight of the unwise they seemed to die; and  
their departing is taken for misery, and their  
going from us, utter destruction: but they are  
in peace. (Wisdom of Solomon 3.1-3)

None of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth  
to himself. For whether we live, we live unto  
the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the  
Lord: whether we live, therefore, or die, we  
are the Lord's. (Romans 13.7-8)

To God all things are alive, O come let us  
adore him. (Matins of the Dead)

Prayer

Eternal God whose cosmic power stands at last revealed  
in Jesus Christ as personal love, and within whose grace and  
strength our lives are spent, we worship thee.

As from manifold paths of life - from the worlds of  
science, the arts and public service, of home and university -  
thou bringest us together in this hour, by the memory of a de-  
parted friend, so also make us aware that within the intermin-  
able conflicts of this world thou art forever gathering the  
separated peoples of the earth into one family of man.

Within thy world-wide embrace, we, too, are all enfolded,  
'safe, though all safety's lost': therefore teach us how to be  
enlarged within the constraints and poignancy of our circum-  
stances. May this day's solemn memory serve thy creative pur-  
poses as the vision and compassion and fortitude of Dorothy Lange  
renew their strength and vigour within our persons. Let her  
memory, O Lord, nourish and comfort us upon our mortal journey.

AMEN



## Scriptures

Let us hear the Scriptures at Psalm 90 in King James's Version; then Archbishop Cranmer's word in Shakespeare's Henry VIII which is spoken of Queen Elizabeth I of England, but rooted in the prophetic hope of ancient Israel - the hope of mankind nourished and at peace; a passage from which Dorothea Lange drew strength, and within which she recognized some of her dearest aspirations. And lastly the opening words of the twenty-first chapter of the Book of Revelation.

### Psalm 90

Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting to everlasting, thou art God. Thou turnest man to destruction; and sayest, Return, ye children of men.

For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night. Thou carriest them away as with a flood; they are as a sleep; in the morning they are like grass which groweth up. In the morning it flourisheth, and groweth up; in the evening it is cut down, and withered.

The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away.

So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.

O satisfy us early with thy mercy; that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.

Make us glad according to the days wherein thou hast afflicted us, and the years wherein we have seen evil.

Let thy work appear unto thy servants, and thy glory unto their children.

And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us; and establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish thou it.



- 5 -

Good grows with her.

In her days every man shall eat in safety  
Under his own vine what he plants, and sing  
The merry songs of peace to all his neighbours.  
God shall be truly known; and those about her.  
From her shall read the perfect ways of honour.  
And by those claim their greatness, not by blood.

And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the  
first heaven and the first earth were passed away;  
and there was no more sea.

And I, John, saw the holy city, new Jerusalem,  
coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a  
bride adorned for her husband.

And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying,  
Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men and he  
will dwell with them, and they shall be his people.  
and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.  
And God shall wipe away all tears, from their eyes;  
and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow  
nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain:  
for the former things are passed away.





- 4 -

## Prologue to Three Tributes

When Ecclesiastes, the Preacher, informs us that

to everything there is a season, and a time to  
every purpose under the heaven: a time to be  
born and a time to die . . . (3,1-3)

he is measuring time, not by its duration, but by its content.

We are measuring these moments by the life and death of

Dorothea Lange. For us, she is the content of this time.

Three of her friends will hold open the door of memory,  
and we shall glimpse her through their eyes, and wonder again  
at the remarkable woman who by this means is partially  
restored to us, and through this act of remembering, will  
take her place in our personal awarenesses of life and find  
a niche in our individual histories.

This remarkable possibility resides in our nature:  
human beings are not simply objects in space, but consist  
also of inward dimensions capable of overflowing, of extending  
themselves, into the lives of others. This means that all  
of us have a kind of existence in other people; to some degree  
we are a part of them, and they are a part of us. So when they  
leave us, and we are left, they are never quite, never  
absolutely gone. And those who have been closely related to  
us by love or work, continue to enrich us with the quality  
of their characters, through our remembering.



Fortunately this mutual sharing of our persons does not always depend upon immediate contacts with each other. People may be reported to us; we may encounter their work; and these evidences suffice to exert a personal power upon us.

Thus I, too, a stranger, looked and listened, and was confronted by an authentic human being whose profound and penetrating vision of life could unlock in men's eyes the frozen seas of compassion, and through the very face of squalor, neglect and forsakenness, could make us all feel the beating heart of humanity.

But the mark of her maturity was this: that thoughtfully, industriously, within diminishing strength, having heard the sentence of death, she was not consumed by her own grief, but could direct her life towards others. In Christian terms this was triumph of a very high order.

Of death itself we cannot speak, but do not let us think that therefore it is without honour, or gravity, or creative power. It is a definitive force in our lives. The night cometh, said Jesus, when no man can work (John 9.4). Darkness and immobility must descend, yet they give urgency to the working day. We are not merely creatures whose lives, so far as we know, are bounded by death; but people whose lives may be enhanced and vitalized, here and now, by the power and reality of death. The New Testament wishes to assert that unless we come to terms with death's inevitability we cannot aspire to be fully human; or as the poet Rilke has it:

For we are but the leaf and the skin.  
The great death which each one has within  
is the fruit around which all revolves.



- 6 -

Dorothea Lange came to terms with her own death; she lived beyond it; and will continue to do so while men have eyes for her work and a place in their hearts. To-day's remembrance grants her a conditioned immortality, for she will be amongst us as a humbling and purifying presence, sharpening our awareness of the kind of people we are, and perhaps, even shaping thoughts of the kind of people we ought to be.

Therefore, it would be false to life, merely to mourn her passing. We must also rejoice in the life that was given us, and be thankful for her death which may yet become for us a milestone upon our pilgrimage to authentic human existence and genuine freedom in this world.

\*

Tributes from

Allan Temko

Dorothea Lange as Artist

Daniel Rhodes Dixon

Dorothea Lange within her family

Christina B. Gardner

Dorothea Lange as a woman and photographer.



## DOROTHEA LANGE: THE MASTER ARTIST AS HUMANIST

Truly great art, such as Dorothea Lange's, belongs so completely to its own time that it transcends time, and belongs to all civilization to come. The underlying principle of classic art of course is not simply permanence, for many worthless things are relatively longlasting. Its main principle is intrinsic excellence. And such excellence rests not on technique, although every great artist is necessarily a great technician -- and Dorothea was one of the finest. Such excellence is the resultant of spiritual and intellectual insight which leads the artists to discover -- where others do not seek even to find -- new truths in the cause of man.

This classic search for truth, and not superficial style, is the supreme unifying force of fine art, drawing wisely upon time past, passionately and intelligently involving itself in the full complexity of the present, fearlessly confronting the future. It unites Phidias and the Master Builders of Chartres, Michelangelo and Frank Lloyd Wright, and Dorothea Lange.

When I was young, Alfred Stieglitz said to me: "I would rather have the smallest blade of grass, so long as it is true, than the biggest papier-mâché tree in the world." Stieglitz, too, was a great photographer whose mind was generously open to all the other arts, as Dorothea's was. The art of such photographers is essentially the art of perception; and its beauty, its highest mystery, resides in





their capacity to make us see through their prismatic intelligence. They confer upon us the gift of sight.

And so, when Dorothea saw an apple pie or an auto junkyard, a burly San Francisco cop or an exquisite Nepalese, she saw truly. She saw the degraded Victorian family home behind the used car sign; she saw humble cooking utensils assembled nobly at a primitive family hearth. She saw hope in a baby, and despair in an empty cup.

This was not merely social observation, but a supreme form of social analysis, free of dogma and cant, utterly liberated from triviality, although no subject was too small, or too modest, for her compassionate examination. Thus it was not only the accuracy and comprehensiveness of her perception, but the love which accompanied it -- a purely distilled compassion which was never tainted by sentimentality -- that made Dorothea one of the most powerful critics of our time. That is why her great photographs of the Depression still carry residual truth that moves us as no rudimentary "social realism" can, truth sometimes as terrible as the parched and blowing earth, but as magnificent as the mother who, in the midst of tragedy as overwhelming as any Greek scene of terror and pity, clasps her children to her, and with superb humanity confronts the fates.

The heroic scale of such photographs is the scale of man facing forces beyond his individual control. What deepens the tragic



irony is Dorothea's awareness, implicit in all of her work, that together we need not be at the mercy of negative forces which human reason can not only bring under control, but turn into a positive direction that could lead us to a new society altogether.

In this aspect of her work she was a remarkable environmental theorist and, in the highest sense, an environmental designer. Perhaps it is not sufficiently realized, in these days of rigidly drawn professional lines among architects, planners, and other environmental designers, that we are all makers of our environment. Dorothea knew this, and she did not hesitate to commit the full strength of her art and her social conviction into the struggle -- and she above all knew how complex and difficult struggle is -- to conserve and improve the environment, to create a truly bio-technic environment which will serve man rather than machines, in an epoch of incessant technological innovation.

Thus we can all thank her for the marvelous burnt orange color of the Golden Gate Bridge (for it was her idea to paint it that way), just as we can be thankful for her demonstration of what the death of a valley can be. How painful the bite of the bulldozer can be, she -- who loved the earth and its people -- knew better than any professional planner.

For she recognized that uncontrolled technology, which in



its present insensate applications to the natural world has become ferocious technocracy, is the chief threat to civilized existence today: the technocracy of smog and water pollution as much as the technocracy of intransigent, unfeeling bureaucracies. For her, human beings and the other creatures of this earth came first.

Not that she hated technology. Anyone who ever saw her hold a camera -- and how magically she held the beautiful Leica which seemed inevitably created for her incomparable hands -- could see her admiration for the solid refinement and careful technical thought which were so clearly expressed in this jewel-like instrument of her art. She defended, with a gay, tender fierceness, the technical basis of her art, which of course was in some ways a craft as well as fine art. She disliked the word "picture" when it was substituted for "photograph" because it seemed at odds with the precise nature of her concept of photography. Her conceptual scope was very broad, but it could also be brought to an extremely fine focus.

Her appreciation of the full potentialities of technology, which could transform this earth into an Eden, therefore led her to oppose all sorts of follies. Although she was a Yea-sayer, she understood that the best way to say Yes nowadays, when so much is done badly, is often to say No. But she was not a Jeremiah, striding about the ravaged Promised Land, stridently denouncing abominations: she quietly offered positive examples of excellence. Mies van der Rohe



once remarked: "I don't want to be 'interesting'; I want to be good." Although Dorothea would never have said it that way, she too was never given to the superficially interesting: her goodness, in her work and personal life, which were really inseparable, was profound.

In considering Dorothea as a complete person, rather than as an artist -- if that distinction can be made, I tried to think of other Americans who combined her particular virtues and who shared her specific vision. For she was so American, even though her heart and mind were open to the world at large, that it is difficult to think of her art -- even though it is as denationalized as music or science -- as anything but American in the finest tradition of the Republic. For its fundamental premise is human liberty and dignity.

And in thinking of other American artists, Thoreau came naturally to mind. For Dorothea surely endorsed his conviction that "to be a philosopher is not merely to have subtle thoughts, or to found a school, but so to love wisdom as to live a life of simplicity, independence, magnanimity, and trust." That is a pretty good description of Dorothea's own philosophy, I think, and in pondering Thoreau's words I recalled Emerson's final tribute to him at a commemorative gathering something like this one.

"There is a flower known to botanists," said Emerson, "one of the same genus with our summer plant called 'Life-Everlasting' ... which grows on the most inaccessible cliffs of the Tyrolese mountains,





where the chamois dare hardly venture, and which the hunter tempted by its beauty, and by his love (for it is immensely valued by Swiss maidens), climbs the cliffs to gather, and is sometimes found dead at the foot, with the flower in his hand. It is called by botanists the Gnaphalium leontopodium, but by the Swiss Edelweisse, which signifies Noble Purity."

At the highest reaches of modern civilization, those forbidding crags which few can discern let alone climb, Dorothea plucked that flower for us all. For her own life, lived with the noblest purity, the clearest vision, and the most unassuming bravery, was in itself the greatest of her works of art. In presenting all to us with an open heart, her life and her art, with the precious flower clutched in her hand to the end, she conferred upon us, and on generations to come as long as civilized existence remains, the gift of life as it should be lived, truly.

Allan Temko



Words Spoken by Daniel Dixon on October 30, 1965  
At Memorial Services for Dorothea Lange

I'd like to speak for a moment of what my mother meant to her family - and of what her family meant to my mother.

She was an intensely domestic woman-- one whose feeling of family, for family, was almost mystical. Sometimes, when she wanted this feeling, she would recite a nonsense rhyme preserved from her girlhood. It was a kind of ceremony. "Ve belong to a club vot's fine," she used to say. "The President's name is Finklestein..."

She was right. We did -- we do-- belong to a club. But the President's name was not Finklestein; while she lived, the President's name was Dorothea. Around her circled a complex kinship of lives -- lives that shared nothing so much in common as that each was in some way shaped and enlightened by this extraordinary woman. Her influence was felt in everything from imposing matters of finance to the care of the household plants. The highly colored details of family life -- nothing was more important to her than that. At nothing did she work harder. In nothing did she work harder. In nothing, I believe, was she more successful. In this way, too, she had genius.

I think I can best describe what Dorothea's presence meant to her family and best describe the loss we feel if I read you a letter. It was one of many received by us here at home while Dorothea and Paul were in the Far East a few years ago.

(Letter follows)

Dear Helen:

The next time you go shopping in the Co-op, think of me, as I thought of you this morning, in the Central Market of Manila. This is a market like our 10th Street Market in Oakland, or the Crystal Palace in San Francisco. How I wished for you to be there with me. We would have come off with bags and bags of all kinds of loot! John, Paul or the children would have enjoyed it not at all. Even I found the heat and the flies and the crowds hard to take at moments and I kept my eye on the nearest way out; for the people are packed solid in the narrow aisles before the stalls and you are pushed along with vendors yelling in your ears and puddles of dirty standing water under your feet where you wade through. But the reason for doing it is the feast for the eyes!

All the beautiful fish and strange sea-life of the tropics is spread out before you in one section of this carnival. Great baskets of all manner of lobsters, crabs, shrimps, clams, in all sizes and colors and all manner of things I never saw or dreamed of. And gleaming fish- all kinds, all sizes - laid on banana leaves and all the stange leaves and herbs with which they cook them. Some of the sea-life they cook right there under your eyes, in leaves and herbs, and wrap in bamboo and you eat. If you buy for your household you either carry away in your hands, unwrapped or you bring your own paper to wrap. Then the crowd suddenly backs



away from a middle path and you get jammed against the fish in the stall to make way for 2 men bearing a big whole fresh-roasted pig. Strung on a bamboo pole. And then you find a corner, only to be surrounded by fresh coconuts, which 3 fellows crack with great knives and grind the meat. Five centavos (2½¢) for a bagfull. Scooped up by your own hands. The whole market is festooned by bananas, green ones and orange ones and red ones, massed with the yellow ones. And when I got into the fruits and vegetables there my eyes couldn't take in the bewildering variety and beauty of growths and produce, most of which I had never before even dreamed of. And all mixed up with flowers, which I had never before seen or heard of. This is the tropics and these dark brown people against all this fantasy of color (and beautiful arrangements) and the thin brown hands moving in and around, in the buying and selling, and inspecting and re-arranging on straw mats and green leaves and basketfuls of mangos and loquats and small golden unknowns and brilliant red eggplants and more things which they use all mounted on bamboo poles, the most delicate tiny peppers, and seeds like sea shells, and mountains of greens, mountains of them, kind unknown. Festoons of garlic-- not a carrot did I see, nor a potato, nor an apple, nor a head of lettuce. Nor one packaged thing. Just great baskets. Bright, pink sweet potatoes and hot syrupy cakes, which they make on braziers right there. And baskets of eggs, dyed all colors, like Easter eggs. These are from China- why colored I do not know- mostly purple.

I'm back in the hotel room now, and quickly writing this to you because you would have enjoyed it so. It was like going to a symphony for the eyes, this time instead of the ears. Flowering banana stalks, I saw - imagine that, and orchids for sale by the basket. ( 10 centavos )

This is what, so far, I have enjoyed in Manila. Will write about other things - Hongkong, and matters in general, maybe tonight.

Much love to my darlings - to all my darlings.

D.

I'll be remembering this market when I push the cart with Lisa-baby in it, around the Co-op.

To live with or around such a woman as Dorothea was always, in some way, suprising. We were never quite prepared for her poetry, her flashing insights, her courage, her humor, her generousities-- or sometimes, her failures of patience, her restless complexity, the intrusions of her will. We were none of us prepared for her death.

Yet there were some things, that we could always expect that were entirely predictable -- the jokes and gestures and events, that, repeated time after time, year after year, became a part of our lives. This was largely due to Dorothea, and to her feeling about the family. Within the family, as within a religion, she believed in ceremony as a renewal of faith and in ritual as an act of devotion. Sometimes these ceremonies were beautiful.



Every year at Christmas, for a luminous few minutes our tree glows with candlelight. And sometimes these ceremonies were homely, but none the less meaningful. And during those last few hours, while my brother held one hand and I the other, and when her breath was so labored that she could scarcely speak, we all recited it together for the final time:

" Ve belong to a club vot's fine  
The President's name is Finklestein,  
Und every morning about a quarter to nine  
Ve go to de teatre und ve have a fine time. "







## A TRIBUTE FOR DOROTHEA LANGE, OCTOBER 30, 1965

In the beginning, elementary life is supposed to have crawled from the primeval ooze of the seas into sunshine. Into sunshine means crawling into light. Light means something special to men, something in particular to photographers. Light means illumination, and Dorothea's life above all has been an illumination to those who have known her, either as a woman or through her work.

The art of Dorothea's life consisted of richness of thought and simplification of means. She enriched our experience rather than impoverishing it. Through the fulfillment of her own special talents, she has given a great gift to us all. And with this gift goes the responsibility of a friendship. She expected us to be concerned with the things that concerned her. And in this regard, she left us with some unfinished business.

In the papers this very month, there have been announcements of three matters which go deeply back into Dorothea's life. The first was the announcement that Sonoma County is to receive \$ 200,000, mostly of Federal monies, to build portable and sanitary dwelling units for migratory farm workers. Child care centers will be included.

The second matter reported the settlement of the last case in the United States Court of Claims for part of the damages inflicted upon Japanese Americans during World War II. The Koda family was interned in 1942. At that time they owned 4000 acres of rich farm land in Merced and Fresno Counties. They received damages for a small fraction of their losses.

The third account began: "Two Ku Klux Klansmen who were acquitted in the nightrider killing of a Negro educator last year, attacked a Negro photographer yesterday and were promptly jailed. The photographer was also arrested."

And then there is the unfinished business of the future. Dorothea left us with a proposal for an important photographic center. She left us with the injunction, particularly to photographers, to preserve our land in (her phrase) "The New California". At least one of us has been working ardently on this vast project which Dorothea considered so important. And I think she would say to us now that we should take to heart the words that I saw one morning after an election outside Sather Gate. The placard waving in the sunshine said: DON'T MOURN: ORGANIZE.

Erich Fromm has written some beautiful words which express best of all what Dorie's friendship meant. He said:

The most important sphere of giving, however, is not that of material things, but lies in the specifically human realm. What does one person give to another? He gives of himself, of the most precious he has, he gives of his life. This does not necessarily mean that he sacrifices his life for the other- but that he gives him of that which is alive in him; he gives him of his joy, of his interest, of his understanding, of his knowledge, of his humor, of his sadness- of all expressions and manifestations of that which is alive in him. In thus giving of his life, he enriches the other person, he enhances the other's sense of aliveness by enhancing his own sense of aliveness. . . . In the act of giving something is born, and both persons involved are grateful for the life that is born for both of them.



\*

Prayer

O God, who art from everlasting to everlasting, fountain of mercy, light of life, we thank thee for the life thou gavest and hast now taken away. We thank thee for that infinite discretion within which our friends are never wholly removed from us, but continue to dwell with us, and engage with us in the inner discourse of our lives.

We thank thee for every remembrance of Dorothea Lange, whose name we cherish, and who is now a part of ourselves. We praise thee for talents consecrated to the art of seeing, and a life dedicated to the art of becoming human. We thank thee for her vivid sense of man's predicament and her determination to augment our human wellbeing.

We pray for her family, for those who were immediately devoted to her, who were privileged to share in her endeavours and in the force and goodness of her art. Grant them, we beseech thee, a sense of her nearness and a share in her triumphant spirit. May her going never lead them to questions which misrepresent the nature of life in this world, but rather to affirmations of the depth and graciousness that is within all things.

We commend each other to thy grace and compassion. As we disperse and follow our appointed ways, go with us now and grant that into whatever circumstances or distances the way may lead, we may never stray beyond the knowledge of that love which enfolds and carries us all.

AMEN

The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you. The Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace.

AMEN

Organ

Luther's Hymn: Ein' Feste Burg



# MAGNUM

MAGNUM PHOTOS, INC. New York 72 West 45 Street, N Y 10036 Tel. 661-5040 Cable MAGNUMFOTO Paris 125 Faubourg St. Honoré, Paris 8e, Tel. Élysée 15-19 Cable: FOTOMAGNUM

DOROTHEA LANGE

October, 1965

Photography lost a leader when Dorothea Lange Taylor died of cancer, October 11, 1965. She was seventy.

As close friends, we will miss her love, compassion, brilliance, and enthusiasm. We will miss her greeting of "What's new in your life? Tell me all about it." Dorothea will always be with us.

Although physically small and at times fragile, she was a giant made of spring steel. Her greatness lay in her respect for mankind and in the importance of the individual. However, she did have strong reservations about some of his actions. She was not a photographer in the ordinary sense of the word. There was nothing ordinary about Dorothea. Thirty-one years ago she sent to the customers of her portrait studio this quotation from Francis Bacon:

The contemplation of things as they are,  
without substitution or imposture, without  
error or confusion, is in itself a nobler  
thing than a whole harvest of invention.

This was her credo: A clear, unfettered, uncompromising, yet compassionate use of the camera. It is no wonder that she has become the guiding conscience of this direct world of photography.

She recognized this power of photography as a social force and its ability to help shape history. Her many memorable incisive depression years photographs did effect government legislation and did help to shape history. For this she became known as a documentary photographer who used her camera as a sharp social instrument. She sat in judgment. With her camera, she collected the evidence. With her editing, she passed sentence.

Since 1958, she has travelled widely with her husband, Professor Paul Taylor, in the Far East, Middle East and in South America. During these years, her abilities reached their peak and she produced some of her finest photographs. At this time of fulfillment she suffered her greatest physical pain. "Just when I have gotten on the track, I find that I'm going to die. There are so many things I have yet to do that it would take several lifetimes in which to do them all. It's hell to get sick." Knowing that the end was near, she



spent her last 14 months assembling and completing a retrospective show of her life's work that will open January 24, 1966 at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City.

There are two projects she did not finish. First, the establishment of an organization to photograph the culture of today's America, its prosperity and its urbanization. For several years she has promoted its feasibility to individuals and to institutions. When it does come to pass it will be because of Dorothea Lange. The second unfinished project is "to expand the boundaries of knowledge by the inclusion of photography into the institutional structure of higher education. There it can participate in the processes by which knowledge is advanced, taught and applied."

There was a possible third project. A year ago, I told her of my dream to walk every foot of the way across this America of ours taking photographs as I travelled. Her face lighted up "Can I go with you?" I said "yes" then and I say "yes" now. Photography could not travel in better company.

Wayne Miller





## A PHOTOGRAPHY CENTER

A Photography Center can serve integrated efforts to explore the place of photography in visual communication. It can offer a training ground for students of the visual. It can afford opportunity for people to learn to see. The camera is a unique instrument for teaching people to see - with or without the camera.

Among the activities at the Center are these:

### 1. "PROJECT I" - A NATIONAL FILE OF PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE USA (see attached sheet for description of "Project I")

Project I is housed within the Center. However, the core of Project activities is independent of the Center. Its Director, together with the team of photographers working with him, is wholly responsible for the creation of the Project File, an undertaking which, because it involves special responsibility and response to changing needs, cannot be subordinated to other purposes. The very existence of a photographic project of magnitude in close proximity, encourages at the Center a climate of creative excitement and enrichment.

### 2. RESEARCH AND EXPERIMENTATION IN VISUAL LANGUAGE

Selected groups of students, qualified by previous work experience, should be enabled to participate in experimental work. For instance:

A group, committed for a limited period of time, under faculty guidance, to record visually the substance of their lives with camera only - their observations, alliances, connections and responses to the world that immediately surrounds them. This temporary commitment to a visual - non-verbal - life is to be a total experience, requiring conscious curtailment of life-long verbal habits for its duration. I feel that from such experiments we may discover that the visual image is truly a language.

In past eras of mankind, images have served as foundations for written characters and language. The Center should now house explorations and experiments with the visual image as a language in its own right.

### 3. TEACHING

The Center is not a trade school. It not only teaches techniques but opens outlooks and attitudes which lead to a profession. Its concern is not only with teaching how to make a fine photograph, but also with teaching understanding of what it takes to make a great photograph or great sequence of photographs.



Here at the Center is to be gathered a staff that - in order to accomplish these purposes - should include at least three elements:

(1) Professional photographers who carry the continuing responsibility for the Center's teaching.

(2) Non-photographers - an ever-changing group of teachers-in-residence selected from diverse fields because their presence can enrich and expand the conceptions and life of the Center.

(3) Technicians who instruct in the Laboratory.

#### 4. LABORATORY

A separate Laboratory staff to provide thorough instruction in the photographic techniques for students and future laboratory technicians, alike.

#### 5. GALLERY AND PUBLIC ROOM

This place is important in the life of the Center. Here work is exhibited and results studied. "Art is a tool for understanding and a promoter of consequences." Here individual work in progress is shown. Here group projects in all stages are studied. Here students foregather to learn to listen to one another, to learn to criticise, to learn to evaluate work - including their own. Here also the seminars and clinics are held.

#### 6. SPECIAL SEMINAR IN CULTURAL HISTORY

A special seminar program in cultural history could strengthen the interrelationships between photography and other disciplines. Here, for example, some social scientists might come to learn how photography could widen their outlook and serve their ends, while some photographers were learning how to apply some of the social scientists field-work techniques and attitudes to their own problems.

#### 7. CLINIC

The Center should conduct a Clinic, open to the public at stated times, to which photographers - amateurs and professionals alike - can bring their own photographs for critical judgment and technical counsel. In this way the benefits of a growing understanding of photography at the Center can be extended in widening circles to the community.

#### 8. LIBRARY AND VIEWING ROOM

A collection of the finest books and slides on all aspects of fine and applied photography, with emphasis on the highest quality. Periodicals and books should be collected from all parts of the world.



9. INTERNESHIP PROGRAM

A. To enable students training to be professional photographers to gain practical experience by sharing the daily work of practising of photographers in various fields - advertising, news, editorial, scientific, portrait, etc. etc.

B. To provide residence opportunities for museum directors, curators and librarians, leading to better understanding of the medium. Photography is just beginning to find its way into American museums and archives. This training course could stimulate collections, improving their range and quality.

C. To provide courses for critics of photography. Photography has a short history, and has had few critics to remark its accomplishments and challenge its mistakes. Critical judgment, based on knowledge and appreciation of the unique qualities of this fascinating medium, is essential to its future. The Center for Photography can attract, and sharpen the perceptions of men and women to fill the need.



PROJECT I ---

A proposal to create a national cultural resource, in the form of a file of photographs. It calls for a Director, and a team of six to perhaps ten professional photographers, free to travel and work all over the United States.

The subject of this file will be the life of the American people in the 1960's, with particular emphasis on urban and suburban life, over the country. This photography will be concerned with the vast area of everyday life and living, in all its multiplicity and complexity. It will be concentrated on what exists and prevails, rather than on the extraordinary incident, the dramatic happening, or the bizarre and unusual situation. When completed, it will offer something not now being attempted - a photographic record of our time for future generations.

The camera can reveal the values and purposes and dangers of our intricate society, along with its outward appearance. I believe that this scrutiny should not be an outlet for passionate personal protest. Instead, it should be a reservoir of original documents. These documents will serve as tools. Their strength rests on their many uses, as with all good research materials.

Photographers should begin work by the Spring of 1967, and conclude at the end of five years. The file should not be opened to use during its initial years. Conceived as an important national resource, its repository should probably be the Library of Congress, which should be charged with its housing, management and protection. Here it can be drawn upon for use and publication.

It will establish a benchmark, to measure change, progress and decay.

It can become an invaluable asset to historians, social scientists, students of environmental design and the humanities, teachers, writers, artists, legislators, judges, administrators, planners.

It will become a national resource for all who, in the future, have use for visual images and the contemporary record.





Dorothea Lange, one of the greatest female photographers of all time, died here Monday. She was 70.

Although she had learned she had incurable cancer 14 months ago and might live only a month or two, she threw herself into a project that was to be the crowning testament to her talent—a big, one-woman, retrospective show at the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

She saw the first of the final exhibition prints before returning to French Hospital here Friday.

The show, now a posthumous memorial to her more than half-century of dedica-

tion to her art, will open January 24.

Dorothea Lange was born in Hoboken, New Jersey, and having decided by the age of 17 to be a photographer, studied with the famed Clarence White at Columbia University and later in San Francisco with Arnold Genthe, the great photographer of the 1906 earthquake and fire.

She operated a studio in San Francisco in the 1920s and early 1930s but tired of portraiture and looked to the street and its harsh realities.

She photographed the agonies of the depression-ridden waterfront, the breadlines and the demonstrations.

In 1935, on assignment for the State Emergency Relief Administration with her economist husband, Dr. Paul schuster Taylor, she recorded the plight of California's broken, starving migrant workers, the refugees of the Dust Bowl.

One of her pictures—of a migrant mother, the pain of the times etched into her face, and her two, forlorn children—is a prized possession of the Library of Congress. In 1960 it was adjudged by a University of Missouri panel one of the 50 most memorable pictures of the past 50 years.

In 1962, the Portrait Photographers of America presented her with their national award "for her international contributions to humanity through photography." She was similarly honored by the American Society of Magazine Photographers in 1963.

In addition to Doctor Taylor, with whom she lived at 1163 Euclid avenue in Berkeley, she is survived by two sons, Daniel Rhodes Dixon of San Francisco and John Eaglefeather Dixon of Berkeley. They were her offspring by her first husband, the late famous painter of the American West, Maynard Dixon.

She is also survived by four grandchildren and a brother, Martin Lange of Honolulu.

Private services were held yesterday at the Abbey of the Chimes in Vallejo. A memorial service is being planned for the future.

# Dorothea Lange

## A Cancer Victim

SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE, Wednesday, October 13 1965



Dorothea Lange Taylor  
Some notations of the last days and hours

About 3 p.m. , Friday, October 8, 1965. DLT: Call Dr. Gardner. Do not give him an "optimistic" report when you tell him the symptoms. But tell him I am not going to the hospital.

Later, 5:45 p.m. DLT: We're licked! Call Dr. Gardner. I will go to the hospital.

Sunday, 1:15 p.m. Dr. Rogers: She has finished her work.

Sunday evening. DLT: "I may be here for three weeks." A fine clear hour with her two sons and their wives. Serious, and with jokes.

DLT: This is the right time. Isn't it a miracle that it comes at the right time!

It comes so fast!

(When hemorrhage began) This is it!

DLT drew her last breath about 4:37 a.m., Monday, October 11.

[These notes were given by Paul Taylor for inclusion in the manuscript.]



Letter from Paul Taylor to Dr. W.L. Rogers

14 October 1965

Dr. W.L. Rogers  
San Francisco, California

Dear "Lefty" Rogers:

For more years than I can remember, you have certainly known the confidence with which Dorothea and I have given her care into your hands. The outcome always justified the confidence.

Now, after fourteen rough months, she has reached the end. These months enabled her to complete preparations assuring that her exhibition will open in New York on January 24, 1966. Their very ruggedness has only increased our admiration for your skill, judgment and spirit.

Although nobody could fill your place during your recent absence, Dr. Gardner did very well by us, and gave us full confidence.

I would not overlook on this occasion that recently Dorothea spoke several times her appreciation of Dr. Daniels. And she did not overlook Dr. Leo Eloesser, with whom she began.

You will find convincing acknowledgments, I am sure, among the notations I attach, tracing from Friday to about 4:37 Monday morning.

Three nurses gave fine care on the last night. Miss Brenda Lyon, in particular, gave care in truly beautiful manner and spirit that moved the members of the family as she assuaged the sufferings of Dorothea. I have sent acknowledgments to each of the three - Mrs. Santerre, Mrs. McManus and Miss Lyon.

I would like to know the revelations of the autopsy, and shall call sometime to ask, if I may.

Sincerely,

[Signed Paul Taylor]



Letter from Paul Taylor to Miss Brenda Lyon, R.N.

13 October 1965

Miss Brenda Lyon, R.N.  
Evening Duty Shift, Intensive Care Unit  
French Hospital  
Fifth and Geary Boulevard  
San Francisco, California

Dear Miss Lyon:

I am more than grateful to you for the beautiful attentions and care that you gave to my wife during her final hours - hardly more than hours ago. She recognized and valued the quality of your services even as she lay dying, and fully aware that the end was near. What you did, and especially how you did it, will not be forgotten.

Under separate cover am sending copy of FAMILY OF MAN, the exhibition known all over the world, in the preparation of which she had large part, and which includes a number of her own photographs.

Sincerely,

[Signed Paul Taylor]





# A born photographer talks of her craft

It will come as news to some of the acquaintances of Mrs. Paul Taylor of 1163 Euclid avenue that, in one of her seven lives, she is one of the world's most distinguished photographers.

Known professionally as Dorothea Lange, she is also housewife, mother, teacher, world traveler, writer and editor.

"I am a natural born photographer," Miss Lange said. "I made up my mind when I was a half-grown girl, when I had never used a camera,

that photography would be my life's work."

Since that abrupt decision made 47 years ago, Miss Lange has taken thousands of pictures throughout the world. Many of them are now preserved in the files of the Library of Congress and of other Government agencies. Part of her work--the relocation of the Japanese at the beginning of World War II--is impounded so that even she can't see her work. Another part--four years of work with the Office of War Information--was lost in the confusion at war's end.

For Miss Lange, the camera is far more than a tool for photo journalism.

## WORTH SLAVING OVER

"There are things that photography can do that are worth slaving over," she said. "The camera is a tremendously powerful instrument...in some hands."

As an example, she told of an exhibit she is preparing for the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

"I am going to try to show what I think about the camera as a means of direct and powerful communication...no, not communication. It's more than that: a means of communion.

"This is not going to be an exhibit of bullseye super-excellent technical things. In fact, it may be that some of the photographs included will be poor technically. I have often been forced by circumstances to pick up a camera without knowing what film I was using, without having time to check the aperture or the focus and to shoot just to get something I wanted to preserve on film. But these pictures will tell some of the things I feel

(Continued from page 5)  
deeply about; it will encompass a lot of things I've learned and that I believe in."

During the times when she is preparing such an exhibit, Miss Lange becomes almost a recluse, seeing few of her friends, taking no pictures, simply selecting and re-selecting the pictures she wants to use to say what she wants to say.

## PROFESSOR'S WIFE

She is the wife of Paul Taylor, a professor of economics and chairman of the Institute for International Studies at the University of California. Their professions overlap admirably.

They recently returned from an eight-month tour of Asia in which he studied village aid and community relations and she photographed the face of Asia.

Because she feels she has to, she is now preparing an exhibit of photographs taken in Korea under the tentative title, "Let Me Tell You Something About Korea."

"This is not coverage in the photo journalistic sense," she said. "It is an effort to get others to behold what I behold, to be interested, to be involved in it. This is a hard thing to do."

Often Miss Lange prepares exhibits for display in a specific place for a specific purpose. In addition to the Museum of Modern Art display, she is preparing 60 photographs for the Italian government, a series on "The Great Depression--7 Lean Years" for the New York Public Library and half a dozen other exhibits. But she does not know where or when the Korean display will be shown.

## WHAT I WANT TO SAY

"This is something I feel I have to do," she declared. "With this one, I want to prepare it to say just what I want to say and then edit



that statement to fit the format, whether it be a magazine or a museum display or a book."

About a year ago, a newspaper wrote a story about Miss Lange, giving her age as 79. This was cause for acute embarrassment for the newspaper, amusement for Miss Lange and consternation for her friends, who were already accustomed to marveling at her vitality and enthusiasm for her work. She is really 64—and there is still cause to marvel at her vitality and enthusiasm.

#### AN AGELESS BEAUTY

Actually, Miss Lange has that sort of ageless beauty some few women develop after the common attractiveness of youth fades. It is not difficult to imagine that she will look much the same as she does now when she boards a space rocket to photograph Mars in the Year 2000.

Her professional photographic career already spans more than 40 years. During the decade of the 20's, she was a portrait photographer in San Francisco.

For the next 20 years she worked for many departments of the Government in a variety of assignments. During the early days of the New Deal she was a member of a photographic team—which has since become famous—whose assignment was to photograph the "Face of the U. S. A."—with emphasis on rural life.

#### RECORD OF NATION'S LIFE

"We made a photographic record of 10 years in the life of our nation," she said. "There is nothing like it anywhere else to my knowledge. This collection is now housed in the Library of Congress and is widely used for many purposes. No such file has been attempted since."

Since she stopped working for the Government after the war, Miss Lange has kept

busy with assignments for magazines and, primarily, her own personal record of the world as she sees it.

In June, she and her husband hope to leave Berkeley to return to Asia via Afghanistan and, of course, she will take her cameras along.

"I live many lives," she said, "but photography is my own personal life."



Saturday Review, March 5, 1966.

**PHOTOGRAPHY**

## Recording Life-in-Process

By MARGARET R. WEISS

**C**RITICS WHO separate "art that involves" from "art that detaches" would find it difficult to classify Dorothea Lange's photography. For its creative insigne—and no small part of its strength and durability—has been the immediacy with which it invites both emotional involvement and reflective detachment.

In essence, this defines the character of Dorothea Lange the woman as well as Lange the photographer. Her intuitive responses to the human condition were insights filtered through the prism of intelligence; her way of knowing was also her art of seeing.

Somewhere in her unpublished notes she had written, "A photographer's files are, in a sense, his autobiography." And the gallery walls of the Museum of Modern Art, where her first major retrospective has been installed, echo the truth of that observation.

The task of selecting 200 representative prints for the exhibit was her own private retrospective. "Learning out of my own past" was how she described the critical process of extracting from each documentary file those subjects that crystallized the essence of a situation rather than its particular circumstances. During months of sorting and sifting negatives, shifting and changing print arrangements on the huge wallboards above her files, she worked alone or with John Szarkowski, director of the museum's photography department—but always against time in the shadow of terminal illness.

Now as the exhibition viewer ad-

vances from panel to panel, from wall to wall, what he sees represents the visual autobiography of Dorothea Lange. Implicit is the prologue: Even while still a student at the New York Training School for Teachers, she had decided to become a photographer. With a gift camera from Arnold Genthe and the basics of photography taught by Clarence H. White at Columbia, she made her way from a rented chicken-coop darkroom on the Palisades to a portrait studio of her own in San Francisco.

The confining studio, static portraiture, posed subjects, synthetic backgrounds—these could not long satisfy one convinced that life meant life-in-process. For Lange, people existed in a rhythmic flow of relationships; man lived in symbiosis with his physical and social environment. It was to reveal this organic reality that she used her camera, producing what her friend George P. Elliott has termed "art for life's sake." Not concerned with abstract symbols, she sought out, scrutinized, and really saw individuals. Her subjects became prototypes—even archetypes in some instances—but not stereotypes. There was a fine distinction made between the meaningful detail and the merely incidental.

It was these qualities in her early self-assigned coverage of the San Francisco scene that brought her photography its first exhibition at Willard Van Dyke's studio in 1934, and in turn the attention of Paul S. Taylor, a University of California economics professor whose co-worker and wife she became a year later. Serving as visual reporter for their col-

laborative social-research projects, she grew increasingly aware of how powerful an instrument of communication and persuasion the camera could be.

**I**N the decade that followed, many readers were to sense that power as they looked at her incisive documentation of migratory workers, of Japanese-American relocation camps, of the United Nations Conference. Later, too, there were longer, more leisurely nongovernment assignments—photo essays on "The New California," on Mormon communities, on Ireland, and on the peoples of Asia, Egypt, and South America—and the continuing pictorial chronicling of her own family and home.

"Whether Dorothea's camera focused on stoop labor in the lettuce fields, delegates around the conference table, villagers in the Nile Valley, or patients in a Venezuelan government hospital." Professor Taylor remarked during a recent visit to New York, "her special 'seeing' was seeing *relationships*. That's what mattered most to her: the relationships of people to people, people to place—to season—to home and garden, photo to photo, subject to subject, tonality to tonality."

The museum retrospective conveys much of this to the viewer. Themed wall legends and panel arrangements signal "relatedness," which readies the eye for seeing more intrinsic relationships.

Dorothea Lange's visual autobiography would not be complete without an epilogue. And she left us one in *Project I*—her blueprint for "a national cultural resource in the form of a file of photographs." The project's photographic unit would comb the country documenting all aspects of contemporary urban life, not only outward appearance but inner values, purposes, and dangers. She has shown the way.











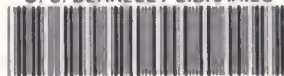




- 13391768

BANC  
MSS  
69/20  
C  
copy 1

U. C. BERKELEY LIBRARIES



C087695647

