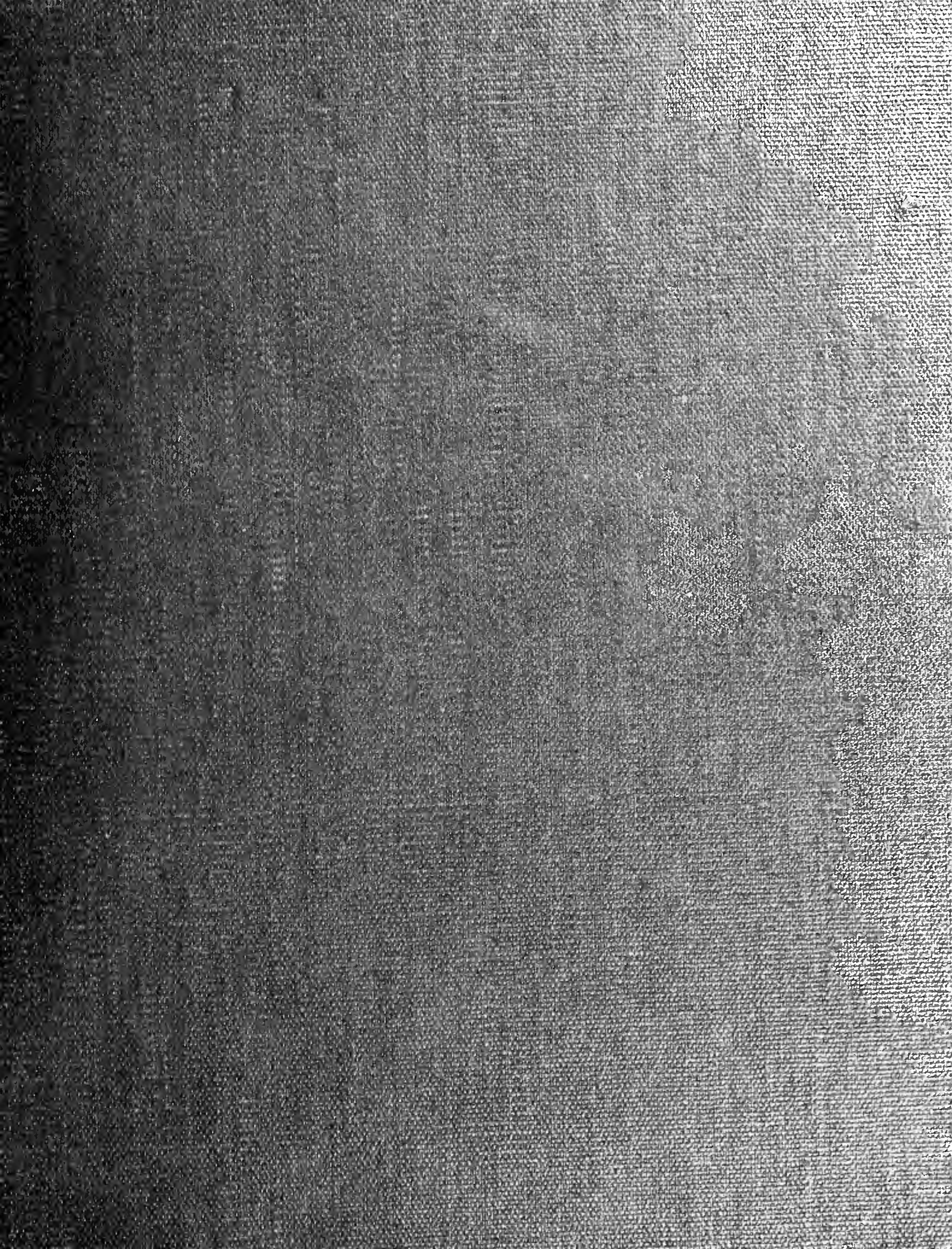

Books and the Imagination

ERRATA

Page 86, line 20 (and throughout, see index), for Susannah Dakin read Susanna Dakin.

Page 76, line 3, for Southwind read South Wind.

BOOKS AND THE IMAGINATION: FIFTY YEARS OF RARE BOOKS

Jake Zeitlin

Interviewed by Joel Gardner

VOLUME I

Completed under the auspices
of the
Oral History Program
University of California
Los Angeles

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INTRODUCTION

Innumerable lives have been influenced by the man generally known as Jake Zeitlin but who should be more properly addressed as Jacob Israel Zeitlin. He was raised in Texas but moved to Southern California as a young man. He arrived destitute with a wife and child. Working at any itinerant job he could find to support his family, he eventually found a niche as a bookseller in a hallway on Hope Street, close by the Los Angeles Public Library and across from the Bible Institute.

It was there I first met the young Jake Zeitlin. I was still in college, at Occidental. An English professor, a dynamic and eccentric poet by the name of Carlyle Ferren MacIntyre, often took me browsing on the booksellers' row of those days in 1927 or 1928 on West Sixth Street. He would pick up stacks of books for which he would haggle and bargain. As I watched his antics, he would spy a particular book and point it out to me saying, "You must read that. Buy it." Thus, my library began to be formed.

We usually sneaked around the corner to peek into the smallest of the bookstores of the area. It had once been the hall entrance to a stairway leading up to some abandoned rooms. It was in this five- or six-foot-wide area that Jake established his first bookshop. We usually didn't buy much there. MacIntyre was interested in bargains,

reading copies; and Jake's limited stock was made up of rare books. But it was always worth the stop just to chat with Jake. Thus I met this then gaunt and scraggle-featured man who was to become not only one of my best friends but a mentor through more than fifty years.

Los Angeles had been known as "The Queen of the Cow Counties." Its climate was so pleasant that one's chief objective was to enjoy it. There had been minor literary activities in the early part of the century circulating around Charles Lummis, but in general Southern California was artistically and literarily barren. Jake arrived at an opportune time. Los Angeles was just beginning to awaken. He moved his shop around the corner on Sixth Street to slightly larger quarters. Lloyd Wright designed for him a charming place; Jake always had extremely attractive shops created for himself. Wright did another one, a few years later, down the street; and Walter Bearman designed a perfect beauty in the old coach house of the Earle estate on Carondolet just off Wilshire Boulevard. Finally, he moved to his present Red Barn on La Cienega Boulevard.

Young Jake attracted to his shop a vibrant group of people--writers, artists, and printers, as well as book collectors. These people congregated there not only for the books which Jake offered them to peruse, or preferably

to buy, but also to enjoy the stimulation of a "small renaissance" enhanced by Zeitlin's enthusiasm and articulate leadership.

One aspect was literary. Jake's was a gathering place for the young writers of the area. They started a magazine, Opinion, "published for the sole purpose of giving currency to pure passion and prejudices, intelligently written on subjects of pertinency and interest. It is inspired by no revolutionary motives, scorns all crusades and reforms, and denies itself equally to the sophistical attitudes of obvious poseurs. The editors welcome terse and pointed compositions--prose and poetical--which will be adjudged entirely from the standpoint of honesty of their conception, the merit of their subjects, and the competency of their development." The contributors were all habitues of the bookshop, and included among others Louis Adamic, Merle Armitage, Walter Arensberg, Carl Haverlin, Phil Townsend Hanna, Carey McWilliams, W.W. Robinson, Paul Jordan-Smith, and Lloyd Wright.

In a back corner of the shop was a small art gallery where Jake, with foresight and taste, hung many important shows--Edward Weston, Paul Landacre, Rockwell Kent, Marie Laurencin, and Käthe Kolowitz--most were the first shows of the artists' works in the West.

His impress on printing was also influential. He induced the then premier printer in Los Angeles, Bruce

McCallister, to cooperate in the publication of a couple of books, Los Angeles in the Sunny Seventies and Sarah Bixby Smith's Adobe Days. This led to the formation of his Primavera Press, one of the first publishing houses in Los Angeles. He gave encouragement and commissions to the young printers who were emerging in the early thirties. He helped Grant Dahlstrom operate Arthur Ellis's Albion handpress to produce the Ampersand books. He had Saul Marks print his catalog, The King's Treasury of Pleasant Books & Precious Manuscripts. It is possibly as handsome a catalog as has ever been printed. But with Marks meticulously setting it completely by hand, time elapsed; and by the time the catalog was delivered, most of the books had been sold. Jake also gave me my first commissions--some pamphlets by Carl Sandburg--the first of many to follow.

All of us are grateful for having known Jake Zeitlin.

Ward Ritchie

Los Angeles, California

December, 1980

INTERVIEW HISTORY

INTERVIEWER: Joel Gardner, Senior Editor, UCLA Oral History Program. BA, MA, French, Tulane University; MA, Journalism, UCLA.

TIME AND SETTING OF INTERVIEW:

Place: Home of Jake Zeitlin, 907 North Alfred, Hollywood, Los Angeles.

Dates: June 28, July 26, August 2, 9, 16, September 9 [video session], September 29, October 4, November 30, December 13, 1977; January 17, February 14, 21, March 14, April 25, May 9, June 27, September 21, 1978; September 12 [video supplement, not in transcript, with Carey McWilliams], 24, 1979.

Time of Day, Length of Sessions, and Total Number of Recording Hours: Interviews took place in the late evenings, after Mr. Zeitlin had worked a full day at the shop or on the road, and after the interviewer had dined with him and his wife, Josephine Ver Brugge Zeitlin. Sessions were, therefore, relaxed and pleasant, averaging an hour to an hour and a half in length. A total of 22 hours was recorded.

Persons Present During Interview: Zeitlin and Gardner. Bernard Galm, Director, Oral History Program, operated equipment at the video session.

CONDUCT OF THE INTERVIEW:

The interviewer immersed himself in the works and archives of Jake Zeitlin. The UCLA Library Department of Special Collections holds many of his early papers, catalogs, and all of his written works, as well as those pertaining to him. Also consulted was an earlier oral history interview conducted by the Program which made recitation of some early biographical details in this oral history unnecessary.

The approach of the interview was biographical. The recording began with the interviewee's early days in Fort Worth and continued to Los Angeles through the various incarnations of his bookselling operations--from the small bookstore on Hope Street to the marvelous Red Barn on La Cienega. His relations with photographers, artists, and the denizens of cultural

Los Angeles, in general, were explored. At the time he participated in the sale of the Honeyman Collection of books on the sciences to Sotheby Parke Bernet, that collection and its disposition were analyzed for elements common to gathering and dispersing collections. Booksellers' associations, local and national, were discussed, as were Mr. Zeitlin's colleagues and competitors in the antiquarian book trade.

Tape Number XIII, Side One, and part of Side Two were dictated by Zeitlin in order to present a historical summary of his fifty years of bookselling which could in turn be used for a proposed catalog.

EDITING:

Editing was done by Deborah Young, Assistant Editor, Oral History Program. She checked the verbatim trasncript of the interview against the original tape recordings and edited for punctuation, paragraphing, correct spelling, and verification of proper and place names. Words and phrases inserted by the editor have been bracketed.

Mr. Zeitlin reviewed the manuscript and approved the edited transcript. He made minor corrections and provided or confirmed spellings of names that had not been verified previously. The final manuscript remains in the same order as the original taped material.

Joel Gardner, Senior Editor, Oral History Program, reviewed the edited transcript before it was typed in final form. Rebecca Andrade, Assistant Editor, Oral History Program, prepared the index. Ward Ritchie, a long time friend and colleague of Jake Zeitlin, was invited to write the introduction. Other front matter was assembled by Program staff.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS:

Zeitliniana at the UCLA Library comprises a vast collection. The Department of Special Collections, as indicated above, holds a complete collection of works by and about the bookseller. Transcripts, audio tapes, and video tapes pertaining to this interview are in the University Archives and are available under the regulations governing the use of noncurrent records of the University. The

Archives also houses audio and video tapes donated to the University by the Zeitlins. These include a video tape of the slide presentation "A Diamond for Jake," produced by Muir Dawson on Jake Zeitlin's seventy-fifth birthday celebration with the Friends of the UCLA Library; a video tape produced by California State University, Northridge, which details the early days of the Red Barn and introduces friends of the Zeitlins, including Lawrence Clark Powell; and a video tape of Zeitlin with Carey McWilliams and the interviewer produced by the Oral History Program in 1979.

Records relating to the interview are in the office of the Oral History Program.

TAPE NUMBER: I, SIDE ONE

JUNE 28, 1977

GARDNER: I'd like to start out by recapitulating some of what you already talked about, but to a degree discussing your intellectual underpinnings and background, especially in Fort Worth. You mentioned the group of people that you were involved with in Fort Worth when you were very young. The names I have are [Bertha] Blatt, Resnick, [Morris] Greenspan, and [Aaron] Shamblum. How did you get involved with them when you were a teenager?

ZEITLIN: Well, of course, these particular people were all Jewish, and they were all connected with the one Jewish synagogue that there was in the town (it was an Orthodox synagogue). Mrs. Blatt, for instance, was not really religious, and certainly was in no way devoted to Orthodox Judaism. She was one of these intellectual Jewish socialists, of which there were quite a few, who actually were actively antireligious; they repudiated religion as much as they could. But, of course, because she was Jewish and she was living in a small town, she gravitated towards the other Jews in the community. I don't remember where she'd come from. Her husband was a typesetter--compositor, I guess I would call him--who worked for the Fort Worth Star-Telegram in the composing

room. She was like so many women--much more, had much more to give. She was a woman of considerable intellect, she had read widely, she'd lived in a big city, and here she was in a small town with a great deal of energy and no outlet.

We had a small group, really a very harmless group, of no more than seven or eight people in all, who used to meet socially and then, about once a month on a Sunday afternoon, would hold a meeting offering culture to whoever wanted to come and get it in the local Hebrew Institute. (The Hebrew Institute had a small library, which consisted mainly of a set of [Charles William] Eliot's Five-Foot Shelf [Harvard Classics] and a few other books.) Somebody would undertake to give a talk on some subject. Now, on one occasion, I think she decided to talk about Karl Marx and the history of the communist movement, and word got around about that, so we were immediately labeled as a bunch of Reds. But most of our meetings were in somebody's kitchen, or on the hot nights on the front stoop of somebody's house. We would often go down to the one local delicatessen there was in town, order corned beef sandwiches, argue, and stay until it was closing time--not any different in that way from the big-city coffeehouse groups.

GARDNER: About how old were you at this time?

ZEITLIN: Well, I think I must have started in with these things when I was about sixteen.

GARDNER: Were there others your age?

ZEITLIN: No. I was the youngster of the crowd. I still can't understand how I happened to circulate as I did and develop the friendships that I did. For one thing, I was never self-conscious, and I must have been a bumptious young man, because I never thought anybody was taller than I was, so that if I heard of somebody that was an authority on geology or botany and that I wanted to learn something from, I would just go and knock on their front door and then tell them I was interested, would like to talk to them. And they were all very kind and hospitable, and lent me books, and invited me back, and took me on field trips and so on. So I think maybe my curiosity bump was bigger than normal, [laughter] and as a result of that I would seek these people out, talk to them, listen to them, and I learned. Practically all I learned was either through reading by myself or through these informal tutors that I sought out.

GARDNER: Was it about the same time that you met Ben Abramson? His role with you must have been an important one.

ZEITLIN: Well, I guess I haven't recorded there how it

happened that I met Ben Abramson and Jerry Nedwick. My father [Louis Zeitlin] had a business which involved the bottling of vinegar, the manufacture of table condiments, the packing of spices; and we would take these out to the various grocery stores. First we had a salesman, who would go around and take the orders, and then we would make up the orders and go out and deliver them. My brother [Sam] or I had to go on the truck with whoever did the delivering. I had forgotten why that happened, until my brother reminded me the other day that when we would send out deliverymen on the trucks and they would deliver the goods, they usually got paid cash by the merchants; they would take the bill along. And when they collected enough cash, they would just leave the truck on some street corner and walk off. [laughter] And so after a few times of that experience, why, my father decided that either my brother or I would have to go along and handle the cash.

My father had an understanding with the local police that if they arrested any Jewish boys, he was to be notified, and he would come in and find out what kind of an offense they were being held for. And if it was a serious offense, he'd bring a lawyer in to the thing; but if it was a minor offense--most of the boys were picked up for riding the rods, for hoboing--why, he would

just pay their fine and take them over to his place, help them find a place (usually a boardinghouse in town) to stay, get cleaned up, and he'd put them to work. They'd work off the money that he'd paid out to get them out of jail, and then they'd stay and work awhile until they went somewhere else. Now, sometimes they were not Jewish; sometimes they were Russians, who, strangely enough, would get way out there in Texas, without being able to speak a word of English. So, after a while, anybody who spoke a strange language that the police couldn't understand was likely to have my father called to go and talk to them. Well, if they spoke Russian, he could talk to them; or German, he could communicate with them.

On this particular occasion, he was called in, and there were these two young men there who had been picked up in the railroad yards riding the freights. One of them was named Ben Abramson, and the other was named Jerold Nedwick. Now, Jerry Nedwick was put to work inside the place, washing bottles and packing the various goods that we sold, but Ben was assigned to work on the truck with me.

GARDNER: Now, they weren't foreign-speaking.

ZEITLIN: No, they were English-speaking. This man, Ben Abramson, was a rather squat-looking man, a stubble of red beard and red hair.

GARDNER: About how old?

ZEITLIN: He was in his twenties. And he wasn't very talkative for quite a while. This big truck that I drove had to be cranked to start--we didn't have self-starters on trucks in those days; that was about 1919, and I think it must have been June of 1919--and this fellow Ben Abramson was left-handed, and he couldn't crank the truck. So I would have to get down and crank it. And one day I got back up beside him, and, a little bit irritated, I said, "You know, somebody recently published a study in which he said that left-handed people were not as bright as right-handed people." Well, he started off right away and gave me a lecture on left-handedness. It seemed that he was very well informed on the whole subject, how many great men had been left-handed and so on. I was quite surprised. I asked him more questions, and it turned out that he had worked in a bookshop in Chicago, McClurg's bookshop, which had the famous Saints and Sinners Corner that Eugene Field had written about. There he had met the great Middle Western writers of the day--people like Sherwood Anderson; he'd seen Amy Lowell smoke a cigar. He knew about Harriet Monroe and _Poetry_ magazine, which I had read about; and he knew Carl Sandburg, who was my great idol.

GARDNER: Were you already writing poetry at this time?

ZEITLIN: Yes, I was already trying to write poetry. I'm not sure whether I'd already won a prize. Baylor College for Women at Waco, Texas, offered a state poetry prize every year, and I won a first or a second prize one year. And this, of course, immediately made me something a little out of the ordinary among the people in my town.

And so, of course, the fact that he knew Carl Sandburg excited me very much. Well, every day from then on he talked. The fact is, he was a nonstop talker. He had a tremendous memory. He had memorized a great many prose passages, and he had also memorized Oscar Wilde's "Panthea," Oscar Wilde's "The Sphinx," and, of course, Ernest Dowson's "Cynara," which was the favorite poem of every bohemian in the English-speaking world at that time. And, as we'd drive along the Texas prairie in the sunset, he would recite "The Feet of the Young Men" of Rudyard Kipling. Well, I was enchanted, and I decided the greatest thing in the world would be to be a bookseller.

Jerry Nedwick, who was Ben's friend, didn't act or talk like he was interested in books or culture at all. As soon as he could, he quit and used to sit around down by the railroad tracks and watch the baseball games.

He and Ben lived in a roominghouse run by a Mrs. Levine, who had a very homely daughter [Ida]. Well, after no more than three months, Ben suddenly announced that he and Jerry were leaving and going back to Chicago. To go back a little bit, the cicumstances under which he left Chicago were kind of interesting. He was on his way to getting married. Jerry Nedwick was his best man. Jerry said to Ben, "Do you really want to marry this girl?" Ben said, "No, I really don't know why I said I would marry her. I don't think I'm ready to get married, and I'm not sure she's the one I want to marry," and so on. And Jerry said to Ben, "Ben, I'd like to stop over here at a bar and get a drink, because I think I need one to sort of prop me up when it comes to the wedding." So they stopped at a bar, and the next thing Ben knew he woke up in a boxcar outside Oklahoma City. [laughter] By the time they got to Fort Worth, Texas, they had been stripped of their tuxedos and were wearing blue jeans with sash cords for belts. What they did with their clothes, I don't know, unless they hocked them for food, or may have been stripped of them by the other hoboes on the road. Ben had evidently been romancing the landlady's daughter in my town, so he decided it was about time to get moving before the daughter pressed her demands for him to marry her. Well,

they caught a freight train, went back to Chicago, and they went into business. They opened the Argus Bookshop, which became one of the most successful bookshops in Chicago in its day, and Ben published a number of catalogs, which were entitled "Along the North Wall." He would just stand there with a bottle of whiskey in his hand, look at the books on the shelves, and talk about them. And he kept a whole string of stenographers there taking his dictation. And as they would get tired, he'd have another stenographer come on, and the other one would go back and transcribe her notes. He published this whole series of catalogs, which have become quite famous.

One interesting thing about all this was that the landlady's daughter and her mother decided they were going to follow this guy Ben Abramson and his friend Jerry back to Chicago. And so one day Jerry Nedwick came to his house, and here was Mrs. Levine and her daughter sitting there talking to his mother. And Jerry said to his mother, "How come they're here?" And she said, "Why, Ben sent them to us. He said she was your girl." The mother and daughter stayed there in Chicago. The daughter never did get married, but the mother met a man who became a very rich real estate operator, and she ended up a very rich and very happy

woman. [laughter]

GARDNER: You remained friendly with him. Did you keep up a correspondence?

ZEITLIN: We kept up a correspondence through the years. It was quite voluminous--mostly on his part--but I never saw him again. He was quite successful in Chicago--he was immensely successful--but he wasn't satisfied. He was a curious sort of an egomaniac, and he was so successful in Chicago he thought he could conquer New York. He sold out his business and moved there, and he wasn't the same thing in New York as he was in Chicago. His kind of a rough-talking bumptious way didn't suit the New York collectors and dealers, and he had to rent a place in a loft instead of on the street--nobody could afford a street store in New York, even in those days--and book people just forgot he was there. Finally, he did so poorly that he had to give it up, and he moved out to Lake Monhegan [and] took an old school building. His daughter lived on the middle floor, his wife lived on the top floor, and Ben lived on the lower floor and had all his books there. The sad thing was that Ben was right the first time. He shouldn't have gone back and married the girl that Jerry had tried to shanghai him from marrying. That was an unhappy marriage, and there

seems to have been a lot of friction between them over the years. The daughter was the chief means of communication. Her name was Barbara, and she used the name of Barbara Benson. Later it turned out that she got the name of Benson because Ben called her in one day and said, "You know, I've never had a son, so from now on you are 'Benson.'" And she has continued to use that. She has a book business--a mail-order book business--up in Connecticut now, and she uses the business name of Barbara Benson. She's also a very talkative, long-winded letter writer, very interesting person and very much like her father. And I've kept in touch with her. I never saw her until a couple of years ago when I went to Norwalk, Connecticut, to a meeting of the History of Science Society; and while I was there, she and her husband came down from Hartford and picked me up, and we went back to New Haven and went to the Beinecke Library. I got a very good chance to talk to her and get acquainted. And since then, she has published a sketch of the life of her father, more or less. And I sent her copies of all the letters that he had written me, and she wrote me very enthusiastically and said that she learned more about her father from these letters than she'd ever known before. The curious thing is that when she published the book, she only alluded once to the fact that we had corresponded

all these years and that she had these letters.

So this meeting with Ben Abramson was what got me into this rare-book business, or what might be called my life of shame. [laughter]

GARDNER: You were in your late teens at this point. Was there any thought of your going to college?

ZEITLIN: It was hardly possible. My family was struggling along. My father had this business which was just barely making a living for us, and my brother and I were needed to help him. I got to be the salesman, my brother got to be the manager of everything that went on in the plant, and there just wasn't enough money. My brother left school in the sixth grade, and he was really a much more talented person than I was; and I think if he had had a chance to have an education, he would have accomplished a lot more. He was the one that they could depend on. I wasn't a very dependable boy. I would up and disappear at almost any time. Even at fourteen, I got up one night, and got on a freight train, and rode off. [I] was gone for--I think it must have been two or three months, until my family found out where I was in Austin, Texas. I can't account for these impulses, why I would just get up and run away, but it certainly didn't improve my appearance of stability or dependability with my parents. My brother, on the other hand, was very dependable and had none of

these characteristics.

GARDNER: About this time, too, you got involved with the Cosmos Club. Now, it may be described to some degree in [previous tapes], but again, how did you get involved with this group?

ZEITLIN: Well, there was a man by the name of Peter Molyneaux, a rather colorful character who was the chief editorial writer for the Fort Worth Star-Telegram. Peter was a very interesting man and was sort of the intellectual ornament of this paper, which to begin with was owned by a Colonel Louis J. Wortham. Later on, Colonel Wortham got himself a circulation manager by the name of Amon Carter. Now, Amon Carter was a very resourceful character--not above a little hanky-panky, such as hiring a gang of distributors who would go out and throw the opposition papers in the gutter, and harass their newsboys, and so on. And in time Amon Carter worked himself up to being the controlling stockholder and ultimately owned the paper [and] became the great Mr. Fort Worth. But at the time I first met Amon Carter, he was circulation manager for this paper.

GARDNER: How did you meet Molyneaux?

ZEITLIN: Well, I met him in a bookstore. The one bookstore that had a fairly good assortment of current books in town was the book department of a place called The Fair; it was part of a string owned by the Schermerhorns. And

the manager of it was a man by the name of Mack Pegues. I would go in there and look at the new books that came in, and Peter Molyneaux would come in there, and he was a very striking gentleman with a rather large nose (probably the result of a substantial appetite for good old southern bourbon), a shock of gray hair and a typical Southern gentleman style. I met him there, and he invited me to his house, which was where I saw the first private library in my experience. He had read [Alfred] Edward Newton's Amenities of Book Collecting [and Kindred Affections]. He lent that to me, which, of course, inoculated me with the virus of book collecting. And because he was the editorial writer for the paper--the paper's intellectual--he used to get a great many review copies of books, and some of them he didn't care for, and he'd pass on to me. And he would invite me to write reviews. So I did do a few reviews there for what passed for a book section, a book page. Well, there was another man whom I also owed a great deal to. I did owe a great deal to Peter Molyneaux. He was a great talker, and he loved to instruct. And also, he and his wife had no children, and he felt very paternal towards me.

And then I met another man, by the name of Franklin Wolfe. Franklin Wolfe was there working on a paper that really was a swindle sheet. It was the Independent Oil

and Financial Reporter, I think it was called. It was supposed to report the happenings in the oil fields of Texas, but its real purpose was to build up the enthusiasm. . . . [phone rings; tape recorder turned off] Wolfe was the editor of the Independent Oil and Financial Reporter, it was called. The chief purpose of it was to sell oil stock to a lot of New England schoolteachers, Middle Western farmers, and small merchants all over the country. And they used to send this out beating the drums for certain phony oil companies. It was during the days of Blue Sky. But Franklin Wolfe himself was a very interesting man who worked on the Chicago Daily News. He had been a friend of Carl Sandburg's, he had been a very close friend of Clarence Darrow, and he had been very active in the progressive movement and the labor movement in California. In fact, he had been one of the original organizers of the Llano Del Rio colony, which was headed by a very interesting, hypnotic sort of a character by the name of Job Harriman. His wife had been a city councilwoman very early in the second decade of this century in Los Angeles, and they had been very active at the time when Job Harriman ran on the Socialist ticket and almost became mayor of Los Angeles. He would have been elected if it hadn't been for the [Los Angeles] Times [Building] bombing.

So, of course, Franklin Wolfe was a great star to me, and he was a delightful old gentleman, with wonderful manners, and as gentle as a child. They didn't have any children either, and so he encouraged me and invited me to contribute poems and things to his paper. I would write some poetry and some prose for his editorial page.

GARDNER: Despite the fact that it was about oil.

ZEITLIN: Yes, about oil. But he had an editorial page which he kept full of all kinds of his own essays and recollections and columns that he kept running. And Peter Molyneaux, Franklin Wolfe, and I were approached by some other people in the town--I've forgotten. One of them was a doctor whose name I can't remember, the other one was the head of a laboratory that manufactured vaccines and serums, antitetanus serums and so on. Another one was a kind of a spectacular personality, a lawyer, whose name I can't remember; and another was a young man--a very striking, handsome young fellow--who was a great dresser, and as a very young man had made a tremendous amount of money in the oil business. Somehow or another, we decided to have a dinner club. I was then only about seventeen; the rest of these were men, mature men, anywhere from thirty on. And they invited me to be a member of this Cosmos Club, they called it; they modeled it after the Cosmos Club in Washington, but it was hardly comparable.

And we would meet, I think it was, one night a month. Later we invited one or two other people, or they invited one or two other people in the town, and somebody would give a paper--very much like dinner clubs of the same sort. But once some member would prepare a paper on some subject that he knew a little about--he knew a lot about very often--and this was, of course, very exciting to me. They all dressed in dinner jackets, but I didn't have any dinner jackets. I was very lucky to have a clean white shirt, but they accepted me and paid my dinner bills and so on. And they would have good wines. I learned--the first I ever learned about anything like good wines and good food was with this group. We met in what then was the best hotel in town, the Westbrook, and now when I go past this run-down, shabby-looking little thing, I can't imagine that this was the glamorous place, the glamorous Westbrook Hotel, which I was so pleased to be invited to come into with those people for a dinner with waiters, dressed up for the occasion. They made quite a thing of this. I don't remember how long this lasted--it couldn't have lasted longer than a year or two--but it, for me, was a great experience and, of course, it set me up quite a lot to be the young mascot, as it were, of these people whom I looked upon as great intellectuals.

GARDNER: At this point, then, I suppose "bohemian" would

be the best description of you. You were a young poet. You remained a young poet, I suppose, the rest of your time in Fort Worth.

ZEITLIN: Yes, I suppose--you know, it's curious. . . . Well, I published a poem or two in the local paper; I did a review or two; I won this poetry prize; the local paper published a feature story on me. I'm surprised that I didn't become more conceited than I was, considering the amount of attention I got. I seem to--I must say this with all immodesty--I seem to have always had a knack for getting publicity without trying.

GARDNER: How did you meet Edith Motheral?

ZEITLIN: Well, I met Edith Motheral through the sister of a girl that I had been quite mad about, one of the girls that I used to go swimming with down on the river, Elizabeth Fish. I taught her to swim, and later she went off to the University of Texas, on the swimming team and everything; and Elizabeth Fish became quite a sophisticated young woman, far beyond my limits, very quickly after she went off to the university. Her sister, Stella, was also a very attractive young woman; she was followed around by a whole crowd of young men. And she got a job at the telephone office working as a switchboard operator, and I used to come by in the evenings to pick her up to take her out for Chinese dinner, or just to talk and then take her home. She was the older sister of Elizabeth,

whom I had a great passion for and whom I taught to swim and who used to go swimming with me. And one night she came down from the office. I met her at the front steps, and she had with her this tall young woman by the name of Edith Motheral. Well, Edith was a very striking, very beautiful, young woman, and she wrote poetry. It turned out she did very good lyrical poetry, and, my, I fell head over heels. And the first thing you know, we were going swimming in the river. (That was my chief way of courting the girls--taking them swimming, and persuading them that the best way to swim was to swim naked on the river at night in the moonlight.) Well, we got so we would go swimming in the wintertime, and then build a fire on the banks of the river, dry off, and dress. Naturally, after a little while, we became quite passionately involved, and ultimately we were sleeping together. Well, I didn't dare tell my family. Her family was quite receptive to me because she was a very tempestuous young woman who had a temper and was headstrong and was uncontrollable, and about the only way she would calm down was if I came by and took her swimming and out for a hike in the woods. Otherwise, she was always at odds with her father and brothers. So ultimately I commenced to have a strong feeling that the only thing for us to do was to get married. We went over to Dallas and got

married without telling my family, and then shortly afterward the natural thing happened: she got pregnant. She was living with her folks, and I was living with my family, and my family didn't know that we were married.

GARDNER: She was not Jewish, I assume.

ZEITLIN: No, she was not Jewish. My family was very strongly Orthodox, and it was a terrible shock, of course, when they ultimately found out. And finally, I went to my friend Franklin Wolfe and said, "I'm married to this girl, Edith"--he had met her; I'd taken her over to visit him and his wife and to have dinner--"and she's pregnant, and I just can't stand to tell my family, and we've got to go away." And he said, "Well, where would you go?" And I said, "Well, I thought maybe I'd go to Chicago and get a job with my friend Ben Abramson in his bookshop. I don't know any other place." And he said, "Well, why not California?" He said, "I've got some friends out there, the Calverts, and I'd think they'd put you up for a while. And I've got a friend who is the advertising manager, the public relations manager, of a cafeteria there, Boos Brothers, which is a big going outfit." And he said, "You could go out there." So I sent her out on the train to California, and she wrote back that the Calverts had been very nice to her and had taken her into their house. And then one day I just walked out of the

place, left a note saying I was going to California, and hitchhiked. Franklin Wolfe lent me about twenty-five dollars, and I started hiking, and I hitchhiked across from Texas to California.

GARDNER: That looks like a good place to end this side of the tape.

ZEITLIN: Yes.

TAPE NUMBER: I, SIDE TWO

JUNE 28, 1977

GARDNER: Now, you're leaving Fort Worth for Los Angeles.

ZEITLIN: Yes. I think this must have been in April of 1925, and as I said, I started out to hitchhike. I remember walking along the road crossing Pease River, which for me had great romantic appeal because it was the river named in a song that Carl Sandburg used to sing called "The Buffalo Skinners." "'Tis now we cross Pease River, / And homeward we are bound, / And no more in that goddamn country / Will ever we be found." A very gory western ballad. Then I stopped in Clarendon, Texas, to see the man who managed the Wagner Ranch properties, whose name I can't remember right now [Bob Moore], but he was known then as a great amateur ornithologist. And I stopped to see him, and he was very hospitable to me--fed me; and I went on my way and crossed over into Arizona. I think I went up by way of Roswell, New Mexico. I remember going through Gallup--almost got mugged by some tramps in the railroad yards in Gallup. The only thing is, they were talking Yiddish because they thought I didn't understand it, and they were going to get me off into a boxcar and take whatever money I had and my shoes. So when I answered them in Yiddish, they were

kind of surprised, and I got away from them.

Well, I think it must have taken two weeks for me to get across. I picked up rides as I went along; I walked long distances, crossed the desert; I got hungry. I'm not clear how I got across the Mojave; I think I hitchhiked a ride which took me across most of the Mojave into Daggett. In Daggett I had fifteen cents, and at the Chinese restaurant all I could get was a slice of bread for a nickel. And a man selling dairy products--cheese, milk, and other things--came along in his truck, and I asked him for a ride, and he gave me a ride, and we crossed over into lush, green California. And it certainly did look like paradise to me after that long, parched desert. We came down into Los Angeles, and I finally found my way to the house of the Calverts with a dime in my pocket. [laughter]

GARDNER: Down to the last dime.

ZEITLIN: I arrived here with ten cents and a pregnant wife and no job. These people [the Calverts], I found, were very poor and hardly had room for a bed in one small room in their house, so that of course we couldn't go on staying there, and I started looking for a job. How I came to get a job for a local Jewish paper [B'nai B'rith Messenger], I don't know; but I remember a man by the name of Joe Cummings who said, "Go out and interview

Marco Newmark. We're going to do a series about the history of the Jews of Los Angeles, and this is your first assignment." So I went and called on this man, Marco Newmark, and we got to talking. He was very friendly. And when he got through talking, I went back to the paper, and I said, "You know, I don't know a damn thing about California history. I wouldn't know where to start to do a story about this man. And unless you can give me some time to do some reading up on this, I can't get you a story." The guy said, "Well, I'm sorry, but you're fired." I think he gave me five dollars, and off I went.

I guess then I must have got the job at Boos Brothers Cafeteria, where I got fired for eating an orange.

GARDNER: A wonderful story.

ZEITLIN: A friend of the Calverts was a woman by the name of Miriam Lerner. Miriam was a very interesting woman who owned a house up in the hills at the end of Echo Park Avenue, close to what was then the Edendale Station, where the Red Cars stopped. She was a girlfriend of Edward Weston's, and she had been a model for a number of his photographs. She'd been very active in the Young People's Socialist League in Los Angeles. And she was E. L. Doheny's secretary, which was kind of a curious anomaly, but E. L. Doheny was pathetically dependent on her, and she was, of course, very close-mouthed, very

loyal. No matter what her personal views were, she never in any way let that interfere with doing her job for Doheny. And she ultimately decided she wasn't going to be a secretary for the rest of her life. She went off to Europe and was secretary to Frank Harris in Nice and helped, I think, with the writing of *My Life and Loves*. She ultimately came back to this country and worked for [Richard J.] Walsh, who was the husband of Pearl Buck. She was the editorial assistant for his publishing company, John Day and Company, and she helped edit *Asia* magazine. Ultimately she came back here to California. But that time, when she was Doheny's secretary, my friend Mellie Calvert spoke to Miriam Lerner and told her about me, and Miriam Lerner got me a job driving a gardener's truck for E. L. Doheny's oil company. My job was to drive this truck and help mow the lawns of all of the oil stations all over Southern California. I got a marvelous orientation because from Santa Monica almost to San Bernardino, and from San Pedro as far as Burbank, I would drive this truck with this gang and trim the lawns. One of my jobs, of course, was to load the truck every morning with fertilizer, so that I was always covered with this brown fertilizer dust when I would come home. . . .

By that time, Edith and I had found an apartment--an apartment house on Wilcox Avenue in Hollywood. It was

called the St. Katherine Apartments, and it was run by one of the meanest women in the world. In return for the rent of this tiny apartment, it was Edith's job to do all the slavey work in this apartment house--all the cleaning.

GARDNER: She had had your child by then, I assume.

ZEITLIN: No. Yes, she'd had our child by then. . . . No, the child was on the way.

GARDNER: She was still pregnant.

ZEITLIN: Yes. When I would come home, this woman said, "You can't have your husband coming in the front door covered with all that smelly fertilizer. He's going to have to come in the back door." And Edith and I said to her, "We're not used to going into back doors, and we're not going into back doors," so she fired Edith, and we had to leave and find a place to live. So we rented a little house out on what now is part of the grounds of University of Southern California. And I got a job. I went to see Holmes--Norman Holmes--of Holmes Book Company. And I think I have covered that.

GARDNER: I think that story is in there, right.

ZEITLIN: Yes. That was my first job in the bookshop in Southern California. I lasted, I think, about three weeks and then was fired for incompetence. And the night I got fired, Saturday night, I went home in tears. We

paid the rent, which had been overdue, [and] bought some groceries. I had a friend living with me--one of the crowd that had come out from Texas--a man by the name of Bates Walter Booth. He was sick at the time; he lived in this little house, in one room. And the next morning, by God, the house burned down. Well, we couldn't do anything but laugh--it was too tragic to do anything but laugh about--and we stood out, fought the flames, and laughed. That evening, there was part of the house still standing, and the rafters were opened to the sky. We had some food left, and we made a meal, [and] sat down with candles. My friend Bates said, "Well, Jake, I guess we've had it. We're licked. I think the best thing to do is to get in touch with our folks back in Texas, and they'll send us money, and we can all come home." And I said, "No. I'm gonna have the best bookshop in Los Angeles someday."

GARDNER: Ah, you didn't really say that.

ZEITLIN: Yes I did. Absolutely true. I said, "It's going to have the finest rare books in it; it's going to have hangings on the walls; it's going to have Oriental rugs on the floor; and I'm going to have Rembrandt etchings [and] Dürer prints in it. And I'm going to stay here, by God, till I get it." I must say, that like a lot of things when you're young and you don't know what's ahead of you, you've got a lot of spunk and optimism--and it's a good

thing. [laughter]

GARDNER: Apparently at that time that's about all you had, was your spunk and optimism.

ZEITLIN: Yes. We were all broke, and that night we slept in the attic of a neighbor's house. The next morning we went out to some distant relatives of Edith's that she had found out here. (South Los Angeles--not Compton, but something like that. It may have been Compton.) And we stayed there. The next day I went into the May Company and went to the woman in charge of the book department, a woman by the name of May Perks. May didn't look like much, but she was a very smart woman; and she also was a very sympathetic and good-hearted person. They didn't have much of a book department. As I look back on it now, I hardly see how it could have been called a book department, but it was. And I told her that I was a bookseller, that I'd had experience. I'd worked for Holmes, and I had worked in Texas for a few weeks in the book department of The Fair before I came out here, and I needed the job. And she said, "Well, go down and see the employment manager. I'll call him up and tell him that I'd like to have you in my department." And the next day, I went to work in her book department. Well, she was a very smart woman. She was the first person to get the idea of products connected with the

movie stars. And she developed all of the Shirley Temple products--Shirley Temple dolls, books, and so on--and she ended up a very rich woman.

I was there, I suppose, about a month, but I could see I was selling more books than anybody in the place. I could walk up to people and talk to them, and I knew the techniques of selling, which I'd learned partly in working in my father's business; so I was doing very well in terms of sales compared to the other people in the department. But I wanted to be in a place where there were better books, and at that time, one of the better book departments in town was in Bullock's. I went over there, and there was a kind of a burly, feisty woman there, very stern, by the name of June Cleveland. I think I've talked about her in some of the other things.

GARDNER: That was where you made your first . . .

ZEITLIN: I told her that I was working at the May Company, but that I wanted to do better, and I wanted to sell better books, and asked if she would give me a job. So she did give me a job there, and I worked there for about a year, and that gave me not only the opportunity to sell books, but also to meet a lot of people who became very important friends to me.

GARDNER: Right--some of whom were mentioned in that

first part, Mrs. [Milton] Getz, for example.

ZEITLIN: Well, no, [not] Mrs. Getz. I didn't meet [her] until after I had gone off on my own.

GARDNER: Oh, I see.

ZEITLIN: The people I met there were Will Connell and Phil Townsend Hanna and Maurice Warshaw.

GARDNER: Did you meet them through that? There's an area of confusion in my own mind. I'll try to clarify it. Is this now simultaneous to your having <u>Whispers and Chants</u> published, and having done the interview with Carey McWilliams and so on?

ZEITLIN: Carey McWilliams came to see me before I met any of these other people.

GARDNER: So, in other words, you had the book of poems published then, or at least about to be published.

ZEITLIN: Well, this is kind of confused. I was working in Bullock's book department. I hadn't had a book of poems published. And the first person that came in to the department that I met was this fellow Phil Townsend Hanna. He was interested in books; he was interested in Southwestern history. He was kind of a dandy in his dress, and later organized the Wine and Food Society here. He came in, and I started to wait on him and talk to him, and we got acquainted. And he was commencing to edit a magazine called <u>Touring Topics</u>, which was the

forerunner of Westways. It was the magazine of the Automobile Club of Southern California. And after he'd come in, he brought in Will Connell. Will Connell had some friends--one of them was a young woman artist by the name of Grace Marion Brown, a very striking, very fine young woman. And her boyfriend was a fellow by the name of Louis Samuel, who was the business manager for Ramon Novarro. He had gone to school with Ramon Novarro, and then he became the business manager. And these people sort of took me up. They invited me to their houses, and pretty soon we had quite a circle going. That was the beginning of a circle which later published a magazine called Opinion. But I met all these people there through Bullock's.

One man that came in one day was Julius Jacoby. He owned a wholesale men's-accessory business; he had the franchise for BVDs for Southern California. And somehow or another we started to talking, and he became interested in me. And then one day Carl Sandburg came to town. Well, Sandburg looked me up, and he said, "I'm going out to give a lecture in Beverly Hills at Mrs. May's house. They're paying me to give a lecture there." This was one of these cultural circles of the Jewish patricians of this town. I went with Sandburg, and this man Jacoby was there. The fact that I'd come with Sandburg,

I think, impressed him very much, so in a few days he came back into Bullock's and said, "How did you happen to be there with Sandburg?" And I said, "Well, I knew Sandburg in Texas. I met him there, and we've exchanged some correspondence. He asked me to come out with him." And Sandburg also, by that time, had published his American Songbag, in which he had a number of songs that I had given him when I met him in Texas. So I think this fascinated Jacoby. Anyhow, he said, "What can I do for you? Is there anything I can do for you?" Well, I said, "Quite frankly what I need right now is a doctor. I need to go and see a doctor because I'm having trouble. I'm losing weight, and I'm coughing, and so on." And he said, "Fine, we'll just fix that up." He arranged for me to see a Dr. Richmond Ware, who in later years became a very close friend. Richmond Ware was the nephew of Dr. Walter Jarvis Barlow, who founded the Barlow Sanitarium. And Richmond Ware looked me over, and then he reported back to Jacoby and to me that what I needed was to go into a sanitarium for a while: I had a spot on my lung. And, of course, I had a wife and a child; I had no money--[I] was getting twenty-seven dollars a week. And I said to Jacoby there's no way I could quit work. He said, "Don't you worry about that. We'll take care of that." At that time the Jewish community here was

headed up by a very fine man by the name of George Moschbacher, who was the father-in-law of George Behrendt. George Behrendt later was the father-in-law of Olive Behrendt, who is now active in [the] Hollywood Bowl and a lot of other things locally. Moschbacher said, "Don't you worry. We'll take care of you. We'll provide the money for your wife and child. We'll give her an allowance enough so that she can live off of it, and we'll pay for your expenses at the Barlow Sanitarium." And then I asked Bullock's if I could leave, and I went out to Barlow Sanitarium. I wasn't there very long--I suppose about seven weeks in all--but it was a very interesting seven weeks.

While I was there, I realized that I couldn't go back to work in the book department at Bullock's. One day a man by the name of Arthur Mayers came to see me, and he said, "You know, we've got a printing company, and I am interested in knowing what you're going to do with yourself and whether we can help you in any way. What do you plan to do?" And I said, "Well, frankly, I think the best thing I could do would be to start a business of my own selling books." And he said, "How would you do that?" And I said, "Well, I've put together the names and addresses of all the people that I sold books to when I was in Bullock's, and I think they're friends

of mine and would probably buy from me if I went to see them. I know a man by the name of Odo Stade, who is the manager of the Hollywood Book Store, and I think he would let me have books to deliver to my customers and give me a discount off of them." And so Arthur Mayers said, "All right, we'll print you some business cards and some stationery."

Before that, while I was at Bullock's, I had met a man by the name of Jim Blake, who was the western representative for Harper Brothers. I'd actually met him back in Texas--and I don't know whether in the course of this previous tape* I told the story of the princess from the Pecos.

GARDNER: That was the . . .

ZEITLIN: Beatrice Molyneaux.

GARDNER: Yes, you did.

ZEITLIN: Well, that's how I happened to meet Jim Blake. And Blake had--I'd met him again when I was working at Bullock's; and while I was in this sanitarium, he arranged to have a book a week sent out to me. And one of the books he sent me was Thomas Mann's Magic Mountain, just about the worst book a man could read when he was in a sanitarium, [laughter] but it made a tremendous impression on me. Later I had the opportunity of meeting Thomas

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* See Interview History--ed.

Mann, getting him to autograph my copy of The Magic Mountain, and telling him the story of how I'd gone through all the experiences of his characters. And he told me that this book had grown out of his experiences while he was in a sanitarium in Switzerland.

GARDNER: Well, how do we dovetail back now to Carey McWilliams and the poetry?

ZEITLIN: Oh, yes, I think we can do that. When I got out of the sanitarium. . . . I don't know whether I mentioned it; I just wanted to say a word or two about the sanitarium. While I was there, we started a little paper called The Temp-stick. There was a fellow by the name of Karyl Marker, who was an actor, a very fine-looking fellow, and he had been quite a success in the local little theater [and] had performed in some of the early presentations of Eugene O'Neill here, and he and I became fast friends. The other man I met there was a man by the name of Sigurd Varian. Sigurd Varian had been a flier. He had developed TB. He had been fired from his job as a pilot on commercial airlines in this country, so he went down to South America. And there he was flying very high altitudes over the Andes, and of course the first thing he knew he was hemorrhaging, and he had to come back to the United States [and now] was in this sanitarium. Sigurd Varian and his brother were the founders of the

Varian Associates.

GARDNER: Oh, my.

ZEITLIN: No one could have guessed this by the looks of the fellow that was there in that sanitarium at that time. And he and I and Marker used to play chess, and we sort of created a little circle. Right away we generated more excitement than the people in the sanitarium wanted, and they told me that I couldn't stay any longer because the patients were not supposed to be getting excited by all the things that Marker and Varian and I were doing. So that was mainly why I was dismissed. They also felt that I didn't have a serious infection, that it was arrested, and the best thing to do was to let me go out and go to work. So I went back to my house at 1623 Landa Street, which was down a dirt road--without a telephone--and I took my little pack of cards, and I started calling on the people that I had sold books to when I worked for Bullock's. I said, "Now, if you are buying books, tell me what you want, and I'll get them for you. They won't cost you any more, and I'll make a little profit." The first order I got was for twenty-seven dollars' worth of books, and I went to see Odo Stade at the Hollywood Book Store. He gave me the books at one-third off, which was his cost, and I took them out. I borrowed eighteen dollars to pay Stade for the books, took them out and

collected the twenty-seven dollars, and I had nine dollars profit. Now, the people who really bolstered me up then were Louis Samuel and Grace Marion Brown, who were living together. They bought books from me. And a fellow by the name of William Conselman--Bill Conselman and his wife [Mina]--he was doing very well indeed as a writer at Twentieth Century-Fox, or Fox Studios, as they were called then, and he had started a comic strip called "Ella Cinders." And very soon he was zooming up, making a great deal of money, and they took practically any book I would bring to them. Soon I had a little chain of people that I could go to once a week or so with a pack of books, and they took most of what I brought them. Jim Blake got me a line of credit with some of the publishers, and I started writing circular letters--direct mail--to my little list, promoting some of the books that these publishers were bringing out; just using the copy on their lists. And this brought me mail orders.

I suppose that now, as I look on it, I'm surprised at all of the different things I did, [and] the fact that I had the gumption to do them. Well, I had collected some of my poems, and I wrote to Carl Sandburg and asked him if he'd do a foreword. He wasn't really too enthusiastic about this, but my friend Frank Wolfe wrote to him and said, "You know, Carl, it would be a great boost to Jake,

and you would do him a lot of good, if you would write a foreword." So Carl wrote a very nice brief foreword. It was a kind of a noncommittal thing, saying that if I kept on I might write some good poetry someday.

GARDNER: Oh, it's much more positive than that, but that does paraphrase it in a way.

ZEITLIN: And I got Louis Samuel--he said, "I'll put up the money to publish your book of poetry. Let's go up to San Francisco and see the Grabhorn Press." Well, we didn't go to see the Grabhorns, we went to see Gelber and Lilienthal, which was a bookselling firm in San Francisco. It was a very fine firm, selling rare books and first editions, and the financial backer of the firm was Ted Lilienthal, one of the fine families of San Francisco. And Leon Gelber had worked in the book department of the White House, or the City of Paris, up in San Francisco, and had learned the bookselling game. So Gelber was the bookman, and Lilienthal was the backer. And they had a publishing imprint; they called it the Lantern Press. So we went to see them, and Louis Samuel bought quite a few books from them, which buttered them up very nicely. And he said to them that he would like to get them to be the publishers for a book of poems if we could get the Grabhorns to print it. So they said, "Of course." They introduced us to the Grabhorns, and I remember that not

only did I meet Ed Grabhorn, but I met Erskine Scott Wood, who was one of the great men of his time. And Ted Lilienthal and Sara Bard Field and Erskine Scott Wood all took me to dinner at Coppa's in the Alley, which was a great Italian restaurant--a sort of bohemian gathering place--the walls of which had been decorated by Maynard Dixon. It was San Francisco's bohemia. And I had lunch there; my, I was bug-eyed. And I came back down to Los Angeles, and I got the Grabhorns to put out a little circular on the book, so that by the time the book was out I'd circularized all the people I knew and all the people that were buying books from me and everybody else I could think of, and had enough orders to pay for the printing of the book and pay back my friend Louis Samuel for backing it. And when it came out, it was reviewed extravagantly in the _Times_ here, and it gave me a kind of a little name. And Carey McWilliams looked me up. At that time Carey McWilliams was in law school at USC, and he was part time doing stories, personal interviews, and so on for a magazine called _Saturday Night_. He called me up and came out one evening to my shack down on this dirt road at the north end of Echo Park Avenue, spent the evening with me, and did a story about me.

GARDNER: Now, that opened up another circle, didn't it? Or it seems to have.

ZEITLIN: Well. . . .

GARDNER: I'm thinking of Merle Armitage, Lloyd Wright, and so on.

ZEITLIN: Well, these people all were part of the Will Connell circle--in one way, as soon as I opened a shop, I started introducing these people to each other.

GARDNER: I see. So you were really the locus, then.

ZEITLIN: Well, in a way. Will Connell was very much a friend of all these people. Merle Armitage was the manager of the Los Angeles Opera Company, and Arthur Millier was the art editor of the Los Angeles Times, and all these people more or less clustered at my shop. And then we would have one of the more affluent ones--like Bill Conselman would give parties. And this grew into a rather wide circle. It included Lloyd Wright, the son of Frank Lloyd Wright; and it included Lawrence Tibbett, who in those days was a very famous opera singer. And whenever somebody interesting would come to town, we'd rope them in. We had Louis Untermeyer one evening, and Lewis Mumford. And the routine was usually they would come into the shop, then I would take them over to Will Connell, and Will would pose them and shoot these old-fashioned, cabinet-type photographs of them. Then we would all go to dinner to a French restaurant on West Sixth Street, René and Jean. The food was--I think dinner

cost seventy-five cents, and a bottle of wine cost another fifty cents, and we would then gather at my shop and talk and make a lot of noise and argue and generally have a hell of a good time.

GARDNER: Well, that gets us ahead of the game a little bit. I should probably double back and get you into the shop. Now, here you are toting your satchel around from place to place. What was it that gave you the impetus to settle down in a store?

ZEITLIN: Well, that also grew out of this circle of people. Lloyd Wright was one of the people in this circle, and Lloyd said, "Jake, you know you just can't go on this way dragging this heavy satchel of books"--he would see me dragging this book bag around--"and you know, you're going to have to start a bookshop." So I said, "Oh, that's very good, but you know I haven't got any money to start a bookshop with, and I haven't got any stock. I'm doing business out of other people's stocks." And he said, "Well, we'll find a place. We'll find a way to do it." So we went downtown, started looking around, and on the corner of Sixth and Hope Street, there was a T. J. Lawrence Real Estate Company, and they had a back doorway; this was about twelve feet deep and about eight feet wide. Lloyd said, "Why don't we ask those people if they would rent us that with the idea of your putting a bookshop in it." So we went

and talked to Mr. Lawrence, and I told him what I wanted to do, and he said, "All right, I'll do it." I said, "How much will you charge me?" And he said, "Thirty-five dollars a month." [laughter]

So then Lloyd drew up the plans for this shop, and it included a lot of cabinet work. All the bookcases and the tables and everything were to be prefabricated and then just brought in and put together and stained. And I went again to my friend Julius Jacoby and told him what I wanted to do, and he said, "Well, go out and see a man by the name of Bob Raphael. They've got a cabinet-making plant that's called Southern California Hardwood Company, and they put in store fixtures and things. Take him your blueprints and tell him I sent you. I'll call him up." So I went to see Mr. Raphael, and he looked them over. He said, "Well, it will cost you about $500, and you can pay me fifty dollars a month."

GARDNER: There you are for eighty-five dollars a month.

ZEITLIN: Yes. Then I went to Louis Epstein, who had a bookshop on West Sixth Street. Louis, as you remember, had the Acadia Book Shop. One day a man by the name of [Ralph] Howey came in and said, "Will you take"--I think it was--"$1,600 for your bookshop?" And Louis said yes. So he walked out of the store, gave the man the key, and he was at loose ends. So he would come to see me, and

he and I would go out looking for books together. And I told him about this, the fact I didn't have any books on the shelf--and Louis had already started accumulating stock for another bookshop. So he said to me, "I'll lend you some books. I'll let you have some to put on your shelves, but when I start my own shop I want back anything that you haven't sold." So I started with books that Louis lent me, with a few that I was able to buy, and with some books out of the collections of some of my other friends [which] they didn't want anymore; and they said, "Take them and put them on your shelf." So. And that was the way I started my bookshop.

TAPE NUMBER: II, SIDE ONE

JULY 26, 1977

GARDNER: As I showed you in the outline, number I is bookselling and letter A is early strategies of buying and selling, so I think you might begin talking about your perspective on the book business when you went into it--what you had in mind to sell, what you had to sell, and so forth. Let me intersperse here, when you finished last time, you mentioned Louis Epstein's giving you the stock . . .

ZEITLIN: Some stock.

GARDNER: . . . to open the first store. I thought that might be a good point to begin.

ZEITLIN: Well, it was not only Louis Epstein but several other people who lent me books so that I could fill my shelves. For instance, Louis Samuel let me have quite a few books, and there must have been others whose names I've forgotten now. I really started with the encouragement of a few friends. Some of them were in the book trade, and some were not. In the book trade there was Jim Blake, who represented Harper and Brothers and whom I'd met originally in Texas in a very peculiar way. Blake had been a bookseller in San Francisco many years ago; he had been actually a partner of Newbegin's and had started a bookshop of his own, and had failed, but had really

found his best medium as being a publisher's representative. And I'm sure that there was no one ever in the book trade who performed the wonderful function he did, had the great role that he did, with all of the booksellers, the book clerks, the book collectors and authors, that he did. He seemed to attract friends everywhere he went, and he seemed to spend more of his time doing things for friends than he did selling books. Every bookseller saved his problems and his troubles for Jim Blake to come around so that they could unload onto his ample shoulders and get his advice and get his help. And he was very willing and eager to help, and I have an idea that he must have lent thousands of dollars to indigent booksellers and book clerks in guaranteed credit. As an example, when I first left Bullock's in the spring of 1927 and went into Barlow Sanitarium, Jim Blake arranged for one of the bookstores in Los Angeles to send me a book a week so that I would have something interesting to read, and I must say that it gave me a great sense of having a friend in the outside world at a time when I had very few. Among the books which he arranged to send to me was Thomas Mann's Magic Mountain--hardly the book to read while you're in a TB sanitarium. But certainly I had the time and leisure to read it, which I have never had since.

Jim Blake, when I told him that I was going to start

up on my own, suggested that I get out some letters to possible customers, and he arranged with his publishing house and several other publishing houses to guarantee my credit to a reasonable extent, so that I could write a letter promoting a book and then be sure of being able to supply it if I had any customers. And among the first books that I wrote a letter about, promoted, was Angel's Flight, by Don Ryan, one of the very good early books about Los Angeles, the Los Angeles newspaper world, and the world of cranks and religious freaks. I had a mailing list made up primarily of the people who had bought books from me when I was at Bullock's--I had managed to put together a card file of their names and addresses--and in addition I was furnished with lists of names by friends; so I had perhaps a couple of hundred names that I could send out mailings to. And as I look back, I think I can say without undue modesty that they were very good letters. It's surprising what good results I got from them. It wasn't enough, however, to really make any money. What it did mainly was to bring me to the attention of quite a few people--100 people or more around town--so that my name was recognizable.

I had a great deal of help, and I can never stop remembering that. There were people who went out of their way to buy books from me who I am sure really didn't want

them. There were people who gave me credit, like Odo Stade, who was the manager of Hollywood Book Store, who gave me a [one-]third discount on books, on which I am sure, in many cases, he didn't have that much net profit.

GARDNER: To what do you ascribe all the generosity?

ZEITLIN: I have no idea, except that I was young, enthusiastic, innocent, and eager.

GARDNER: And all those other Horatio Alger adjectives.

ZEITLIN: Yes, all the other Horatio Alger adjectives. I think that the fact that I published in 1927 this book of poems with an introduction by Carl Sandburg must have given people the idea that I was a promising young poet. It was reviewed in the L.A. Times by Paul Jordan-Smith, who became a good friend of mine very early. And this, I think, gave me a certain standing, a certain distinction.

GARDNER: You mentioned also, after telling that Louis Epstein had given you the books, that there was an interesting story having to do with his wanting them back.

ZEITLIN: Well, at the time Louis Epstein lent me these books, he had sold the bookshop which he had on West Sixth Street--the Acadia Book Shop--to the Howey brothers, and he set out immediately going around and buying up books. So pretty soon he had a roomful of old books. He would go to the Salvation Army and the Goodwill, the other thrift shops, and go through their books, and pick

out the reasonably good ones, and buy them, and just stow 'em away. He also learned about the auction houses and taught the auctioneers that they could get more than ten cents a volume for their books when they put them up in lots, and so they very often would accumulate their books and let Louis Epstein have them at a knockdown price, rather than put them out at auction at the mercy of the merciless public. In time, the auction houses became a very good source of books for Louis.

For some months after I started, he continued to accumulate books, and then, after a while, he found a place of business over on Eighth Street [and] decided to open up again. So he came to me and said he wanted his books, the ones that I hadn't sold and accounted for. And I said, "Louis, you can't have those books because if you do my shelves will be empty." This was all very good-natured; neither one of us got mad. And I finally turned over to him what books were still unsold. But he's always made a big thing of it and a great joke that I wouldn't give him his books back.

GARDNER: Were your interests in books similar? It would seem to me that . . .

ZEITLIN: Well, at that time, any decent book interested me. I had a strong interest in English literature, contemporary English literature. And I remember I started

in buying from a firm in London by the name of William H. Jackson, who were distributors. They were brokers for publishers, and they would send me over packages of books of the prominent authors of the day. First they would send me lists and I would order five or ten copies of Martin Armstrong, and A.E. Coppard, and H.E. Bates, and Sylvia Townsend Warner, and the other prominent authors of the day, so that they came to me in bundles. And I was the only bookseller, for some reason, who was importing these books. They were seven shillings and six pence, and I think the average retail price was $1.75. I think one of the things that attracted people to me is that they learned very quickly that these English books in fine condition--the original dust wrappers all new--were coming in, first editions, and that they could get them from me. And as Larry Powell has had occasion to mention, books smell different: a book produced in England smells differently from a book produced in the United States, and pretty soon the place becomes permeated with the smell of the glue and the cloth and the ink which is used in those books. So I think my shop, after a while, developed the odor of English bookshops rather than the typical American bookshop. [laughter]

Now, at that time, I had a young woman who came to work for me. She had been a newspaper reporter on the

Los Angeles Record. Her name was Marjorie Butler. Marjorie was the most versatile, capable person you could imagine: She could type, she could use a paint brush, she could wrap packages, and she was willing and eager. And I actually gave her a fourth interest in the business and later had to buy it out.

GARDNER: Would that be on Sixth Street now?

ZEITLIN: That was on Hope Street. That was at the very beginning. Later I moved around on Sixth Street. But we sort of grew in different directions. We were different personalities. We sort of didn't continue to be simpatico. There was never anything but a friendship and a business relationship, but something didn't work. And at the same time, a very remarkable young man by the name of William Blaine Wooten came to work for me. Bill was a man who, if he had continued along the lines that he was developing when he worked for me, would have become, I think, one of the greatest modern calligraphers and designers. He had a very fine instinct for lettering, he knew types, he was extremely well read, he was interested in the whole movement of William Morris and Cobden Sanderson, he knew good graphic arts, and he had the techniques of lettering and binding and anything having to do with the book arts right at his fingertips. It was he who mounted some of my shows, and did the window cards, and

arranged the windows in a very tasteful manner, so that before long I think we had a unique quality about our place, in terms of the taste and the way that his taste reflected the then-growing tradition. We were getting books like the Nonesuch Press books in 1928, after they really got going; we were buying books from Douglas Cleverdon, who was just beginning his bookselling in Bristol--I think we were among the earliest and the largest customers that Cleverdon had in this country. I remember we filled a whole window with the book on the prints of Eric Gill which Cleverdon had published.

GARDNER: How did you know to--how did you find some of that Cleverdon? Here you were a bookseller in Los Angeles.

ZEITLIN: I don't know. I think that I just had the curiosity and the interest, and that I naturally gravitated towards that sort of thing. Where I got my models, I can't say--I think I must have come in contact with them even before I came out to California, but I have no remembrance of just what I encountered which started me off with a sense of the kind of printing and typography that was being produced by Cleverdon, the Nonesuch Press books. I think that together with that fact, I didn't hesitate to write to these people and tell them that I liked their books, and I would like to sell them.

GARDNER: Did you find yourself influenced by any other of the downtown booksellers? It seems that even at the beginning, you're setting off in a completely different direction.

ZEITLIN: Well, I think, of course, everybody was influenced by and admired Ernest Dawson. Ernest Dawson was a very generous man. He was a good-spirited man, and he was also a tremendously energetic man who inspired and stimulated other people. I remember that in 1928 on Christmas day, I was in my shop because I'd come down to get caught up on some things. I got a phone call from Ernest Dawson. He said, "I just got in a big shipment of books which Marks and Company" (who were his agents in London) "bought for me, cases and cases of incunabula." These days if somebody has four or five incunabula, it's quite remarkable. In those days Ernest Dawson would bring over a shipment of maybe 150 or 200 incunabula at one time. And he said, "Would you like to come over and see them?" I went over and, of course, here were these beautiful books in contemporary binding, some of them chain bindings. And he said, "I've got a lot of these here, more than I need for my shop, and if you would like to have some of them for your bookshop, you pick out what you would like, and you can have them for 10 percent above my cost." He didn't need

to do it; he could have sold them all himself. I have no reason--I cannot understand why he was moved to do this, but I certainly am grateful for the fact that he did. So I was able to take over to my shop maybe twenty or twenty-five of these beautiful fifteenth-century books. And when I opened after Christmas, I had something to show people that was really outstanding--would be distinguished today, more distinguished even I think than then, when fifteenth-century books were being brought over by Dawson and other booksellers--although nobody as much as Dawson--in large quantities.

GARDNER: I read a story--and I can't recall where it was, I'd have to shuffle through my notes, and I don't think I will--that Maggs came over here at one point and made contact as well.

ZEITLIN: Well, in 1928, I think it was, Ernest Maggs came over. I had written to Maggs Brothers, and I said, "I would like to have your catalogs, and if you need someone, I would like to represent you in the United States and do anything I can to show your things to people. If you want to send them over for me to show, if you have things that you think I can sell, I would appreciate your giving me an opportunity." So Ernest Maggs came to town, and he stayed at the Ambassador Hotel, and he called me up. I came down to the hotel, and he said, "I want to

go out to Mrs. Getz"--who was then one of the most important book collectors in this part of the world--"and would you like to come with me?" So I went out. He was very well received, and she had known me before [and] was very nice to me. And then he went out to see Mrs. Doheny. I don't remember that I went with him then. He had brought along with him a collection of first editions--The Deserted Village, Tom Jones, Gulliver's Travels. He had, oh, thirty or forty outstanding books, among other things a very good copy of, as well as I remember it, the second or third folio of Shakespeare. And he said, "Why don't you take these? I'll leave them with you. I don't want to take them back to England. Sell what you can. The rest of them, we'll let you know when we want them, where you should send them." And I said, "Mr. Maggs, you know, I'm not worth a cent. If those books were to be damaged or lost, I couldn't possibly pay for them." And he said, "Don't be foolish. Just take them, and I'm sure that you will be responsible." He loaded me into a taxi and sent me home with these books, so here I was right away with a beautiful collection of important English first editions. I never realized, really, what an exceptional collection I had, and I didn't know who to go to. At that time I hadn't yet contacted William Andrews Clark. I showed them to the

people that came into my shop. I tried to sell some to Mrs. Doheny, but she wasn't prepared to take them seriously, so that instead of my selling them to her direct, one of the New York booksellers got an order from her for a set of Tom Jones, or something like that, which I sent to him in New York, and he sent it back to California.

But the same thing worked the other way around. There were collectors in New York who wouldn't buy from New York booksellers. I would buy from those booksellers, quote them to the collectors in New York, and mail them back there. That was true in the case of a man by the name of Charles Kalbfleisch. Charles Kalbfleisch was a stockbroker on Wall Street. His office was a very short distance away from Byrne Hackett's Brick Row Book Shop. Byrne Hackett didn't have a very good reputation, unfortunately. He had a tremendous nose for good books and was a very imaginative, creative bookseller, but he evidently had a bit of the rogue about him. His brother was a well-known writer of the time. He did a book about Henry VIII. I'm trying to remember . . .

GARDNER: Francis Hackett?

ZEITLIN: Francis Hackett, yes. But Byrne Hackett had a distinguished stock of books, and he was a very brilliant bookseller, but he unfortunately had this tendency to

want to play the rogue once in a while, and this got him in bad with quite a few people. So I would order books from Byrne Hackett, or Byrne Hackett would write me and offer me books; I would in turn offer them to Mr. Kalbfleisch a few doors down the street from Hackett; Mr. Kalbfleisch would order them from me, and I would have to have them sent out here and then sent back to New York because I didn't want Mr. Hackett to know where I was selling the books. And so this thing works two ways.

There's always the glamour of distance. People seem to feel that if you offer them something, it is as if you've newly discovered it, that it has been buried in cellars or attics for 100 years, or that it's been created out of nowhere, there's a certain magic about it if it comes from a long way off. So that I have customers here in Los Angeles that would rather buy from dealers in New York and London, and in some cases the books they buy are books which these people have bought from me. And it works the other way around. I have customers in New York and London [and] other parts of the country that buy books from me that they woudn't buy around the corner.

GARDNER: Early on, who did your clientele consist of? Was it through the circle of friends that you made, or were there a lot of people who dropped in the shop?

ZEITLIN: I had wonderful support from a man by the name of Bill Conselman and his wife, Mina. If I needed money, I could just load up a pack of books. They were mostly interested in authors like James Branch Cabell and Theodore Dreiser, so I'd go out to their house, and they'd feed me and buy a couple of hundred dollars' worth of books. It saved my solvency more than once. Then along about 1928, Elmer Belt came in one day on the way to his office.

GARDNER: This is when you were still on Hope Street?

ZEITLIN: I was still on Hope Street, and he and his nurse, a Miss Theil, stopped, and he was so warm and friendly. And I remember the first book I ever sold him. It was a great big thick book, bound in vellum, and the title was Sepulcritum, and before long I'll remember the author. It was a book of post mortems, a seventeenth-century book, the first large collection of pathological case histories that I think had ever been put together. Bonetus was the author.

This book had been left with me by a man by the name of Charles Lincoln Edwards. Edwards headed the department of natural history with the Los Angeles public schools. It was a sort of teaching museum, and he also used to go around to the different classes and lecture. He was a lovely, inspiring man, and his wife was a charming woman, too. They were extremely well read people of very good

taste. He had been a professor at Stanford University. He was brought out from the University of Texas, where he taught before, by [David Starr] Jordan, who had been hired by Stanford to form Stanford University, and put together a staff. Charles Lincoln Edwards had then come down here to Los Angeles and had set up this department connected with the public schools, but finally the politics of the public school system closed up his whole museum, and his library, and all his lectures. There were lots of people until very recently who used to remember Charles Lincoln Edwards and his nature lectures. He was a very fine man, who, among other things, published what is probably the first American book of folk songs. It was a collection of songs from the Bahamas, Bahama Songs and Stories (Boston, 1895), which, I am glad to say, I have a copy of inscribed by him. He was quite an elderly man when I got to know him in 1925, and he was very kind to me. He and his wife took me into their house, encouraged me, treated me with great consideration, talked to me about all of the people they'd known in the world of science. They'd known David Starr Jordan very well, [and] a lot of other people; they were full of anecdotes, good spirits. I think they were very sad in their later years. They made unfortunate investments in avocado groves in Southern California, which everybody hoped to

make their fortune with. They didn't go. And they had a son who was a newspaperman and worked on the Los Angeles Examiner. I remained friends with him after they died.

But Charles Lincoln Edwards had accumulated a number of good books over the years, and when I think back on it now, I think what a pity it was that I didn't appreciate these books more. He had bird books of Gould and Elliot; he had very fine color-plate books of flowers. And he turned these over to me to sell for him. And it was out of the work that I did describing them and the research that went with it that I developed my interest in early science and the history of science.

GARDNER: Is that so? That was the origin.

ZEITLIN: I think that, probably more than anything else, except of course I'd always been an avid reader of what now would probably not be looked upon as very high grade scientific thought. I had read Karl Pearson's Grammar of Science, and I had read everything, every line, that John Burroughs ever wrote. I had read everything of Jean Henri Fabre--The Life of the Bee, The Life of the Fly, and so on--and I still think that he is one of the most poetic nature writers that ever lived. Of course, along with that I read Ernest Thompson Seton, and a man by the name of Roberts--some of the people who substituted

fancy for fact in their treatment of animals. But generally, somewhere along the line, I acquired a sense of the difference between science, the rigors of scientific logic, and the nonscientific way of thinking. I think that, really more than anything else, sort of set my course.

GARDNER: Mrs. Getz was also one of your important early clients, wasn't she?

ZEITLIN: Yes, she was really the client upon which I depended most, and I think without her I would never have gotten started as a real book seller. And it was her friend Julius Jacoby who called me and said, "Call up Mrs. Getz. She is collecting rare books, and she'll buy some from you if you call her." Well, as a matter of fact, she called me first. She called me up, and she said she wanted a set of the [Konrad] Haebler portfolios on incunabula, which at that time were being distributed in this country by E. Weyhe. The whole set probably didn't come to more than $1,000 or $1,200. Recently I sold a set for $10,000. But I naturally didn't have that kind of money, and I knew that Weyhe wouldn't give me credit, so I called up Mr. Jacoby and I said, "Your friend Mrs. Getz has given me an order for these books, and I haven't got any money to buy them with. How am I going to supply them if I can't get the money?" And he

said, "Go down to the Union Bank and ask for Mr. Joe Lippman." Well, it happened that Mrs. Getz's husband was the vice-president of the Union Bank. His name was Milton Getz. Her father was Kaspare Cohn, who had founded the Union Bank. But of course, Mrs. Getz didn't want them to know that she was buying rare books--at that clip, anyway. It wasn't good for your business associates to know that you were indulging in luxuries like that. Her brother-in-law, Ben Meyer, was the president of the bank also. So I went to Joe Lippman and said, "Julius Jacoby sent me to see you and borrow some money. And he said for you to call him up." So he called up Jacoby, and Jacoby said to him, "This young man is a young man with a future. He's a very respectable young man who's in the book business, and he doesn't have any money, and I want you to lend him some money. I will guarantee his account up to $5,000." There was absolutely no reason for this. And as a matter of fact, Julius Jacoby has always had a reputation--as a misanthrope. When I talk to people now, they say, "He was a mean son of a bitch. How did he ever do that for you?" But he did, and he never expected anything back. I never could do anything for him to compensate.

In any event, with this guarantee, I had some credit, so that I could go to the bank and borrow a couple of

thousand dollars and buy books and deliver them and get the money and pay them off and take the profit. The first thing I bought was this group of Haebler. There were five volumes in all. There was German incunabula; west European incunabula, which included Holland and England and Spain and the Flemish country; and then there was the Italian incunabula. And these were beautiful portfolios which contained single sheets from a number of the outstanding printers of all Europe. And among others, the set on west European incunabula contained a Caxton leaf, which in itself has become more valuable than the full set was then. It was Merle Armitage who told me to write Carl Zigrosser, the manager of the print department at Weyhe. That was then the outstanding art-book store in the United States. Weyhe himself was a real genius, a man of tremendous taste and great energy, and a very sharp businessman. And the man in charge of his print department was Carl Zigrosser, a young man who was just commencing his career, and in the course of time became the outstanding American authority on the graphic arts.

Artists were attracted to Weyhe. He exhibited them in a little gallery upstairs. It wasn't much of a place. I had an idea this was a great big handsome gallery. It wasn't. It was just a wall and a balcony upstairs

over the bookshop. But Weyhe had a great talent for accumulating books and for attracting artists, and he showed a great many of the first American printmakers, along with a lot of the very good prints of older artists. But what he really specialized in were people who for the moment aren't so well known--Emil Ganso, [Yasuo] Kuniyoshi, Rockwell Kent, Marie Laurencin. And he had prints by Picasso and Matisse for very little money. He had an enormous business built around his very special taste, and people flocked from all over the country to Weyhe's to see his exhibitions and to buy these new printmakers. He had a great deal to do with the graphic-arts renaissance of the twenties and thirties.

Carl Zigrosser responded very kindly to me and sent me out several exhibitions for my one wall which I always reserved for prints. I had an exhibition of Marie Laurencin; I had an exhibition of Rockwell Kent. The prints were provided to me; they gave me a discount, I sent back what I didn't sell. And then my first local show was Peter Krasnow, the lithographer who lived in Glendale and is still alive. My second show was the photographs of Edward Weston.

GARDNER: By this time, of course, you're on Sixth Street.

ZEITLIN: No, I was still around the corner. Then I moved. I'm shuttling back and forth, but it's all in

the 1927, 1928 period. And I think the fact that I was giving these exhibitions generated some excitement. Arthur Millier of the *Times* gave me little reviews; there were people who came in who were aware of all these new developments in the arts--in the graphic arts--[who] came and bought prints from me. There wasn't anyone else who was doing this. And small as my effort was, it was the only thing of its kind.

GARDNER: As small as your shop was.

ZEITLIN: Yes. But I had a lot of encouragement from people like Arthur Millier, who was the art critic of the *Times*; Merle Armitage, who was the manager of the Los Angeles Opera at the time and a collector of prints and graphic arts. And very soon this little shop of mine was a very busy place. I started getting out little brochures. I would send out postcards in which I reproduced an artist's work and announced that I had an exhibition. I didn't have any idea how insignificant these things were by comparison, and I was right.

TAPE NUMBER: II, SIDE TWO

JULY 26, 1977

GARDNER: We were talking about the relative insignificance of . . .

ZEITLIN: Well, my wall was about 6 feet x 8 feet, but it was the only wall in which these things were being shown, and through some peculiar stroke of luck I managed to get publicity for it. At that time no one else was doing this sort of thing; today it wouldn't be exceptional.

Now, showing Edward Weston was for me the beginning of what I continued to do through the years, and that is to show photographers. I didn't really know much about Stieglitz. I simply knew that in my opinion photography could be an art in the hands of a man who had the right eye. And I decided that I would show and offer for sale prints of photographers along with prints by wood engravers, lithographers, and etchers.

Strangely enough, while they sold for very little, there were people who bought them. Now, they bought very few in the long run, and I can remember--I have letters from Edward Weston in which he speaks very gratefully of my sending him twenty dollars. Finally we accumulated a tremendous number of his photographs and

offered them for sale. Edward decided to change the size of his print, the style of his mounting and everything, and suggested that I offer them for sale for $2 apiece. So now some of the prints which turn up on the market for $1,500 and $2,000 each--and now even $10,000--are those prints which I had for sale for $2.

GARDNER: I'd like to stop you here and get some digressions on some of these people you've mentioned--just short sketches, personality sketches--because so many of them were crucial in the era. Merle Armitage, of course, became an important man around Southern California.

ZEITLIN: Well, at that time Merle Armitage was the managing director of the Los Angeles Grand Opera Association. There were two impresarios in Southern California at that time; as usual, they were spectacular personalities. One of them was L. E. Behymer, who really deserves a monument, and for whom there should be a special biography because I think that Behymer brought more culture to Southern California from the turn of the century on into the thirties than any other individual. He was the concert manager of Southern California, and every great musician of any sort was presented by Behymer. When Merle Armitage came out here, it was as assistant to Behymer, in association with a concert manager in New York

by the name of Charles Wagner. Before that, Merle had been a sort of an assistant to Charles Wagner. He had been the company manager of the Diaghilev ballet when it arrived from Russia and traveled across the country, and that was very exciting, a very strange and bizarre adventure. This taught him a tremendous lot about being resourceful and dealing with temperament. For a while, he was associated with Behymer, but then he broke off from Behymer and I think he became a concert manager on his own or in association with Charles Wagner, who managed certain important American stars. He had a very close association with Mary Garden, and soon he was the manager of the Los Angeles Opera Association. He was a spectacular personality. He had style about him; he dressed as an impresario should. He had been born in Iowa. He had grown up in the Middle West. His name was originally Elmer Armitage, but he saw the advantage of changing it to Merle.

GARDNER: It's an anagram, too.

ZEITLIN: Yes. And he, as is the case with a lot of impresarios, was a combination of genius and con man. But I'm glad to say that I enjoyed the benefits of the best sides of his character. He had a great zest for living. I met him first in this group which circulated

around Will Connell, this group that never had a name, that used to meet at my shop occasionally and that published this magazine called Opinion. And in October of 1927, I think it was, Arthur Millier said, "Why don't you come on a trip to the Sierras with me." And I met Merle and Arthur at the end of Echo Park Avenue at the corner of Altivo Way. They picked me up, and off we went. Merle sported a Packard roadster, which was just about the peak of smartness. The only thing that exceeded it was a Stutz Bearcat. We started out and traveled along the east side of the Sierras. We swam in the streams; we ate at all of the out-of-the-way restaurants--and there were some very good Basque restaurants, there were some very good lumberjack restaurants, in places like Sonora. We went up the east side of the Sierras. We stopped at towns like Bridgeport and Carson City. We went past Mono Lake when it was really a very dramatic, somber place, to June Lake in the snow. For me it was a great experience, a really coming into life again. We stopped at Reno. We visited the cribs of Reno, which have just been closed down. (I read in the paper today that a last-minute effort to make them a cultural monument had failed.) Lawrence Tibbett, the great baritone, was a friend of Arthur Millier, and he had given Arthur some extra money to

spend on the trip, and Arthur shared it with us. We drank good cognac, and I remember reading to them from John Masefield's "Dauber" in the midst of a storm in one of our camps. We then proceeded to go over the Sierras through Truckee in the snow and down into Sacramento. We went to the State Library Building, which was just being finished then, and Maynard Dixon was painting the murals on the walls. They are there still, and they are really outstanding murals. And this was the beginning of my acquaintanceship with Dixon.

We proceeded to San Francisco, where we enjoyed the company of Albert Bender, one of the fabulous characters, Mr. San Francisco of his day. We ate at Coppa's. We met a man who later became one of the outstanding composers in Hollywood, Hugo Friedhofer; I think he was playing an organ in a movie theater or something like that--he was just barely living. We turned back and went up into the Mother Lode country; visited Angel's Camp and Columbia when they were still in fairly good shape. I remember going to Virginia City and going down into what had been the print shop where Mark Twain had worked. We went to Gold Hill, Nevada. We stopped at the Yellowjacket Mine, which was closed down, and the old-timer who was guarding the mine told us the story how Senator Jones of Nevada had

gone down into the mine to look it over. It wasn't producing, and they were going to have to decide whether to continue it or close it down--it meant the end of the economic well-being of a whole area. He came up, turned to the reporters who were there and said, "Boys, she's a sucked egg." That struck me as a truly apt description.

We went to Gold Hill, Nevada, which was partly in ruins, and there we went to the ruins of a bank, the Gold Hill, Nevada, Bank. The vaults had been broken open, and all the old certificates and the papers and the records of the Gold Hill, Nevada, Bank were laying around on the ground. I took a carton and put these papers, without any selection at all, into a carton and brought it back and just put it away at home. And over the years I have sold hundreds of dollars worth of stuff out of that carton of rubbish that was lying there in the rain and wind.

We turned back after going to the Mother Lode country, into San Francisco again, and then came down and stopped to visit Erskine Scott Wood, the man who had written Heavenly Discourse, a man who had had a great reputation. He had published the first edition of Mark Twain's 1601. He had been an Indian fighter on the frontier, and later in Portland had been a great defender of labor and a great liberal, and later moved

down to San Francisco and married Sara Bard Field and remained until his death one of the great American symbols of independence and defenders of free ideas. He looked like the Sunday school leaflet picture of God, with the halo of white hair around his head and his long white beard. He and this lady of about seventy, Sara Bard Field, had built a beautiful house at Los Gatos. Some sculptor up there--I don't remember his name just now, but I will [Benjamin Buffano]--had done a pair of stone cats which stood at the entrance to his estate, and we drove up the winding road. He met us standing out on the balcony, this grand patriarchal figure. He and this very dignified lady were living in sin, and would have remained living in sin if her grandchildren hadn't forced them to marry. I remember that he showed me Garrick's copy of the second edition of Shakespeare, and I opened it up. And I had a glass of wine in my hand, and I said, "Wait a minute, I have to put this wine aside." And he said, "Oh, no, no. Don't worry. If you spill wine on it we'll just say that it was spilled by Boswell or Johnson or Reynolds or one of Garrick's other friends."

From there we went down to Carmel. We stopped and called on [Robinson] Jeffers. He was very hospitable; so was Una Jeffers. They didn't repel us. It was

before Jeffers had really got to be very famous. He had published Roan Stallion and I think possibly The Women of Point Sur, but it was before the masses had started to invade his privacy. And in spite of the fact that he was supposed to be a recluse, we found him very friendly and hospitable. And instead of being the closemouthed character that he appears from his photographs, I learned then--and confirmed later in the times when I saw him--that if he got a chance to be alone without Una, he was talkative to the point of being garrulous, which I'm afraid I am being now.

GARDNER: That's precisely what you're supposed to be. Did you have any introduction to Jeffers? Had you corresponded, or Armitage or Millier corresponded, with him?

ZEITLIN: I think I may have written him a letter. When his Roan Stallion came out, the Liveright edition, I was in the book department of Bullock's. And I read it, and I said, "That guy is an important poet, and I think this guy is going to be one of the important American poets, and certainly the most important poet of the Pacific Coast." So I persuaded the manager, June Cleveland, to order a quantity of the books, and I started selling them. And I don't know just how it was; I may have dropped him a note. In any event, when

I got to Carmel, I wasn't unknown to him. Una was very hospitable, too. She was, of course, very protective, as she was later on completely possessive; more and more as time went on, she cordoned Jeffers off, partly because he couldn't stand the pressure of all the people that wanted to get at him and partly because she was so terribly possessive and didn't want to lose him.

There was one rift in our friendship, and that was a few years later when a man by the name of Ramiel McGehee, who lived in Redondo Beach, turned over to me a group of letters and postcards which Robinson Jeffers had written to a foster mother, a woman that lived in Redondo, about himself and Una at a time when Una and Robinson had left Una's husband and gone up north (I think they went to Seattle, Vancouver, and they wrote a number of postcards to this foster mother). Well, Ella Winter, who was married to Lincoln Steffens, was eagerly collecting anything having to do with Jeffers. And when I got this material, I immediately sent a list of it to Ella Winter. She in turn told Una Jeffers about it, and I got a very heated, very . . . well, I guess you could call it "disagreeable" letter from Una asking me how I dared offer these things for sale; how could I think of selling anything that was so intimate. And so I wrote back and said to Una I was

surprised to discover that these offended her; that these were for sale, that they had been brought to me by a man who owned them who was offering them for sale, and that I had no interest in trying to cause her any embarrassment, and that I had returned the letters to this man and told him I didn't want to have anything to do with it. I'm very sorry I did; I should have bought them from him and put them away [laughter] because today they would be worth a great deal of money. And not only that--they would be essential to the story of the relationship of Una Kuster, as she was then (she was married to a man by the name of Kuster in Carmel), and Robin Jeffers.

GARDNER: Did he ever do anything with the letters?

ZEITLIN: I don't know what happened to them. I haven't the slightest idea.

GARDNER: You never saw them on the market, though.

ZEITLIN: I never saw them on the market. He died, and they disappeared. And whether they survived and came into someone else's possession, I don't know.

This man Ramiel McGehee was an interesting character who had gone to Japan with Ruth St. Denis. He lived in a little house in Redondo, and he was a friend of Edward Weston, and later of Merle Armitage. He helped Merle Armitage produce a cookbook. He

stimulated a couple of young fellows living down at Palos Verdes--they were longshoremen who had turned lifeguard--into writing. One of them was Lee Jarvis, who had been an Olympic swimmer, and the other was a very beautiful young man by the name of Grant Leenhouts, who managed the swimming club at Palos Verdes. Grant wrote several good stories, one of which appeared in the American Mercury, and then one of them was reprinted in the O'Brien Best Short Stories. The group sort of . . . some of the group--Merle Armitage; Ramiel McGehee; Edward Weston; an interesting woman, a lesbian by the name of Tone Price, who followed me out here from Texas; and a very beautiful young woman whose name I can't remember right now--well, there were a considerable group of us which used to go down to this swimming club in Palos Verdes. We would hold great parties there at night after the natives of Palos Verdes, who were paying for the club, had gone to bed. [We would] broil lobsters, and have great songfests, and dance, and talk, shout. Later, I introduced a novelist by the name of Myron Brinig into this group, very much to my regret.

Myron Brinig was a sort of a sulky baby elephant, and he had a certain way of winning your confidence. He had published a couple of books about his family in

Montana, a couple of novels. I took him down there, and later he published a novel called Flutter of an Eyelid in which he tried to do a Southwind about this group. He made me into a very ugly character. It was, I thought, very unkind; and it was, more than that, a betrayal of an effort to be a friend to him when he was lonely and needed friends. The publishers made the mistake of sending me a set of the galleys before it came out, whereupon I immediately notified the publishers that this set of galleys, if they published the book in that form, constituted libel, [and] that I was going to take action. And I got in touch with a friend here, a young lawyer by the name of Homer Crotty, who later got to be one of the very important figures in Southern California. Through him, I got in touch with a man I'd known before, John J. McCloy, a rising young lawyer and a member of the firm of Cravath, Somebody, Somebody, Somebody (DeGardsdorf, Swaine, and Wood), one of the leading law firms in New York City. John McCloy later became the high commissioner to Germany for the United States and is now, I think, the president of the Chase Manhattan Bank. But at that time he was a relatively young man of promise. I asked him what he thought could be done about this book. Well, he got in touch with their lawyers, and their lawyers immediately sent someone out here who got a hold of them and

told Farrar and Rinehart, the publishers, that I had one of the most important law firms in the United States representing me. [laughter] They couldn't believe it. They thought this little jerk out here in California couldn't muster any influence or force, and it was purely by accident. So they sent another man out here. First they had Leslie Hood, who was the head of A. C. Vroman company in Pasadena, call me up and come to see me and try to persuade me that it would be all right, that there was nothing wrong about this book. And then they sent their own representative out, and I made a mistake. He persuaded me to go ahead and strike anything I wanted out of the book and let them go ahead and publish it. I should have consulted McCloy and said, "What do you think I ought to do?" I think McCloy would have had them on the carpet for a half a million dollars. In any event, I agreed to their proposal. In the meantime, they had issued advance review copies of this book, and they sent out telegrams and sent personal representatives to every reviewer that received a copy asking for it back. And, I'm told, they've destroyed these. I kept mine, and I have from time to time been able to buy a copy or two. One of the copies I bought was from a dealer in Beverly Hills, Max Hunley. He showed me the book, and he asked me if I wanted to pay fifty dollars for it, and I said,

"No, that's blackmail." And he said, "Well, if you won't pay fifty dollars, will you write something in it?" And I said "Sure," and so I wrote, "This book is inscribed in memory of a louse I once knew. --Jake Zeitlin." A few months later the book turned up with an inscription underneath: "Says you. --Myron Brinig."

GARDNER: That's amazing.

ZEITLIN: The book was not much of a book. There needn't have been any fuss about it because it didn't sell. Nobody took any interest in it. None of us were prominent enough to make good news stories. The book died on the book counters and was forgotten.

GARDNER: To return to your trip with Armitage and Millier, was the Jeffers visit in Carmel the last stop?

ZEITLIN: Yes. We stopped in Carmel--I think those are the last people we saw. We may have stopped in Santa Barbara, where Brett Weston was living at the time and doing photography. And then we came down the coast. It was like an Arthur B. Davies landscape as we drove through it, not knowing how much road there was ahead of us or what there was beside. It was like a dream sequence in a fantasy movie.

GARDNER: You've described Armitage. Could you describe Arthur Millier a little bit--what he was like then, perhaps, and something about your friendship with him?

ZEITLIN: Arthur Millier had been born in Great Britain. His father was a music teacher. He came to San Francisco, I think, when he was in his teens. His first job was as an artist in the Schmidt Lithograph Company, who specialized in labels for bottles and cans and boxes. They were the biggest producers of lithographic labels on the Pacific Coast at the time. Now, how he got down to Los Angeles and how he got to be the art editor of the Los Angeles Times, I don't know. The man who preceded him was also an Englishman, and I can only remember his first name, Anthony [Anderson].

Arthur became the art editor of the Los Angeles Times without any training, I think, either as a newspaperman or in art history or art criticism. Newspapers in those days, if somebody came along who said, "I will write the music criticism" or "I'll write the art criticism," didn't examine their credentials any more than they do now. I mean, a guy like Bill Wilson or Henry Seldis was never really trained to be an art critic; they're journalists.

Arthur had an engaging way about him. I think he tried to stay free of any commitments to the people who had art galleries, but naturally he couldn't help but develop certain friendships, like those with Earl Stendahl, who had a leading gallery at that time and who was really showing some very important things here. I know the first

showing of the Guernica of Picasso was in Earl Stendahl's gallery. After all, it's the art dealers who provide the medium through which art is exhibited. Without them, you would not have an art world anyplace. And a city like Los Angeles owes a great deal to all the different men--like Earl Stendahl, and Dalzell Hatfield, and Frank Perls--who had the enterprise, the courage, to present some of the important artists of their time, and promote them, sometimes without very much financial success but always with great enthusiasm. I think they proved what artists need to learn over and over again: that art dealers are entitled to make money off of art because they will give half a dozen shows or a dozen shows in which they make no sales at all, and then they have to hope that they will have one exhibition that makes some money. And when they do, very often the artist whom they've put on the map will turn around when he's successful and leave him, try to sell the clients direct or go to a bigger, more influential gallery. I've had that experience myself, and that's one reason why I don't deal in living artists' work. I think the most manageable artists and the most grateful ones are dead artists. [laughter]

Well, anyway, I'm not talking much about Arthur Millier. Arthur Millier was a good talker, a good conversationalist.

He wasn't a great intellectual, but he certainly wasn't an ordinary man. He had immense charm, and he had great attraction for women--and I think he had great attraction also for men who liked his conversation and his company. He lived in Santa Monica Canyon. When I met him first, he was married to a beautiful dark-haired, dark-skinned woman by the name of Francine. She was half-Indian, and before he had met her she had been part of a race-track, sporting-world crowd. She was a great friend of people like Baron Long, who ran the Agua Caliente race-track and built the Los Angeles Biltmore, operated some of the famous nightclubs of the day. But she had married Arthur Millier, and they had had three children and were living quietly in Santa Monica Canyon, and it all seemed like a quiet and settled life. Then they moved out near El Monte, to a small place which had more ground on it. The children could have horses, and they were out in a semirural atmosphere.

And then Arthur became a great Lothario. Ultimately he became involved with a Southern woman by the name of Sarah, a public relations woman. And he completely went to pieces. He and Sarah took to drinking. They became impossible at social events and art openings to which they were invited, and they finally got down to living in a single room on Skid Row with nothing but a

mattress on the floor, drinking and just down in the gutter. They seemed absolutely helpless. And something happened, something I've never understood and could never explain, but they got out of it. Somebody got them into Alcoholics Anonymous. By that time his wife had divorced him. He ultimately married Sarah. They stopped drinking; they straightened out; they cleaned up; they got an attractive apartment; she again became a public relations woman, which she had done very well before. And in the last years of their lives, they lived very stable lives. He died of lung cancer about five years ago.

The one tragedy of Arthur Millier was that he was really a very fine watercolorist and a very fine etcher. About 1936 or '37, I gave an exhibition of his watercolors, and I think they were outstanding. They were in the tradition of the English watercolors. And about the only person that bought any of them was the woman who was the most generous and one of the finest patrons that Southern California ever had, Susannah Dakin. Susannah bought some of his watercolors; I don't know who else did, but very few of them sold. His etchings were in the tradition of Rembrandt and Seymour Hayden. They had great richness and, I think, a very fine feeling for the medium, and they sold very little. I think I had two

exhibitions during his lifetime. In his later years, there was an exhibition at Barnsdall Park, and I made an effort to get the sponsorship to publish a book of his etchings; but they never were published, and I think they still should be. And I hope if I live long enough and can assemble the capital that a catalogue raisonné of his etchings will be published, because I don't think a finer etcher has ever worked in the western United States, and I think it's a tragedy that he remains unrecognized.

TAPE NUMBER: III, SIDE ONE

AUGUST 2, 1977

GARDNER: We finished up last time talking about Merle Armitage and Arthur Millier, and I thought it would be interesting to go from that and talk a little bit about Opinion magazine, which was the joint product of yourself and a number of the members of the young literary community of Los Angeles.

ZEITLIN: Well, Opinion magazine was the outgrowth of the social activities, really--the getting together of a number of different kinds of people who used to circulate around my shop, have parties, and eat and drink together. It was a very widely diversified crowd. It contained people of the extreme right, like Phil Townsend Hanna, and people who would have been characterized as pretty far left, like Carey McWilliams. There was Judge Leon Yankwich, who later became a federal judge, who was one of the members of the group. There was a man by the name of José Rodriguez, who was a very lively, talented, charming Latin American, and quite a rapscallion besides, who wrote the perfect kind of yellow journalism that Mr. Hearst liked on his Examiner. There was Lloyd Wright, the architect; there was Arthur Millier; there was another newspaperman, by the name of Ted Leberthon; Will Connell,

the photographer; Kem Weber, who was a furniture designer; Grace Marion Brown, who was a graphic designer; Henry Mayers, who was in the printing and advertising business and quite a tight-laced teetotaler, quite the opposite of most of the other members of the group. I can't remember the names of all the rest. There was Paul Jordan-Smith, who had written several novels and had edited Burton's _Anatomy of Melancholy_; and Merle Armitage. And somehow or another these people managed to enjoy the kind of free-wheeling exchange of ideas and ribaldry and storytelling and joking that went on in the group.

So the idea occured to some of us that it would be great to publish a magazine. Well, there were about twenty people in the group, and each issue was supposed to be edited by one or more members of the group. They were to gather material from various contributors, and then we each contributed $5 apiece, which made a total of $100. Phil Townsend Hanna had a connection with a printing plant, a commercial printing plant, called Wolfer Printing Company; I don't think Wolfer Printing Company made any money out of _Opinion_. We managed to get out a total of seven issues. They had a variety of contributors--Leroy MacLeod, a novelist; Hildegard Flanner, a poet; Carl Haverlin, Gordon Ray; E.T. Bell; and I can't remember who else.

GARDNER: What was the content?

ZEITLIN: The content was quite varied. Some of them were essays, and some of it was poetry. Some of them were political opinions, and some was fiction. And finally, of course, it sort of collapsed. It ran out of steam. And it had no opinion, so there was no unifying philosophy behind it and no motivation that would keep it going. This random self-expression wasn't enough. We did get out these six issues. My bookshop was the address of the publication. There was no actual publisher listed, and few copies were distributed. We got a few subscriptions. We mailed out some to other magazines on exchange, and we sent some to libraries, and a lot of them remained undistributed.

GARDNER: They must be quite a collectors' item now.

ZEITLIN: I don't know. I don't think anybody is really bustin' his britches to get together a set. [laughter] Certain issues are harder to get than others, and I'm not sure that even I have a complete set of them. The group was never anything like a fixed group. People came and went. They swam in and out of the school, and there was certainly nothing like one directing personality.

GARDNER: What exactly was your role? Did you have a specific role?

ZEITLIN: Well, the only role I had was that I would sort

of announce to these people, call them up, or get in touch with them as they came in and say, "Well, we're all going to get together next Friday night." Or I would say to one of these people, "Well, you're the editor of the next issue, so you better start calling on all the other people to get some material together." I would set deadlines. And then my chief function other than that was to mail them out and to collect the five dollars apiece and pay the printing bill.

GARDNER: Did you do any poetry?

ZEITLIN: Yes, it had some of my poetry in it. It had translations of Japanese haiku by Carl Haverlin. It had political essays by Carey McWilliams. It had a short story or two. I can't remember who all the contributors were now; there were contributors outside the group. It turned out, however, that being nonpaying and not promising a very wide circulation, there wasn't much of an appeal. I don't think we ever got anything out of John Steinbeck or Faulkner or Jeffers, but we really never solicited them, either. We might have gotten. . . .

So this was a little bit of a symptom. I think it can be characterized as sort of a symptom of a ferment that was going on in a place that really hadn't arrived at anything like the cultural maturity that it has now. A great many of the people that were part of this group

became successful in one way or another. Some of them reached their limit of success fairly soon and didn't go anywhere beyond that. But it was an interesting symptom of the kind of vitality that there was in the community, and of the variety of interests and impulses that wanted to find expression.

GARDNER: Was it a monthly?

ZEITLIN: More or less. [laughter]

GARDNER: And what was the style of printing, and who was responsible for the printing? Oh, you mentioned the shop.

ZEITLIN: The cover was designed by Grace Marion Brown, and that was uniform throughout. Some of the design was done, I think, by Merle Armitage and some by Henry Mayers. I really have no idea how it happened to get the particular format it did, because there wasn't anyone among us that was really a typographer. Grace Marion Brown was a designer, and she designed the cover; the general format followed from that.

GARDNER: What was the size? Was it a regular magazine size or larger?

ZEITLIN: It was approximately--I suppose it was 8 X 12 or thereabouts. Yes, it was normal magazine size.

GARDNER: And how many pages per issue?

ZEITLIN: It must have been twelve to sixteen pages.

GARDNER: It's a fascinating and little-known part of Los Angeles history.

ZEITLIN: Yes, well, I don't think that it blasted any new pathways or created any great convulsions, but it certainly had a touch of the big city about it--the big city that was coming to be.

GARDNER: The next area that I've mentioned to you was the area of your own publication. (I don't mean Primavera Press, because we agreed that we'd try not to talk too much about that since it's so well covered elsewhere.) In going through the archives I found publications like Booksworm and Booksheet, and of course you did catalogs from the time you were on Hope Street.

ZEITLIN: I don't remember anything called the Booksworm. I used to get out--I would try to write something a little lively for a Christmas sheet. It would be a large sheet that would fold down into a mailer, and it had some exhortations and essays and enthusiasms about books and art. I think that my whole idea of reaching the book buyers--partly influenced by Henry Mayers, of Mayers Company advertising, and then by Dana Jones, a very nice man who loved books, had a particular addiction to Christopher Morley and McFee (both people who are forgotten now, more or less--they certainly have been eclipsed and aren't noticed very much--but who had a large follow-

ing in their day: William McFee, who wrote stories about the sea; and Christopher Morley, who wrote charming, sentimental essays about books and bookish things, and also wrote one very good novel, aside from several lesser sentimental things like _Where the Blue Begins_, and _Parnassus on Wheels_, and _The Haunted Bookshop_--all which had to do with everybody's wish to be a bookseller or to have a bookshop on wheels and travel around the world, in other words to have all the advantages of an establishment and not be confined to one place). Dana Jones was in the advertising business. He took an interest in me and made suggestions about these large sheets, which could then be folded up so that you could do the whole thing in one press run without having any stitching or binding to do. And they became a sort of a standard style, if I ever had one standard style. The other thing is, when I first started my bookshop, I made it a point the first thing in the morning to sit down and write ten postcards to ten customers telling them something about some book that might interest them, or just reminding them that I was still there and would like to see them stop in. So as time went on, this did bring a good many people in, the fact that I remembered to write them and say, "There's something in here that interests you." In those days, of course, postcards only

cost one cent to mail. Later on, I got a larger mailing list; and when I would have an exhibition, I would put some artist's drawing on the back of the postcard together with a message saying that there was an exhibition--and these went out once a month to everyone. I think they did a lot to get people's attention to the shop.

GARDNER: What about catalogs? Did you do catalogs from the earliest moment?

ZEITLIN: The first catalog I did was, I think, in 1928, and Wilbur Needham, who had come out here recently. . . . He'd been a book reviewer on one of the Chicago papers, and his wife, Ida Needham, a very lovely person--both of them really very much loved people. They were innocent like children; they never did grow up. He was deaf, and he was as beautiful as we think the young Shelley must have been. They started a little bookshop out in Santa Monica. He also did reviews for the Los Angeles Times. But after a while somebody labeled him a Red, and he was no longer allowed to do the reviews under his own name. So he did reviews, and in return for the reviews he would get the review copies of the books, which he could sell to bookstores. That was what he and his wife lived off of for a long time, but he did the reviews under pseudonyms.

GARDNER: What were some of them, do you know?

ZEITLIN: I can't remember now. But he did the foreword to my first catalog, which was published in 1928 and was a very nicely designed catalog on cream-colored paper--a pocket-sized catalog, not a large one but one that I figured that people could slip in their pocket and read while they were riding home on the streetcar. And it did fairly well. It could hardly have been called a financial success, but on the other hand, it succeeded in bringing a lot of people in. At that time I had a logo which was a grasshopper. People used to ask me why I used the grasshopper, and I said, "Because like the grasshopper in Aesop's fable, I fiddled and sang in the summertime and froze and starved in the winter."

GARDNER: Even in Los Angeles. Who did you send the catalogs to at first?

ZEITLIN: I sent them to libraries. It was easy to get lists of university libraries.

GARDNER: Nationally?

ZEITLIN: Yes, I sent them around fairly widely. I'd send them to places like the University of Chicago Library, University of Illinois, University of Iowa, University of Texas, and then I would send them to certain public libraries; for instance, Cleveland Public Library was then a very active buyer of old books, and the New York Public Library, of course, was really in its prime and

bought very heavily. And the Library of Congress was also buying. And then I sent them to booksellers. And of course the directories of booksellers, the names that would appear in the Book Wanted section, the Out-of-print section of the Publishers' Weekly. There was no AB [Antiquarian Bookman] when I started; there was a separate section of the Publishers' Weekly which was edited by Jacob Blanck, and later on it became a separate publication, the AB, and it was bought by Sol Malkin, and set itself up as a separate business from Bowker. Publishers' Weekly originally was the medium through which all booksellers and all publishers advertised.

GARDNER: Bowker still does Publishers' Weekly, doesn't it?

ZEITLIN: Oh, yes, it still does Publishers' Weekly, and it's the chief medium for the publishers to get their books to the attention of the booksellers. It's the outstanding book-trade journal. It does a very good job.

I think that I was also responsible for the first book fair that was held in Los Angeles, and that was held at the Los Angeles Public Library. June Cleveland of Bullock's, Leslie Hood of Vroman's in Pasadena, and myself formed the committee. And we got the publishers interested in sending exhibitions and got their representatives to come, and we had a publishers' book fair

(it was really not a booksellers' book fair) at the Los Angeles Public Library, and that I believe was in 1927. I even have a letterhead of that. And that was, I'm sure, the first book fair held in Los Angeles. I was the secretary.

GARDNER: What sort of business were you doing in those days?

ZEITLIN: Well, I think I mentioned before that I had learned about a firm in England that was exporting English authors, and they would get out a regular weekly bulletin describing what was being published by Martin Armstrong and A.E. Coppard and John Galsworthy and whoever was popular in the late twenties and early thirties. And I would order quantities of them--anywhere from five to twenty-five copies--of these first editions of Virginia Woolf and Robert Graves, [and] a great many other of the new authors of the time. They would arrive in packages smelling differently from American books--the peculiarly different smell of the glue and paper and printer's ink--and I would stack them up with their different-colored jackets and designs from the American books; and people would come in and buy, and it got to be a regular thing. Some people even said, "Send me everything by a certain author as you get it in." So I had a certain number of customers to whom, for

instance, I could send anything by Virginia Woolf or anything by Martin Armstrong, or anything by A.E. Coppard--these were some of the popular people--or Sylvia Townsend Warner, whom I remember particularly. This, of course, helped keep the business going. There wasn't much profit in any one of these things; in fact, I think that probably they were a loss. The money that a small bookshop makes has to be made out of secondhand books and buying large groups of secondhand books for small prices per unit. You can't make money out of handling new books in a small bookshop, because too many of them remain afterward, and in those days there was no returns policy.

GARDNER: Especially to England; it would have been impossible.

ZEITLIN: There was <u>no</u> returns policy to England; and the American books which I ordered, I had to either sell 'em or swallow 'em. And very often I was very much in debt to the publishers for books which hadn't sold and kept accumulating in the shop. I think the easiest way for a bookshop to commit suicide is to buy new books from publishers when it hasn't got the volume of a bookshop like Pickwick or Hunter's or so on, with hundreds of people coming through the place.

GARDNER: What kind of money were you making in those days?

ZEITLIN: Very little. I have no idea yet how I managed to keep the doors open. The landlords were very indulgent. West Sixth Street wasn't the street it is today, and there wasn't a great deal of demand for locations. There were some cheap hotels and restaurants along the street, and there were secondhand bookstores and other such things in the area below Grand. We made hardly enough to feed ourselves [or] to pay the rent, and very often we fell very far behind on the rent and very, very far behind in paying the publishers. Maybe after a couple of years and the publishers kept on digging at us, we'd write to them and say, "Look, we can't pay you. Do you want us to shut up our place?" And they'd say, "No, pay us half of what you owe us, and we'll be glad to let you go on doing business." Because they needed the outlets, too, and everybody was in the same boat.

GARDNER: You must not have kept carbons of those because not very much of that remains in the archive that I went through.

ZEITLIN: Oh, there is a lot of correspondence concerning settlements with publishers.

GARDNER: Yes, that's true. There is some.

ZEITLIN: If you read Kathy Thompson's account of the shop in those days, you'll find quite a bit of reference to those ups and downs.

GARDNER: There's a lot of reference, but very seldom is there a copy of a publisher saying to you, "Well, that's okay."

ZEITLIN: Oh, well, there were plenty of them saying "Pay your bills or else."

GARDNER: "Or else," right.

ZEITLIN: Well, in those days I was looked upon as a promising bookseller and used to get visits from Bennett Cerf, who was just starting in; he and Donald Kloepfer had worked for Horace Liveright. They had been stockboys and just worked in the place, and they broke off and went into publishing for themselves--started Random House. Cerf used to come out and visit me. At that time Bennett Cerf had an interest in fine printing, partly because of Elmer Adler, who was a member of the firm and who separately had a printing plant that he called the Pynson Printers. I was interested in press books and used to buy a lot. In fact, I think I was the largest outlet on the Pacific coast for the Nonesuch Press books and the Golden Cockerell Press books that were being published at the time. Things like the Four Gospels of Golden Cockerell Press with Eric Gill's engravings were seventy-five dollars, and I would take four or five of them, which was really considered phenomenal. Today those same things bring twelve-, fifteen hundred dollars apiece. The

Golden Cockerell _Canterbury Tales_, with Eric Gill's illustrations: I had customers who had subscribed for sets, so that I think I may have at one time had standing orders for six or seven sets. And then I remember the Nonesuch Press Shakespeare, for which I think I must have had about ten standing orders; there were projected to be seven volumes, and they were coming out, oh, two or three a year. This was considered quite phenomenal by Random House, which was distributing these books in this country. So they took an interest in me and were very friendly and encouraged me. And at one time Bennett Cerf sent an uncle of his out here with the idea that maybe I would get together with the uncle and we would found a handpress and do some hand-press publishing, but nothing came of that. [tape recorder turned off]

A good many of the book collectors in Los Angeles after a while discovered that they could find some of the new press books in my shop. I'd also taken an interest in some of the young printers. The first one that came to see me was a chap by the name of Gregg Anderson, who was working as a page in the Huntington Library. Gregg had the best taste and really the finest character of the whole group of us younger men. And he knew what to select in the way of matter to print; he was able to instinctively pick out good paper and good

types. And he printed on a little proof press--whatever he could get ahold of. He called this press the Grey Bow Press, and he would print anywhere from five to twenty-five examples of various things. The best of them was a thing of Llewellyn Powys, an essay which I wish I had kept. I must still have it; I hope it's still around somewhere.

Later, Arthur Ellis, a lawyer here in Los Angeles who had an interest in printing, sent over to England for an Albion handpress from the Caslon Company. It took a great deal of trouble for him to get that Albion handpress because they wanted to know what kind of a person he was and whether he was entitled to have one of their presses. And then we got the press over here, and the Treasury Department wanted to know what he was going to do with this press. Was he by any chance thinking of printing dollar bills on it? But the press arrived, and it was lodged in his barn out in the south part of town, and we tried to get Gregg Anderson to come and work with it. Arthur Ellis quickly recognized the fact that Anderson was an unusual person with a true instinct for printing and types and paper. But Gregg Anderson wrote and said, "I am not ready to do that sort of thing. It's a mistake to think that I'm equal to your expectations." Well, he was then an undergraduate out at Claremont, and

later he went up to San Francisco, and he worked as a printer's devil for the Grabhorns. He learned printing, every operation that went into the printing of a book, there with the Grabhorns. Later he went to Boston, and he worked for a while with D. B. Updike, who was really the best printer in the country at the time, a man of exquisite taste and sense of proportion and quality in typography. And then he went to work for the Meriden Gravure Company, a company which pioneered the use of collotype and other reproductive processes and became an outstanding concern in Meriden, Connecticut.

Following that, he came back to California. Ward Ritchie was working for me, and I could see that Ward Ritchie didn't really want to be a bookseller. He was standing back in the shipping room doing layouts of books on the wrapping paper instead of wrapping books with the paper, and so I said, "Ward, I don't think you want to be a bookseller. I'm going to fire you and give you a printing job." Phil Townsend Hanna had brought me a book called Libros Californianos, which was a selection of the twenty-five best books, rarest and most important books--which is a difficult set of conditions to meet all within one group of twenty-five books. He got Leslie Bliss, Robert Cowan, and Henry Wagner each to select what they considered the twenty-five rarest books, and then he

contributed an essay on California books, and he contributed his list of the five-foot shelf of books one should read in order to become familiar with California history. And we got it out in paperback for a dollar and a half, and cloth binding for three dollars, and it sold very well to people who were interested in California books. Mr. Dawson took quite a number of copies.

Well, Ward Ritchie, and Gregg Anderson, and some friend of theirs who already had a printing plant all got together and produced these books, and that was the beginning of Anderson, Ritchie, and Simon. Anderson and Ritchie was first, and then Anderson, Ritchie, and Simon. Simon came along much later.

GARDNER: Then it eventually became Ward Ritchie Press.

ZEITLIN: Well, Ward Ritchie Press was the publishing outfit, which was separate from Anderson, Ritchie, and Simon.

GARDNER: I see, which was the printer.

ZEITLIN: Which was the printing concern. And Ward Ritchie owned and operated separately the Ward Ritchie Press. Now, I don't know how they kept their affairs from becoming commingled and entangled. The Primavera Press was started because of an out-of-luck poet by the name of Leslie Nelson Jennings--a man who wrote rather good sonnets but was an old auntie of a character--[who] had

drifted out here. He had worked for Harold Vinal, a poet who did some publishing in the thirties. Leslie Nelson Jennings was a Southern gentleman. He needed something to do and needed something to make a living at, and he persuaded me that we could do some vanity publishing; that is, we could publish books for poets who wanted their poetry published. He would be the editor, and he would supervise the production, and we would distribute them through the shop. And that is how the Primavera Press came into being. Primavera Press was in its beginnings a vanity press.

A few months--I'd say no less than a year--after the Primavera Press got started, and had published, oh, maybe three or four vanity books, the income from the Primavera Press was not enough to sustain Mr. Leslie Nelson Jennings. He was unhappy and felt it was a disappointment, so he withdrew. And I found myself the owner of the Primavera Press, which was nothing but an imprint and a stock of books of poetry, most of which were unsalable. [laughter] However, that gave me the idea of getting together a few people, like Phil Hanna, Carey McWilliams, Ward Ritchie, and Lawrence Clark Powell, and forming a corporation--the Primavera Press, Incorporated. So that came into being by taking over the books that Jake Zeitlin had published, and then the Primavera

Press had published. Now, my first publication in Los Angeles was a book that I got out in 1929 with Bruce McCallister. It was called Los Angeles in the Sunny Seventies, and it was the translation from the German of a book by Archduke Ludwig [Louis] Salvator, an Austrian archduke who had come here in the seventies and described everything within a day's buggy ride of Los Angeles, including Anaheim, and Fullerton, and Santa Monica, and--I've forgotten what the other communities were--Long Beach, San Pedro. But he had published this book under the title Eine Blume aus derx goldene Land; that is, "a flower from the golden land." But Phil Hanna had been publishing this translation by Marguerite Eyer Wilbur in Touring Topics--which was the predecessor of Westways--serially. He suggested to me that this would be a good thing to publish as a book. So I went to McCallister, and McCallister printed it, and I published it. He got out a very attractive circular, and the thing sold out within a very short while. It was my first and probably most successful publication. We did better than break even, and we had a very nice book to our credit. Following that, I did a book by Sarah Bixby Smith; it was the third edition of her Adobe Days. And that's a book that I'm very proud of because it had some very fine personal recollections of growing up in Southern California

as a member of the Bixby family.

GARDNER: That remains a very important . . .

ZEITLIN: Yes, it remains a very important book. The first edition of it was published by the Torch Press in Iowa, and the second edition was also published by the Torch Press. And then Sarah Bixby Smith, who was the wife of Paul Jordan-Smith, suggested to me that she would like to get it out in a better edition and add some new material, and I undertook to publish it. That was about 1933. It was a very attractive book, and it sold quite well. But when I merged my publishing with the Primavera Press, the Primavera Press then became a corporate entity; and when the Primavera Press started to falter, and there were not enough books sold to keep paying the small salary that we were supposed to give whoever did the secretarial and bookkeeping work and wrapped the packages and shipped them out, then the whole stock and everything was turned over to Ward Ritchie, to Anderson and Ritchie. And I'm sorry to say that after Anderson and Ritchie had the Primavera Press for a while, a good many of the books were junked. Ward says it was an accident, that they had left them in the place they were occupying and been told they could leave them there, and that after a while the people that had occupied the place following them had dumped these books without

notifying them. But, in any event, a large part of Adobe Days was destroyed, went to the dump; and a large part of a book translated by Van Wyck, the translation of Fracastorius's [Girolamo Fracastoro] On Syphilis also was largely destroyed, [as well as] several other books. So these books are now rarities, not because they were consumed by the public but because they were destroyed before they ever got to the public.

GARDNER: The more or less definitive work on the Primavera Press is Ward Ritchie's Influences on California Printing that was done for the Clark Library in 1970. Well, I'm going to turn the tape over in a second, and when we get there I'm going to ask you a question about some of the printers with whom you worked on Primavera.

TAPE NUMBER: III, SIDE TWO

AUGUST 2, 1977

GARDNER: In the Ward Ritchie pamphlet, one of the publications he mentions is something he did of Merle Armitage called Aristocracy of Art, and the designer was Grant Dahlstrom.

ZEITLIN: Well, Grant Dahlstrom was working for the Mayers Company at that time; it was one of his first jobs in Los Angeles. I think he'd first come here and gone to work for Bruce McCallister; then the job ran out, and he worked for the Mayers Company. And then he went back to Bruce McCallister, with whom he remained for quite a long time.

Bruce McCallister was the only printer around town in the middle twenties who had any appreciation for the tradition of fine printing or knew anything about early printed books. And he was a great idolator of the work of John Henry Nash. In fact, his devotion to John Henry Nash was excessive and uncritical. Nonetheless, he recognized the fact that John Henry Nash used good types and good paper, and he strove for excellence in presswork and things like that, and he knew enough to appreciate these things. He also collected printed books, and the first book he ever asked me to find for him was a Jensen's

[*Life of*] *Pliny*. Well, I never found a Jensen's *Pliny* for him, and it wasn't until many years afterwards that I finally had one on vellum, which I bought at the Chatsworth sale and sold for $100,000.

Merle Armitage, who was as energetic as he was egocentric, had delivered a speech at the California Art Club, which then used to meet in the Frank Lloyd Wright house, the so-called Hollyhock House. It had been Aline Barnsdall's house. And there, about once a month, there would be a meeting of the so-called California Arts Club; people like S. MacDonald-Wright and Arthur Millier, and a number of other people interested in the critical side of the arts would get up there and debate.

Merle Armitage delivered this paper one night on the aristocracy of art and then suggested that I should publish it. I took it to the Mayers Company, but Grace Marion Brown actually designed that. Grant Dahlstrom had very little to do with it, and I'm sure he would be the first to disown it now because he disliked very much that bold black type that was used, and he also disliked the philosophy of Merle Armitage, which was expressed in that, as much as I did later when I came to realize what form of elitism Merle Armitage was advocating. But in any event, I did publish it, and

curiously enough I used to have bundles of them. For years I couldn't sell them, and I used to give them away or put them out for a dollar apiece. The other day I went to look for one, and I couldn't find it and the last one I saw offered for sale was priced at eighty dollars.

GARDNER: Everything's relative.

ZEITLIN: Yes, it's all a matter of changing and growing tastes.

GARDNER: What about Dahlstrom?

ZEITLIN: Dahlstrom was one of the first printers I met here. He had studied at the Laboratory Press in Pittsburgh. He had gone back to Ogden, Utah, for a short while, but he wanted to conquer the big city and learn more about printing, and so he came to Los Angeles. And shortly afterward, his girlfriend, his bride, Helen, came out, and they got married. I think that was 1927. I met them shortly after they were married, when Helen was pregnant with their daughter Anna Victoria.

Grant was a man with good taste in everything he did. He wore polka-dot cravats that were just the right color and size, and his pants were always hung right with the right colors to match his jackets and shirts, and I always looked upon him as a man who had innate good taste. He had a good hand with flowers, growing things.

We became fast friends very early. I introduced him to Arthur Ellis, and he and Arthur Ellis, with my occasional help, put together the Albion handpress, which was the first handpress established here for the purpose of producing anything like fine printing.

Grant has always followed traditional standards and styles in his design. His idea has been not to do anything spectacular but to utilize the materials and processes of printing for giving the best expression to the ideas that were to be conveyed by the materials--the contents which were contained in the vessel of the book. He was, however, very knowledgeable in the traditions of printing, and when Saul Marks came to town, Saul Marks looked him up. Saul Marks was working in a typesetting plant at the time, and he and Grant came to my shop, just as Ward Ritchie and Gregg Anderson did, and we would look at different specimens of printing. We would look at the few good prints, the Dürer woodcuts and the Dürer engravings that came in the early printed wood-block books, and all this stimulated us all very much. Also, Paul Landacre--we took him into the group. Paul's wife, who was my secretary for a short time, had come around and showed me some of his wood engravings, and I exhibited them and encouraged him and would show him all the new prints that came in. I would take them out to his house

and show him different styles of wood engraving--different artists' work. We got together one night, in 1929, and formed what we called the Thistle Club. We called it later the Rounce and Coffin Club. Gregg Anderson was there and Ward Ritchie and Grant Dahlstrom. And later we took in Paul Landacre, and then we took in Saul Marks. And our idea was that that was all that was ever going to be of the Rounce and Coffin Club. Each time somebody else would be the host--we'd eat at someone's house--and then we would show each other what we had found in the way of interesting specimens of printing and talk about them. Then we had the idea that each person would do a keepsake, and some of the early keepsakes are very rare because there were only five of them, one for each member. And the earliest Saul Marks keepsake was really an exceptional thing. Saul Marks had good taste, not only in types and the quality of printing, but he also had good taste in literature. He was reading the Restoration poets and Elizabethan plays and so on. And he chose, I think--I've forgotten now--one of the Restoration poets to do a poem from for his first Rounce and Coffin Club keepsake. In any event, the Rounce and Coffin Club grew, continued to meet, and then somewhere, I think about 1933-'34, Grant Dahlstrom had the idea that we should sponsor a western-books exhibition, and that became

the main function of the club and has been the thing which has kept it going.

GARDNER: When did the expansion start? Around then?

ZEITLIN: Around then. Well, we brought in various people. Roland Baughman of the Huntington Library was our first secretary, and then Cary Bliss was secretary for a while, and then Archer--H. Richard Archer--who worked at the Clark Library. Well, there've been about six secretaries over the years, and the club has continued quite surprisingly . . .

GARDNER: And grown.

ZEITLIN: . . . and grown until now it has a membership of more than seventy and a lot of corresponding members. It once had a set of bylaws, which were never read or observed since the time they were printed, and on the occasion when we adopted the bylaws and constitution of the club (which had been printed for the occasion), one of our members resigned. He announced that he would not be a member of any group that had a set of bylaws and a constitution.

GARDNER: Who was that?

ZEITLIN: That was Raul Rodriguez. I think that was a fine spirit, but none of the rest of us followed his example. The Rounce and Coffin Club differed from the Zamorano Club, number one, in that it wasn't exclusive;

and, in the second place, that it was very disorderly; and, in the third place, it never took itself very seriously. It had no regular meeting places or times and has continued in the same way.

GARDNER: What was your first keepsake? Do you recall?

ZEITLIN: I can't remember at all. But I think this sparked us all, and the Rounce and Coffin Club remained a sort of a medium through which we all communicated. We stimulated each other, we brought ideas to each other, and I think every one of us benefited greatly, even the ones that weren't printers. There were people like Larry Powell that never did any printing, but it was a meeting through which they could publish some things, write things for the keepsakes. It was a forum for debating ideas about printing or discussing our notions of what constituted a good example of printing and what didn't. The Rounce and Coffin Club in general disapproved greatly of some of the more famous of the local typographers; they looked upon them as bulls in china shops. One of them was referred to as a "stud horse critter," and Bruce McCallister said of him that his ideal would be a book in the shape of a perfect cube.

GARDNER: Who was this?

ZEITLIN: Well, this was Merle Armitage that Bruce McCallister was speaking of--since both of them are gone

and nobody really cares, I don't think it makes any difference if I tell you.

GARDNER: I notice Saul Marks and his Plantin Press did one of your early books. When did he first arrive?

ZEITLIN: It must have been 1933. I think he arrived sooner--he must have arrived around 1930--but actually Marks set up a printing concern in which Grant Dahlstrom was a silent partner. And then he took in another partner, McKay, and the first piece of printing they got out was a sort of a broadside inviting me to give them some printing to do. [laughter]

GARDNER: What was he like?

ZEITLIN: Saul Marks was a very sensitive man. He was a man of very high ideals and very good taste. He could be very stubborn, and the more you pressed him to get a job done, the more stubborn he could be. At times, also, if he had an idea that a certain thing was right in the way of typographic format, no matter how much it violated the rules of bibliographical style, he insisted on doing it the way he felt it would look best to the printer's eye. And over the years Saul and I fell out many times, mostly because I would give him a job to print a catalog and by the time the catalog was printed and he delivered it, all the books had been sold and the money had been spent, so that I had a very hard time paying

him for a catalog that was no longer of any use to me.

GARDNER: Except as a collectors' item.

ZEITLIN: Yes, except as an ornament. One of his other first jobs was a little thing called A King's Treasury of Pleasant Books and Precious Manuscripts, written by Paul Jordan-Smith and handset and printed by Saul Marks. And it is a really exquisite little piece of printing. I'm not sure that I have a copy of it left because my scrapbook in which I pasted all of my early catalogs and announcements and so on seems to have been filched; it has disappeared from my house, and I don't know where it is, and I don't know that it would do anybody else any good. So except for other specimens of things that I saved in other places, there's a lot that's missing.

GARDNER: The scrapbook really is missing? Have you looked through and checked?

ZEITLIN: Yes. I've turned the place upside down. It just isn't here.

Well, the best book that Saul Marks ever printed--that he printed in his early years--was Gil Blas in California, and that was very much of a labor of love. Ward Ritchie would go over, and they would make up different page layouts, and they would set the type and print them, then hang them up and look at them and criticize them and change them over and so on. No

commercial plant could ever have afforded that kind of a thing, so they spent many a night and many a day bringing about what I think was a very beautiful and very well integrated piece of printing--the Gil Blas in California. Paul Landacre did the engravings. He did a map of the gold fields, and he did a series of vignettes, chapter headings, all of which I think represent just about as good examples of that kind of thing as has ever been done in a book. It was all around a very beautiful production. And, of course, it bankrupted Marks and nearly put the Primavera Press out of business, but there's no doubt that it was an artistic success. None of us made any money out of it, including poor Paul Landacre, for whom, however, it was a very good medium for showing what he could do; and it later resulted in his being commissioned to do a number of books for the Limited Editions Club. While that was published as a Primavera Press imprint, it certainly was a collaboration of many people, including Grant Dahlstrom, Saul Marks, Ward Ritchie, Paul Landacre, and all of us who were part of the Primavera Press. The book was translated by Marguerite Eyer Wilbur. It was translated from the French, and it was supposed to have been written by Alexandre Dumas--but since Alexandre Dumas had a literary factory, we're not sure that it wasn't written by somebody

who came back from the gold fields and was commissioned by Dumas to write it so he could put his name on it.

GARDNER: The business aspects of Primavera, as I mentioned, are of interest, too, I think, just for your comments. Hanna and Ritchie were 30 percent each, you were 40 percent, and Carey McWilliams was an attorney with 0 percent.

ZEITLIN: Yes, none of us profited by all this. We didn't get any money out of it, and we did put a little in--I don't think very much. I had already put in all the publications I had, and that was what brought the press about. It was all ready; there was a Primavera Press. We were very poor businessmen, all of us. If we had been good businessmen, we never would have gone into it, and we wouldn't have produced anything, and that would have been a shame. So I'm not sorry that it wasn't a business success. It did about as well as could be hoped for, considering the impracticality of all of us involved--the fact that we set our ideals of fine printing above our notions of good business.

GARDNER: That's wonderful. Well, to move away from fine printing and back into the bookstore, in 1928--I guess late in 1928--you moved to Sixth Street, right around the corner.

ZEITLIN: Yes.

GARDNER: What was the reason for that?

ZEITLIN: Well, the landlord wanted the space. And we didn't have much room. It was a very small space. We had built this shop into the back doorway of this real estate office, T.J. Lawrence Company, at the corner of Sixth and Hope Street, and they were very nice to let us have the space at all. I'm not sure how many city ordinances we violated, and it may have very well been that T.J. Lawrence decided that he didn't want to take a chance on being fined for violating a lot of ordinances. Whatever it was, he said, "I need the space, so you'll have to go somewhere else." So we went around the corner, and we published a little playlet called _Kicked around the Corner_, which was written by my friend Henry Mayers, in which I was asked, "Why are you moving, Mr. Zipkin?" and I would say, "Well, our landlord wants the space." And then the man would ask me another question, and he would say, "Mr. Zeppelin, where are you going?" and so on. He never did once pronounce or spell my name right in the course of the whole play; that was part of the joke of it. Paul Landacre did a little portrait woodcut of me which was used as a sort of a logo in this mailing piece, and I still have some copies of that around.

And when I moved in 1928 to, I think it was, 705 1/2 West Sixth Street, Lloyd Wright again designed that place.

It was a very beautiful place, but it was no more practical than the previous one. He always had a great love for putting in lighting arrangements which created a very soft, diffused light. But when the light bulbs went out, you couldn't get at them to replace them, and so gradually, as one after the other of the light bulbs expired, the place got darker and darker. And finally we couldn't use the ceiling fixtures at all, and we had to set lamps around the place in order to keep the shop lit well enough for people to see the books they thought they might buy. It was about that time that I started to import a lot of the books produced by Douglas Cleverdon, who was still an undergraduate in Bristol and had a very fine taste for printing and was a great admirer of Eric Gill. He produced a volume of the collected woodcuts of Eric Gill, and I bought some of the special editions in which each proof was signed by Gill. These sold for, I think, as high as $150 a set, and today I should think that if one had one of those special copies which I bought, it would bring anywhere from $2,000 to $3,000. In any event, I remember filling a whole window with the woodcuts of Eric Gill.

I had a wonderful young man working for me then. His name was William Blaine Wooten, and William Blaine Wooten had come to me out of the blue. He had a natural

sense of the rightness of letters and the rightness in proportion of arrangements. If he had persisted as a calligrapher and a typographer, I think he would have been one of the very great ones. He would have been in a class with Dwiggins; he was very much in the tradition of Edward Johnston. And I was very fortunate to have him. He designed one catalog which would really have bankrupted anybody but a very indulgent printer like Bruce McCallister, who followed his directions and changed it just to conform to his ideas of the right proportions and the right use of ornament and color. He hung the exhibitions; he wrapped books; he did the lettering of signs. He was a wonderful young man, but after a while he became dissatisfied--he was temperamental--and he left me. And I've always regretted very much that I didn't have the art of keeping him and didn't know what it took to hold onto him and encourage him, because I think William Wooten would have become one of the great typographic designers and calligraphers. He went into the navy, and I don't know what happened to him afterward. He was a very good friend of the Landacres, and they were in touch with him for quite a while. But I do know that from shortly after he left me, he never again did anything with this very great talent he had.

I had several very interesting young men working

for me at 705 1/2. The first one was Karl Zamboni--Karl Philip Zamboni--and in those days he was a very handsome young man, having all of the best attributes in physical appearances and personal charm of a combination of Scandinavian and Italian parentage. He was also a very good bookman, and I think that he could have become the outstanding bookman on the Pacific Ccast if some unfortunate things hadn't happened to him. But when he was with me, he was very charming, he was very inventive, and he did a lot of things which advanced my business. He was with me for five years, and then he left and came again and was with me for another five years.

His wife was one of the most beautiful young women I have ever seen. I remember an English woman author who wrote a satire on Somerset Maugham. Somerset Maugham had written a book called Cakes and Ale, which was an attack on Hugh Walpole. And this woman, who wrote under the pen name of Elinor Mordaunt, had written a response to Cakes and Ale, which she called Gin and Bitters, in which she went after Somerset Maugham with a bull whip and a rapier and really struck some very telling blows. The result was not that Hugh Walpole applauded her, but rather he attacked her in spite of the fact that Maugham had really been merciless in satirizing him in Cakes and Ale. And Walpole wrote a review of Gin and Bitters saying,

in effect, "How could she do that to poor Willie Maugham?" Elinor Mordaunt was quite an older woman when she came here, but I remember one evening her coming to our house, and Cathy Zamboni came in the house. And she stopped, and looked at her, and seemed to stop breathing. And she said, "What a very exquisite young woman." And she was. She looked like a combination of Polynesian and the all-around American girl. But later Cathy left Karl Zamboni, and when she left him, it took all of the drive out of him, and he never became anything like the great bookseller that he could have become. He left me. He went up to Northern California, and he is still living up near Palo Alto and does an occasional catalog, sells books by mail--a great specialist in esoteric trivia. And he has lost all of his very great youthful appearance and handsomeness.

GARDNER: Of course, another of your early employees--well, perhaps not that early--your employees on Sixth Street, was Larry Powell.

ZEITLIN: Yes, before Larry Powell there are two others I would like to mention. One was a young man by the name of E. Digges Graves, Elliott Digges Graves. His father was a sort of an advanced Episcopalian minister, and Elliott and his father both were disciples of Eric Gill and strived very much to follow his example in lettering

and in the crafts. E. Digges Graves was a very strange man, who never bore fools gladly and was very impatient with people who would come in and ask ridiculous questions. Finally it came to the point where Elliott couldn't bear the ridiculous questions of my best customers, so he decided to leave. He joined with Stanton Avery, who was the founder of Avery Adhesives and was his early partner. The only thing is that Avery continued to be successful and became an immensely rich man and great business tycoon and, of course, poor Elliott Digges Graves remained the strange man that he was.

And another of the young men who worked for me at that time was Fillmore Silkwood Phipps. As I think of the names of these young men, I'm wondering whether they were invented by Trollope or by Charles Dickens. [laughter] Fillmore Phipps was a very handsome young man who dressed in tweedy coats and had a seal ring and was very uncommunicative about his family. It turned out later that Fillmore Silkwood Phipps's father ran a popcorn stand in the park at Long Beach. Fillmore had higher ambitions; in fact, he left me and was a partner in a book business with a woman who also worked for me at that time, Tone Price; and later, when they dissolved that business, he was in charge of making films for a company that was subsidized by Forest Lawn. And he, poor fellow, started to behave

most erratically; started to be impossible and unmanageable to his wife. Finally she put him out, and he was living in a room in Hollywood, in a cheap hotel. And when he died, it turned out that he had a brain tumor; and if it had been diagnosed early, they might have saved him. Apparently that was responsible for his erratic behavior. He left a family of beautiful and talented children and was a very respectable person.

TAPE NUMBER: IV, SIDE ONE

AUGUST 9, 1977

GARDNER: You were about to say what you recalled we closed with last time.

ZEITLIN: As I remember, I closed with an account of the sort of things that we exhibited--the sort of books that we tried to sell--Eric Gill's book of wood engravings as published by Douglas Cleverdon, and I think I also talked about the design of the shops that I had by Lloyd Wright.

GARDNER: Right--his lighting systems.

ZEITLIN: Yes. His lighting systems were only good as long as the light bulbs lasted, and then it was no longer possible to get back of the fixtures in order to renew the light bulbs; so that as the light bulbs blew out or wore out, the light became dimmer and dimmer, and finally we had to set lamps on the floors and find other ways of lighting the place. I don't mean this to be in any way a reflection on the imaginative quality of Lloyd Wright, because I have come to believe that a great deal of what was best in the architecture that his father gets credit for in Southern California was designed by the son, Lloyd. The father would come along, and he would do a tremendous job of selling, and then he would turn loose Lloyd and a team of several of his disciples,

and they would go ahead and do the details and creative work on a place like the so-called Hollyhock House (the Aline Barnsdall house) and a number of other places in Southern California. Lloyd was especially brilliant in combining plants with architecture, and he did introduce in every place he designed for me some kind of a plant or a box of green, growing things. And I think in that he was far in advance of many of the architects that have come along since. He was very ingenious, very creative, and certainly produced the most effect for the least money. He wasn't always practical, and the amount of shelf space we got out of the walls, for instance, wasn't the maximum. After a while, the interest was focused so much on the architecture and the interior design of my shops, the customers couldn't look at the books. A great many people would come and look at the architecture and "oh" and "ah" and walk away, and that wasn't really what I was there for.

GARDNER: That must have stood out on Sixth Street at that time, because most of the other shops must have been very practical.

ZEITLIN: Well, yes, they were very simple, practical shops. They just took some lumber and built some shelves along the wall, hammered together a few counters, and that was it. And bought some glass cases. There were

several interesting shops on Sixth Street. The largest one was about a block east of Figueroa on the south side of the street. It belonged to Holmes; it wasn't his headquarters, but it was the largest shop and the last one that he had. He had about five secondhand-book stores in Los Angeles, and they were really jammed full of what today would be great treasures. The shelves ran up to a very high ceiling on all sides of this big space. He also had a balcony room in which he would store a great many of the things that he bought in quantity, and, among other things, he bought up a number of copies of a little book of poetry called _Flagons and Apples_ by Robinson Jeffers. He had found the entire remaining stock somewhere at a printer who had produced them. And if I bought five copies at a time, he would let me have them for a dollar and a half apiece. Later he raised the price to three dollars each, and ultimately we had to pay as much as fifteen dollars a copy, which seemed outrageous. Today, I would say that it sells for between $650 and $750 a copy. And when poor Holmes's store was finally closed, there was a large number of them still on hand. At one time he used to auction off books and sets of books on Hill Street around Christmastime, and when the selling got slow, they would give away a few books, including copies of Robinson Jeffers's _Flagons and_

Apples.

One of the other bookshops was Rogers. [Warren] Rogers was married to the sister of Ernest Dawson, and he had a substantial general secondhand-book stock. But he was never as imaginative as Ernest Dawson, never had the stimulating style of exhibiting things, or writing up cards about them, and so on; or meeting people with the friendliness and enthusiasm that Dawson showed. Gradually his stock dwindled--he didn't go out and buy aggressively--and he ultimately closed down and went into selling books from an office, particularly books on managing restaurants and hotels, and he seems to have done quite well at that for a while. One of the most spectacular bookshops on the street was that of a chap by the name of Bunster Creeley. Bunster had been a flyweight boxer. He was about five feet tall and very feisty, and he had a secondhand-book shop. He was married to a niece, I think, of Norman Holmes.

GARDNER: Quite an incestuous street.

ZEITLIN: Yes. And one of his earliest employees was H. Richard Archer, who later became the curator of the Clark Library and then has recently retired as the librarian of the Chapin Collection at Williams College.

Further towards Figueroa there was also Kovach's Bookshop. Nick Kovach was a Hungarian who began, as far

as I know, in this country working for a watchmen's service. He used to ride around on a bicycle and patrol the houses over in Fremont Place and along in the area that the Los Angeles Country Club was located in. He happened to meet one of the men whose house he guarded, a man by the name of Arthur Cecil, Dr. Arthur Cecil. Cecil had been the leading urologist of the time in Los Angeles until Elmer Belt came along, and Cecil had resisted, with every device at his command, the growth of Elmer Belt--tried to prevent his becoming a member of the staff of Good Samaritan Hospital. But Arthur Cecil was a rather testy Virginia gentleman who, being a surgeon, had enjoyed all the prerogatives of that role--ordered people around; spoke with a great sense of command to everyone around him. Arthur Cecil had become interested in collecting rare books, and primarily it started with an interest in the first editions of Edgar Allan Poe. Being a Virginian, he acquired some letters of Poe (I think he had one page of manuscript and several first editions of Poe), and then he branched out into a few other things. And one of the outstanding things that Arthur Cecil had was a manuscript of Gauguin which he'd acquired while on a voyage to Hawaii a great many years before. He'd acquired it from a lady by the name of Madame Reviere who lived in Hawaii. I don't know how she had acquired this manuscript of Gauguin; it

was an unpublished manuscript covered with drawings and unique woodblocks of Gauguin's, and it was about ninety pages. It was a violently anti-Catholic polemic, and it was unpublished and probably unpublishable. At the beginning of it, there was a long autograph letter from Gauguin to his friend Charles Meurice, in Paris, who had sent him a great deal of money from time to time, and who later edited some of his letters. Anyhow, it was a long and very interesting letter of Gauguin's.

But Mr. Kovach had persuaded Dr. Cecil to let him get out a catalog of these things and offer them for sale. It was probably the most remarkable first catalog that any dealer ever got out. I don't know how many copies there were, but as far as I know, the only thing that was sold from this was one of the Edgar Allan Poe letters, which was sold to Mrs. Doheny. In any event, Mr. Kovach went on to become a secondhand-book seller and opened a shop on Sixth Street. And one of his girl clerks, also a Hungarian, attracted the attention of Richard Archer, and he married her. Her name was Margot--an extraordinarily beautiful young woman and a very sweet and wonderful person. Kovach later became a dealer in periodicals and journals, and also would buy up entire libraries and resell them. He was a great problem, because he would make librarians very extravagant offers for their books, and

nobody could compete with him. The only thing is that after he took the books, they could never catch him to get paid. No matter how much he offered for them, they were great bargains; he would turn around and sell them at below-market prices. So he spent a great many years running from his creditors and going from one deal to another of that sort. He was a brilliant man, had a great deal of charm, and if he had used his energy and charm towards a little better disciplined style of doing business, he would have made a great deal more money and been a much happier man.

There has always been a mystery about Bunster Creeley's place. One morning when the place was opened up, one of his employees was found dead in the place; he had apparently been stabbed, and no one ever could figure out what happened or how that man happened to get killed. It's always been a sealed book. Another interesting thing: there was an old count who lived up on Bunker Hill who had, over the years, accumulated a lot of interesting things, some of which he inherited. And among other things, he had a painting of a man with a beard. It was old; it needed cleaning; it was brown; it wasn't too easy to see what it was. Bunster Creeley had it in his window, selling it on commission for the man; I think he wanted something like $150 for it. I

took it over to my place and asked several people who were supposed to be knowledgeable about art to look at it, because it struck me that this thing was done by someone of real quality. Well, I remember showing it to Arthur Millier, and he said, "Oh, it's just another beard. Don't bother with it." Finally, some man from up in the Bay Area came along and bought it, and paid something like $100, $150 for it. In the course of the years, he researched it; he developed a real background on it, and it turned out to be a very fine portrait by [Giovanni Battista] Tiepolo, probably worth $200,000 or $300,000.

GARDNER: That's amazing.

ZEITLIN: The other shop on West Sixth Street that I remember vividly was Fred Lofland (it probably had been spelled Loughlin originally, but I think it had gone through the transformations that American ways with names have, and it ended up as Lofland). And Fred Lofland had a very closely packed shop: I don't know how he managed to get as many books into one small shop as he did. One of his most constant customers was a writer by the name of Gordon Raye Young. Gordon Raye Young had become very successful writing for Adventure magazine, and he had a whole series of things going, and then some of them were published as books. In one, in particular,

there was a sort of a Conrad-like story. I took it out to Ben Schulberg at Paramount Studios, my first time inside of the office of a cinema mogul--enormous room with a desk perched at one end of it, raised on a dais, and, like Mussolini's office, you had to walk a long way to get to it. However, I must say that Mr. Schulberg was very kind to me, and he did have this thing read and synopsized. But for some reason or another, it never got accepted for pictures. It was called Siebert of the Islands, and it had to do with some German plantation owner on a Pacific island. That is all that I can remember of it. However, Gordon Raye Young had an enormous appetite for books, and when he died, he left a large roomful of books up on the top of Echo Park Avenue--one of the Echo Park hills just off of Cerro Gordo Street. He was a close friend of Paul Jordan-Smith. And Paul Jordan-Smith and his wife [Sarah Bixby Smith], Gordon Raye Young and his wife, and my wife and I used to get together and have some very wonderful evenings; we drank lots of wine and ate lots of spaghetti and spouted a lot of good talk. Then when we got into the mood, we would all do our own form of solo dances, our own inventions. Paul Jordan-Smith later wrote about my gymnastic ability when I was inspired. I can't imagine leaping and soaring in the style that he described

as I am now, but I'm sure that his visions of what he thought I was doing were very much colored by the redness of the wine.

GARDNER: What about some of the non-Sixth Street booksellers?

ZEITLIN: Well, I want to mention one other bookshop that was on Sixth Street which I think ought to be mentioned, and that is Jones Book Store. Jones Book Store was on Pershing Square. It was largely a textbook store; it supplied a great many of the public schools and some of the parochial schools in the Southern California area, and they had large contracts with the board of education. The woman that managed it was a really striking woman. She was Mrs. Lawrence Maynard, and her husband had been Lawrence Maynard, who was the head of the publishing firm of Small and Maynard. They had published a number of good poets and other writers. They had published some of the editions of Walt Whitman's Leaves of Grass and the books of Whitman's disciples. They had published Bliss Carman and Richard Hovey, and they had also published a good many of the good English titles which they brought over to this country. And they had employed some of the very good book designers; I think that Will Bradley must have done some of their books for them.

A great many of the leftover stock of Small-Maynard

was distributed on the shelves of the Jones Book Store. I can remember seeing them in piles and thinking what perfectly beautifully charming books there were, which I could have bought for seventy-five cents, a dollar, a dollar and a half, and two and a half dollars--and not doing so. She [Mrs. Maynard] was a very striking woman; she carried a sort of a pre-Raphaelite air around with her.

And then there was Parker's Bookstore. [C.C.] Parker was a gentleman of the old Southern school. He came to Los Angeles, I suppose at the turn of the century, and he taught elocution and had a bookstore besides. He used to dress very formally, with these high-tipped celluloid collars. He was looked upon as the very [pinnacle] of what one should read and the kind of books one should have in his library. And I must say that his idea was a good one: his idea was to have every good book that was in print of any publisher in the United States, so that you could go through the shelves there and find marvelous books--first editions of Edwin Arlington Robinson and Theodore Dreiser and a great many of the writers of the early part of the century--in mint condition at the price at which they were originally published. And that went on until sometime in the thirties when the business finally had to close. That

shop was a marvel; there was no bookstore in the United States (it was said by the traveling salesmen for the various publishers) that carried so good a stock of books as Parker's Bookstore did at its peak. Of course, he got more and more in debt to the publishers; the expenses outran the revenue, and the turnover was very poor relative to the size of the stock. And when finally the stock was sold off, just marked down and slaughtered, it was astonishing what wonderfully good books there were there. If someone had just taken the trouble to get them out--dig them out from under the shelves, price them, and put them out for sale, there would have been enough money coming in to pay off all the bills which finally dragged Parker into receivership. But there were no bookmen there. One of the troubles, usually, with book businesses which have lasted for a long time is that ultimately the man that had founded them--the genius of the business--cannot hire people or will not hire people who have the ability to appreciate and to sell the books the same way they could, so the stock finally has no one to galvanize it, no one to really present it and price it; keep up with the times with it. That's what happened with this place.

GARDNER: You say "cannot" or "will not," and that's an intriguing duality. "Cannot" because they can't

find them, or "will not" because they don't really want to train someone who will then go into competition?

ZEITLIN: Well, it's very hard for a man to yield the powers that he has to defer to some younger man. It's a great blow to your pride, very often, to have one of your youngsters go out and sell rings around you, or to take something off the shelf and say, "Look, we've had this long enough, and out it goes. We're going to price it at half of what you've put on it." But that's what has to be done if the business is to go on. And this has happened a few times; in no case do I know where it's lasted for more than two generations. All the great bookshops have sooner or later degenerated because the kind of individuality and leadership that it took to carry them on just wasn't there.

GARDNER: Is that true everywhere?

ZEITLIN: Well, it's been true. It was true of McClurg's in Chicago; it was true of Brentano's in New York. In this day of branch bookselling, Kroch, for instance, has remained a great book business, but not in the sense that it was when Adolph Kroch himself was managing it. It happened with Weyhe's bookshop in New York, which certainly was the greatest art-book shop in our time and in the history of American bookselling. And it happened with Stechert-Hafner, who were great wholesalers and

importers of books. I could name many more. It's happening right now with Arthur H. Clark and Company in Glendale, which started out in Cleveland and which has, for almost 100 years, been an outstanding publisher of western American historical books and also a dealer in American historical literature. One of the interesting exceptions is John Howell's bookshop in San Francisco, which has certainly grown and become a much more important book business under the management of Warren Howell, but there is no sign of his developing a successor. And, of course, Dawson's Book Shop in Los Angeles, which has been carried on in the tradition of Ernest Dawson--not as vigorously as he carried it on, but with the same high standards and principles.

GARDNER: Well, again, that falls within your two-generation rule, though.

ZEITLIN: Yes, it falls within the two generations, and I can't think of anyplace. . . . There are no Quaritches left, of course, no relatives of the Quaritches left in Bernard Quaritch in London. The Maggses [Maggs Brothers] are the only firm I know of where the management has continued into the third generation, and what will happen there is hard to say. They're all fine people, but there is no one strong head of the firm, and they are continuing largely because of the magnificent reputation that they

have and the devoted patronage of people like myself who have done business with them for fifty years and would like to keep it up. The Goodspeeds--the son and son-in-law have carried it on, but I doubt if there will be a Goodspeed's in twenty-five years. The Paul Elder bookshops in San Francisco are no longer; they continued one generation after the founder, and then that was the end of Paul Elder's. And so it seems to go.

GARDNER: To return, have we completed our tour of Sixth Street?

ZEITLIN: Well, I think we have, except I think I should go on to mention that Louis Epstein started the Acadia Book Shop on Sixth Street. He made a mistake in his article by offering a prize to anyone who could remember the name of his bookshop, but he excluded Max Hunley and me. And then he said that he got the title out of _Hiawatha_. He didn't get the title out of _Hiawatha_--he got it out of _Evangeline_.

GARDNER: He got that straight in his interview, by the way.

ZEITLIN: He did. I corrected him, and I'm sure some other people did, too. But he started the Acadia Book Shop on Sixth Street after he had had a bookshop in Long Beach. And one day two young men by the name of Howey came in. Richard and Ralph Howey came in, and they offered him $1,500 for his bookstore, and he said,

"I'll take it." So Acadia Book Shop became the property of the Howey brothers. Richard Howey continued with his studies of economics and acquired a degree, became a distinguished professor and was head of the Department of Economics and Economic History at the University of Kansas, until recently when he retired. Ralph Howey, the other brother, continued the business. He was a very quiet man who really didn't like to meet people. Ultimately he went to Philadelphia and went to work for the Rosenbachs; he remained with the Rosenbachs for five or six years, until the business was closed. Then he went into the business of selling, mostly seventeenth- and eighteenth-century pamphlets, which it was possible to buy at one time in large quantities in England. He would catalog them, list them, and sell them to places like the Folger Library, Yale, Harvard, and so on, and has continued to be very successful without having to meet the public generally. He lives somewhere in Pennsylvania now. I'm sure I haven't mentioned all of the bookshops that were on West Sixth Street.

GARDNER: The only one I can think of, offhand, is Kohn.

ZEITLIN: Dave Kohn. Mr. Belch! That was a remarkable bookstore [Curio Book Shop]. He had a brother who had had a bookshop on Sixth Street, Soldier Joe, and Soldier Joe's bookshop continued independently. Dave Kohn first

started up on Third Street, and he used to sleep, I think, on the balcony of this bookshop. He had somewhere picked up the most enormous stock of old paperbacks, all in mint condition, and none of us had sense enough to know what a treasure he had. I think when he closed that shop, most of them were hauled off to the pulp mill. The most marvelous paperback classics--I just wonder how many copies of the first edition of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, Stephen Crane's Maggie: A Girl of the Streets, the first book of Hamlin Garland, and a few other things like that, were in that library. Dave Kohn and his sister had an enormous storehouse of books on Sixth Street; it was a labyrinth. There was very poor light. You sort of blundered around in this mess of old books and spiderwebs and dust; and there was no classification whatever, except in one room of this place [where] he had segregated and kept up to date a complete run of Everyman Library books. It was the one place, I think, in all the United States where you could go and get any title of Everyman's Library. He kept the stock up to date and in perfect numerical order, so that if you wanted an Everyman's book, you could take the catalog and go in there, and find it. Otherwise, it was a great, dismal swamp.

GARDNER: To move, then, from Sixth Street outward, were

there any other major dealers of used books around town?

ZEITLIN: No, there really weren't. Louis Epstein later opened up a shop on Eighth Street [Epstein's Book Shop], which he continued until the Hollywood bookstore commenced to occupy all his energies. And he closed that and transferred most of his stock to the Argonaut Book Shop, which was operated for him by his brother Ben.

GARDNER: What about Alice Millard?

ZEITLIN: Well, Alice Millard was a different kind of bookseller. She was really a very creative woman who had had a house designed by Frank Lloyd Wright in Pasadena called La Collina. It was a beautiful little establishment in which she had exhibitions of original watercolors, of Blake, of the proof sheets of early bindings of the Doves Press and Doves bindery, and of the Kelmscott Press. I remember meeting May Morris at her house. She used to go to London and Paris and buy the best books she could find. She had a great sense of style; she would go to the bankers in Pasadena and say, "I want to go to Europe, and I want to spend $500,000 and buy a lot of good books and bring them back, because Pasadena needs them." They would lend her the money, and she would come back, and she would sell them not

only in Pasadena but she would sell them to J.P. Morgan and to the McCormicks and to people all over the United States. I remember that she always had a big black limousine waiting for her when she went to call on customers like Mrs. Doheny. She dressed elegantly, and she dyed her hair blue.

GARDNER: What was her background?

ZEITLIN: Her husband had been George W. Millard, who worked at McClurg's Bookstore in Chicago. He had been in charge of the rare-book department; it was called the Saints and Sinners Corner. It was frequented by people like the Reverend Gunsales, and Eugene Field, and the actor Francis Wilson. He moved out here to Southern California in his later years. He had nicely bound sets and gentlemen's books in his apartment. He would invite customers to come in and see his books, and serving tea for him was this very beautiful lady who looked like something that had been created by Burne-Jones or Rosetti. She was always in the background pouring the tea, helping her husband. And when he died, she said, "I'm tired of this piddling business." So she called in the booksellers and the bookbuyers from around the area, and said, "Here, I'm selling off all these standard sets and these neatly bound Sangorski and Suttcliffe books. I'm through with that sort of thing.

I'm going to do some real bookselling." And she did. She brought great manuscripts, magnificent incunabulas, books printed by Jensen and Wynkyn de Worde and Fust and Schoeffer, and so on to this part of the world. She sold Mrs. Doheny a great many important books in her library, and she educated the rare-book buyers of Southern California to a much higher level of appreciation than they'd ever had before.

GARDNER: What were her years here?

ZEITLIN: I can't say that I know. She was already in business in the late twenties, when I arrived, and she certainly continued to be in business until sometime in the forties. There is a chap by the name of Eliot Morgan who worked for her, and I hope somebody gets ahold of him and gets the story of Mrs. Millard from him, because he knows much more of it than anybody else, and he's getting to be a gray-haired oldster like me, now. They'd better get over there soon.

TAPE NUMBER: IV, SIDE TWO

AUGUST 16, 1977

GARDNER: I think it's time to move on into the 1930s. Was there a change that came about in the nature of your business with the oncoming of the Depression and so on?

ZEITLIN: The change that came about was not so perceptible as it might have been to some people who had been doing better earlier. I remember somebody asked Lloyd Wright how the Depression had affected the artists, and he said that the artists have always had a depression, and they're probably better prepared to live in the midst of it than a lot of people who were flying high. They'd always lived on basics and hadn't depended upon the luxuries in order to maintain the certain forms of self-esteem. Now, my business was never a big business; in fact, I'm astonished at how little volume--we did in a month what we exceed now in a day. It seemed to keep us going. Of course, I paid very little. Some of my employees got $100 a month, some got as much as $35 a week, some got as much as $50 a week, but that wasn't very much money. Still, it was more than nothing. A lot of them hung on simply because there wasn't a better thing to go to.

I myself drew very little out of the business. I

had no fixed salary because, after all, it was a personal business, and it of course got worse and worse into debt. But nobody closed us down, because there was nothing to close down on; you can't liquidate a business that doesn't have much to liquidate. I must say, also, that I knew very little and was very slow learning how to go about buying books. I bought very few libraries; most of the books I bought were books that came into the shop. I didn't know that I should go around to places like the Goodwill, the Salvation Army, and the other places that some of the booksellers went to regularly. I had a vague sense that buying was the most important thing in the book business, but I really wasn't a very good buyer, and I bought altogether too many new books. For a book business with very little money, the new books are a royal road to disaster because very quickly you get your capital tied up in books which become dated, and within the course of a year, you find that your stock consists of a lot of books that didn't sell when they should have sold and now are on the remainder lists. Publishers didn't have as good a returns policy as they have now, and the discounts weren't very good either. In fact, what I marvel at is how I managed to keep the

business going at all, considering how little I knew about the basic elements of buying and selling. I knew more about selling than I did about buying. I knew very little--almost nothing--about management, keeping control of overhead; but when I found a good book, I could sell it. And I was always able to work a deal, every once in a while, selling a collection out of which I made profit enough to resuscitate the dying body.

GARDNER: Did you have any particular orientation? Were you still selling the same sorts of things in those days?

ZEITLIN: Well, I was primarily selling books about books, modern English and American first editions, and fine press books. I was also selling prints. And until 1935, when I moved out of 907 West Sixth Street and went to 815 (I think the address was), I kept the place afloat mostly through buying and selling to collectors, importing books, finding a good book once in a while on which I could make a profit, and having an exhibition from which I sold some art.

GARDNER: What about the fine printing that you dealt in--did you make any money from that at all, from Primavera?

ZEITLIN: Well, Primavera Press was never a money-making enterprise. It was an effort to make a place for myself as a publisher, and I hoped that it would become a source of income to the business. It actually started as a form

of vanity publishing (I think I already talked about Leslie Nelson Jennings). Between 1930 and 1935, when I was in the location at, I think it was, 705 1/2 West Sixth Street, I went from one crisis to another, and finally I became involved with a man by the name of Alfred Leonard. I had a friend, a young woman by the name of Marjorie Rosenfeld--a very fine, sweet person, about nineteen or twenty--and she was very hospitable to me. She used to bring me home to her house very often for dinner (there were parties quite often at her house). Her mother was a very smart woman, always very beautifully dressed, and there was some inherited money in the family. There was a kind of a sentimental attachment but never a very active one, and certainly nothing that involved any emotionalism or sex (at least not that I was aware of). And Marjorie went off to Germany. She was there during the time that Hitler was rising. She met a young German by the name of Alfred Leonard and married him and brought him back here. Alfred Leonard was a very aggressive, very bright, young man, who was quite at a loss to know what to do. He'd brought his father over--or she had helped bring his father over--and his brother, who was a brilliant musician, a blind man but a brilliant pianist. Alfred was taken into Marjorie's family, and she came to me, and she said, "Haven't you

got a place for Leonard in your bookshop?" So we worked out an arrangement where we were to set up a partnership, and he was to become a shareholder with the money that she provided. It wasn't very much; I don't think it was ever more than $5,000. He came in, and he was full of ideas about new plans. Pretty soon he turned out to be overly aggressive and not at all sensitive. The whole staff started to dislike him thoroughly, which bothered him not one bit. And he started drawing more and more out of the business. He went abroad, and he charged it to the business. By 1936, after we had moved to 614 West Sixth Street, it became an intolerable situation. My customers couldn't stand him, I was going into frenzies, the employees were threatening to attack him physically, and something had to be done in order to get him out. I told him and Marjorie that it was no longer possible for him to go on. He set a very high price on his getting out.

I then went to Oscar Moss, who was an accountant and whose wife, Sadye Moss, and wife's family had been friends of mine. They were all interested in art. They were a group that lived up in the Echo Park area, up above Edendale. There was Oscar Moss and his wife Sadye, and there was Maurice Saeta and Sadye Moss's sister, who were married. They were all people who had ambitions and interests in books and in art and music.

They were exceptionally bright people. Saeta was a lawyer. Moss was a lawyer and an accountant, and Moss had very quickly developed his firm into a very successful accounting firm. He invested a pittance. We decided to incorporate the business and buy Mr. Leonard out. He told me that he could arrange to do that. And so we drew up the papers of incorporation, and he urged me to go to my friends and get them to become stockholders in the business. I went to a number of them, and, in all, I got $10,000. Frank Hogan subscribed $2,500; he was the largest single subscriber. Oscar Moss subscribed $2,500. Other people subscribed $100 apiece, and there were quite a few of those, including Harvey Mudd and Mrs. Doheny and Homer Crotty and a number of other individuals in the community.

Mr. Moss put one of his accountants in the place to supervise things. We managed to get Mr. Leonard out of the business. He went into the record business and continued in his ways. He became a broadcaster of a music program. He opened a record store on Wilshire Boulevard. He involved a number of people in the business with him and went through a lot of people's money. He also went through a number of friendships and managed to alienate a great many other people. So, as time went on, I decided that it wasn't just my paranoia that caused

me to think of him as being the kind of person that he was. It was a great pain to me. It was distressing because his wife was someone that I had great affection for, and she for me, and this became an almost insuperable rift. It wasn't until years later that she and her children came to see me and we became friendly again. And she remained married to him; she became a bright professional psychoanalyst, and it was a kind of an arrangement whereby she carried on her life and brought up the children, and he lived his own life. He went to New York and became associated with one of the big broadcasting companies, remained with them, I think, until he was retired.

In any event, it seemed that I could always go out with a satchel full of books and sell; I could always find a few good rare books and keep the place going. I had customers like Hugh Walpole who bought quite a few thousands of dollars' worth from me. I sold books to Mrs. Doheny. I sold books to Mrs. Getz. But the sense of crisis was always there, and it increased as time went on. The finances were always thin; the whole idea of incorporating the business with $10,000 was a ridiculous idea. To think that that could go on and carry on over a period of years was really not very practical, and I have no idea why Mr. Moss, who was such a very successful financier and accountant, ever encouraged me to

believe that it could. In any event, the accounting charges that his firm placed on the business were quite heavy, and there was never enough to keep ahead of the creditors. We remained there, however, until 1935, when we moved to 614 [Sixth Street]. It was a beautiful shop. It was the third shop to be designed by Lloyd Wright and really the most attractive of them all. I have a number of photographs of that shop that were taken by Will Connell, and it was a unique establishment. My employees were an interesting group. In particular, I had a man who was in charge of the print gallery, by the name of Howard Moorpark, who knew a great deal about prints and who managed to get some interesting exhibitions and put on some good shows. I had friends among the artists here--like Tom Craig, Millard Sheets, Phil Paradise, Milfred Zornes. I did a lot to exhibit the watercolor school that was developing at that time and got out announcements. So there was a stream of people coming into the place constantly, both because of the interesting design of the shop itself and the exhibitions we put on. We had a number of interesting receptions there; in fact, when I opened the shop at 614, I had a party, and it seems to me, now, as I look back on it, like hundreds of people came. It couldn't have been that many, but there was an enormous crowd, and they kept coming, and I had a great sense of having lots of well-wishers. A.G.

Beaman, in particular, who was an insurance man and a book collector, and a man who spent more time than he really should helping people like me and supporting literary activities and bookish activities, had written a number of letters. I got all kinds of beautiful letters and telegrams from people all around the country wishing me well; I have framed in my shop, now, a letter from Hamlin Garland.

GARDNER: So, though you'd been living from hand to mouth, you'd really developed an extensive following.

ZEITLIN: Yes. What kept me alive was the fact that, no matter what I got, I could always sell it. [tape recorder turned off] It is true that a lot of interesting people came to the shop. A lot of people were loyal and supported it. It attracted a great many people who bought whatever was there to sell, and we managed, somehow or another, in a very unbusinesslike way, to keep a business going. Its position was not improving in terms of profit or its debts. I used bank credit the best I could but was always having to renew loans to pay off in part and then start borrowing again.

GARDNER: What was the financial arrangement you made with the graphics? Were they a consignment sort of thing?

ZEITLIN: Most of them were consigned. I bought very

little art. I managed to get things consigned from people like Norman Lindsay in Australia, who sent me a great many of his etchings, and I used to exhibit them and sell them for $75 and $150 apiece. Now, when I see them selling for $1,000 apiece in Australia, it's very interesting. He used to send me large groups of them, and now I'm quite astonished at how well we did. I exhibited artists like Paul Landacre. I exhibited the photographs of Edward Weston and used to arrange sittings for him. It was never big, but it all added up. And then Howard Moorpark used to go out and get prints--he had prints consigned from the East, from Weyhe, and from other art dealers. As a matter of fact, it wasn't a great time for graphic arts, and there were very few print dealers. Between 1930 and about 1955 were twenty-five years in which the graphic arts had a very lean time: you could sell the best Whistlers, the best Rembrandts, the best Dürers (and there were plenty of them available) for very little money. And we managed to get quite a few of these. We didn't make much off of them; our commission was something like one-third.

We also exhibited contemporary painters, but that was not a very lucrative business. We were one of the few places in town, however, that contemporary artists could come with their work and hope for an exhibition.

There weren't many galleries. There was the Biltmore Gallery; there was Hatfield, who by then, I think, had moved out on Seventh Street; there was Stendahl's on Wilshire Boulevard; and there was a man by the name of Harry Braxton in Hollywood. Stanley Rose had a sort of a gallery. It's curious when I think now of the sort of things that he had for sale, which were ridiculously cheap: original blue Picasso paintings, Braques . . .

GARDNER: Stanley Rose had those?

ZEITLIN: Yes, Stanley Rose. There was a man who ran a gallery in Stanley Rose's place, [and] his name was Kurt Merlander. Then there was another chap by the name of Howard Putzel. Howard Putzel was a man with extraordinarily good taste and a great deal of knowledge. He didn't have much money--he had a small gallery on Hollywood Boulevard in one of the arcades--but he did bring some fine things there. I remember a [Odilon] Redon drawing that Ed Hanley bought from him, and a great many other things. However, he was an epileptic. He couldn't keep his business alive here, so he went to New York. He became involved with Peggy Guggenheim, and he helped build Peggy Guggenheim's collection. He died quite young, I think as a result of one of his epileptic attacks. But Frank Perls also was getting started. There weren't many places--a handful, four

or five--where any contemporary artist could get a showing, and so my place provided an opportunity for things to be exhibited. And that was one more reason why the shop kept alive.

GARDNER: Were you close to Stanley Rose at all?

ZEITLIN: Well, we were friends. I knew him over the years, from the time that he started as a stock-room boy at the Broadway working in the book department. Then he went out to Hollywood, and he joined up with Mac Gordon, who had originally managed a big secondhand-book store downtown which belonged to a man in Chicago, Powner's. Mac Gordon moved out to Hollywood next door to the Brown Derby. Stanley Rose joined forces with him, and they really got the cream of Hollywood's book business; they had a spectacular bookshop. Everybody that was coming along in Hollywood was there, coming and going--people like John Barrymore, Red Skelton. . . .

GARDNER: Now, this would be about the mid-thirties, right?

ZEITLIN: Yes, the mid-thirties. And, of course, Stanley Rose also was a man who had good friends among the bootleggers. During prohibition you could always get a drink at Stanley Rose's. He knew his way around. He never struck me as being a man who was very literate, and yet he had friends among the sort of the tough-guy school of literature. Jim Tully used to frequent his

place. I'm trying to remember some of the names of the people who were regulars at Stanley Rose's. . . . Certainly nobody who came to Hollywood failed to go to Stanley Rose's bookshop, or didn't know that if you wanted a drink at any hour of the night, you could always knock on Stanley Rose's back door, and he was there at the back of the shop with a jug.

GARDNER: What kind of books did he handle?

ZEITLIN: Well, he handled best sellers. Mostly he would go out to the studios with big suitcases of books, and he would sell them to the writers and to the directors and producers, and he sold a lot of art books to the art directors. They, in fact, constituted a very important part of the customers of the book business in those days. And the research departments also were considerably active in buying books. The research departments of the studios had great budgets because everything that they needed for a production could be charged to the production. In its prime, Paramount Studios had Miss Gladys Percy, who bought very expensive sets of books; they could buy a set of Diderot's Encyclopedia or Napoleon's great set on the Egypt expedition. They had no limits on the amount they could spend, and they bought full sets of things like the London Illustrated News, or Harper's weekly.

GARDNER: And what did they do with these?

ZEITLIN: They used them for research, background material for the films. The writers used them, the artists used them, and they built up enormous libraries. RKO had a research library; Columbia developed one later; but MGM must have spent, in the course of the years, I would say, close to a million dollars building their research library. There was a Russian woman there who was head of the research department. I can't remember her name, but she was a very spectacular lady who walked around in a riding habit and carried a quirt.

GARDNER: What's happened to these libraries?

ZEITLIN: Well, some of them were given away. They were given to some of the universities--the universities were told to come in and take them. MGM apparently has retained its library; I never found out. I went out once to Twentieth Century-Fox, which had a very well conducted research library headed by Miss [Frances] Richardson. They answered the questions of all the writers, they answered the questions of the art directors, and they provided the background material. A copy of the script was always given to the research department, and the research department immediately set to work to provide background for the writers and the directors, producers, and the art directors. So it was a very essential part of movie-making.

Universal finally sold its library to George Macon, one of the employees of the research library, for a nominal

sum, so that they would no longer have to pay taxes on it, and he could start all over again at the price he'd paid for it. They leased their space to him, and he then became a sort of a contract research department for the studio. I don't know what ultimately happened to that department. At one time he came to me with the proposal that we set up an independent research library, a research service for the different studios, but it was just one more activity that I couldn't take on. And I think, in the long run, I was very wise not to.

GARDNER: Well, back to Stanley Rose. In that period of the mid-thirties, the dealerships around town had changed quite a bit, I'd imagine. Who were some of the principal bookdealers around L.A. by the mid-thirties?

ZEITLIN: Well, there was a woman, Jean French, and she did all her business selling art books to the research departments of the studios. And she worked very hard, but she made a great deal of money and, in the end, retired very well off from just selling art books to the studios. She would go both to the studio heads--I mean the research department heads--and to the individual artists in the art department, and she would sell them books, and they would buy and always be in debt to her. So half the time she was selling books, and the other half of the time she was trying to collect her money. Before that, there was

a Miss Marian Blood who sold architectural books and books on art research to the studios. And then along in the thirties, the Rapid Blueprint Company had over the years built up a very large stock of art books, architectural books. They must have had $100,000 in their book department. They were out on Maple Street. A man by the name of Henry Davis was the head of it, and they decided they were not going to go on with this. So I bought their stock, and I think that was one of the lifesavers--transfusions--which I got to help keep the business going. Because when I think back on the beautiful folios that we took over, all of the great classics in architecture . . .

GARDNER: How did that happen? Was it open to bid, or was it through a contact of yours?

ZEITLIN: It was a personal contact. Henry Davis used to come into my shop--the Rapid Blueprint Company was then the largest and most active blueprint concern, very successful--and he was a strange man, so very brutally direct and full of all kinds of aggressions. He hated his brother (Pierpont Davis), who was an architect here at the time. When his mother died, he didn't go to her funeral. And he was always full of violent threats. But on the other side, he was a man of considerable sensibilities, and he had started coming into my shop

to see some of the exhibitions. I would have as a regular visitor here in Los Angeles a man from Bristol, England, by the name of Kenneth Gallop, who represented a firm called Frost and Reed. They had the American agency for Russell Flint's watercolors. And when Mr. Gallop would come to town, he would set up an exhibition at the Biltmore Hotel. He would let me take a number of his good things and hang them in my shop, and I used to bring various customers to him, and I would get a commission. I sold things to the Huntington Library; I sold things to the L.A. County Museum. He brought good English watercolors, drawings, and etchings, as well as a great deal of material that was purely for the interior decorator trade. But the Russell Flints that he brought at that time, which we could sell for $250 to $750, were the kind of things that later I bought back and sold for $10,000. And Henry Davis became a customer of mine for Russell Flint watercolors; he really became intrigued with them, and he collected a number of them. Some of them were the best watercolors that Russell Flint ever did. And I used to buy a few of them in between visits with Gallop, and I always had Russell Flint watercolors in stock, and other English watercolors. This, I think, also accounted for the fact that we were able to keep going. Henry Davis liked me in a peculiar way, so that

when they decided to close out their book department, they just invited me to come up there and take over the entire stock on a consignment basis. At first they were all consigned to me, and I think I got a third on everything I sold. But I could move them into my shop and price them and sell them, and finally, when the residue got down to a certain level, I bought everything from them at an agreed price.

GARDNER: Now, it sounds as though the art-book business was flourishing in the 1930s.

ZEITLIN: The art-book business was flourishing greatly. It was a very important part of our business, and the chief market for art books then were the studios.

GARDNER: What about other dealers around town? What was your basic competition?

ZEITLIN: Well, I think Stanley Rose was an important competitor when it came to the studios. Of course, Dawson's Book Shop imported a great many art books; Ernest Dawson had a constant flow of business. I don't remember who else. I think it was just a great time for selling any art books that we got.

GARDNER: It sounds as though the competition has mostly drifted away, then, by now.

ZEITLIN: Well, the market diminished as time went on, and instead of buying heavily, the studios got to the

point where they weren't buying at all. And ultimately, within the past few years, they were trying to sell, and if they couldn't sell, they gave their libraries away. They gave a great many of their books to UCLA and to USC. But in the thirties and forties and fifties, the studios were a tremendous market.

GARDNER: Was Sixth Street still the center of the book universe in those days, or had it split up pretty much?

ZEITLIN: Well, Sixth Street remained the street of bookshops until, I suppose, about 1945, and then the rents went up. The bookshops couldn't afford to pay the rents; a lot of the buildings were torn down. The people that lasted the longest around Sixth Street were Bennett and Marshall. They remained in the location which I had had near 614--next door to 614--for quite a few years, and it wasn't until, I think, sometime in the fifties that they moved out on Melrose.

GARDNER: Hadn't they worked for you?

ZEITLIN: No, neither one of them worked for me. Bob Bennett had worked for Holmes, and Dick Marshall had worked for Dawson's. And a great deal of their stock came from Dawson, because Dawson was very generous about giving credit and selling them stuff at marked-down prices. He believed in buying large masses of stuff, putting a small profit on them and turning them over,

and extending indefinite credit to anybody. He was a man who might have been called naive if he hadn't been so intelligent.

GARDNER: And so successful.

ZEITLIN: Well, he was successful to a degree. He was a successful merchandiser. He was certainly a successful person. But he didn't leave when he should have. He should have bought the locations which he was renting then; they were offered to him for very little money. And he didn't take the profits he should have taken on his good books. He became impatient whenever a good book didn't sell, and he marked it down rather than waiting for the right buyer to come along. He loved to buy so much that he would sell anything to get the money to buy something else. This becomes a kind of a senseless compulsion among booksellers: they love to buy books, and they'd rather buy books than sell them. I'm sure that that's true of me. I find it very difficult to restrain myself anytime I see a good library, even if I have to go head over heels in debt. But it was because of the studios and what they bought, because of the people who bought prints and drawings and watercolors from me, and because of the collectors, all of whom were very good and very generous to me, that I managed to keep the West Sixth Street shop going until 1938.

TAPE NUMBER: V, SIDE ONE

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GARDNER: Now, as I mentioned, before we get to your move from Sixth Street, there are a couple of areas to talk about, and I guess chronologically, the first one would be Larry Powell and his time with you. And the thought occurred to me (I'll keep interrupting before you can start) that it seems that when he came to your shop, there was more conversation with the local universities, and then especially after he left and was affiliated with UCLA.

ZEITLIN: Well, I'd like to say, first of all, that my affiliation with UCLA began much earlier than Larry Powell. I started going out there and selling them books in 1927.

GARDNER: Up on Vermont?

ZEITLIN: No, they had already moved out to Westwood, and the librarian there then was John Goodwin. The woman in charge of acquisitions was Virginia Trout. I realized that they were building a big research library that didn't have many books, and that they were in the market for substantial reference material. So any time I saw a good set that I thought would fit into their program, I would take it out or I would write them about it, and so on. In those days, nobody else that I can

think of was doing much in the way of trying to sell them. They didn't go to bookshops very much, so that I had a great deal of UCLA's business to myself. And they would tell me what sort of thing they wanted. I remember that they told me they wanted a set of the British Museum catalogs, and I located a set. In those days it consisted of over 100 volumes, all great big quartos, and I located a set through Maggs Brothers. It was unbound, it was in the sheets, folded, ready for binding, and Mr. Goodwin said, "Go ahead, we'll buy it." So I ordered that and had it sent. And then the basic guide to reference tools was [Isadore G.] Mudge, and I got a copy of Mudge [Guide to Reference Books], took it out to UCLA and got the librarian there to check off what they had and then to indicate what they would like to have. So I was able to work from an actual desiderata list. I didn't take the full advantage of it [as] I should have. I realize now that if I had sent out want lists, and if I had advertised in the various trade journals, I could have done a great deal more business. But I was handicapped then by the fact that I didn't have the capital to do more business than I was doing, so that it was really a case of hand to mouth and not enough in between.

GARDNER: How about some of the other universities--USC,

Oxy?

ZEITLIN: USC was buying very little; Occidental was buying very little; and Leslie Bliss at the Huntington was buying as little as he possibly could, partially because the attitude of the trustees of the Huntington then was that they ought to conserve their capital, not build the library. And it wasn't until quite a few years passed--until sometime in the fifties--that the trustees realized that they had something like a million dollars in reserve funds which should have been spent buying in the years in between. They called Bill Jackson and asked him what they should do, and he said, "Gentlemen, spend it as fast as you can on books, because they're going to cost you more every year. Your dollar is going to go down in value, and the books are going to go up in value." But Leslie Bliss was intimidated by his board. I remember Robert Schad telling me how he wanted to get a certain herbal because they had the gardens (they were supposed to be a botanical garden as well as a museum and a library). And he went to Mr. [Robert A.] Millikan, and after quite a lot of negotiating, he was told, "Mr. Schad, we will give you the money for that book provided you promise not to ask us for any more money to buy books with this year."

Well, you were asking about Larry Powell. Larry

Powell came to me because he had returned from Dijon, where he had gotten his degree. He had married Fay, and he had expected to get a job teaching at Occidental College. But the then-head of the faculty didn't approve of Larry, and in spite of the goodwill of Remsen Bird and certain other friends that he had there, he couldn't get a job. He really had no money, and he and Fay were living down at Laguna Beach with M.F.K. [Mary Frances Kennedy] Fisher, who was then married to Dilwyn Parrish, the brother of Anne Parrish. Dilwyn Parrish was a very talented painter and he also was a good writer. And he was a fine person. He was the one man that M.F.K. Fisher always was deeply in love with. I got a letter from her a few days ago in which she told me the story of how she went with him to the Mayo Clinic later--I suppose it was sometime in the forties--and they told him that he had, I think it was, some form of a degenerative disease. He had to undergo a series of amputations before he died. But Larry was living down there, and he didn't have any money. And I said to Ward Ritchie, "What do you think we could do about Larry Powell?" I said, "Do you think he'd come to work for me if I offered him a job?" He said, "Well, I don't know, but you can try." So I sent him a telegram saying, "If you want to come to work for thirty dollars a week, come in Monday and start"

(something to that effect--I've actually got a copy of the telegram somewhere). And he really didn't like the idea, but it was better than starving; so he came in and went to work. And he and Fay found a little house down the side of a hill on Lakeshore Avenue in the Echo Park area, and he worked for me for several years. He could type, he could write letters, and he had a large group of friends. He made friends very quickly; Larry Powell has always had a talent for friendship. Through the shop, he made a great many of the friends who later were to be his chief supporters when he became the librarian at UCLA, [as well as] his chief links with the community. He had a unique opportunity to establish relationships with the people who were interested in books and who had influence, both political and financial, because we were located downtown in the area where the men who wielded power in Los Angeles came and went. The California Club was around the corner; the Pacific Mutual Life Insurance Company was across the street, and the men who managed Pacific Mutual Life Insurance Company were customers of ours. There were people like Seeley Mudd and his brother Harvey Mudd of the Cypress Mines Company, who had their offices and came into our shop frequently, and attorneys like Homer Crotty. There were men like Glenn Schaefer, who was president of the Security Title Insurance and Trust Company, which was

separate then from the Title Insurance Company. And they all came into the shop at one time or another. Larry Powell met all these people, and he formed friendships with them. He would write them letters and sell them books. One of his jobs was to go over to the Los Angeles Public Library and call on Albert Reed, who was then the head of the acquisitions department of the public library. Albert Reed had first been librarian of the El Paso Public Library; I don't know how long ago, but it must have been about the turn of the century. Later he worked for Fowler Brothers, which was the largest of the new-book stores in downtown Los Angeles, managed by a very interesting character, a very colorful man by the name of Charlie Hixon. Larry went over to call on Albert Reed to sell him some books, and Albert said, "Larry, you're not any good as a salesman, but you'd be awful good on this side of the desk. Why don't you go to library school. I think I can help get you a scholarship, and, one way or another, I think it would be a good thing if you got yourself a library degree to go with your PhD. You would be one of the men who would be fitted to go ahead and advance as a librarian beyond that of most people who had come up through the ranks of library school." So he persuaded Larry to come up to Berkeley and go to library school. Larry had very little money, but he took the risk. I

don't know how he managed; I think Dr. Al Cass, his friend, advanced him some money, as other people did. He went up [to Berkeley], became friends with [Sydney B.] Mitchell, who was the head of the library school and evidently a very inspiring man, and got his library degree, came back down here and again couldn't get a job.

I hired him again, and this time (it was about 1936) Frieda Lawrence had come into my shop. She'd been brought in by Galka Scheyer; Galka Scheyer was a very interesting, very spectacular Hungarian woman who represented the Blue Four [Die Blau Vier] group of artists--Kandinsky, Klee, Feininger, and Jawlensky. She was trying very hard to get people to buy their paintings and drawings, and she would come to me and say, "Jake, why don't you come up and buy one of those paintings. It will cost you $300, and you can pay $10 a month." I didn't have ten dollars a month, and besides, I thought, I was not going to be stuck with those things. So she never stuck me with one cf those great paintings, and the only man who really supported her in those days was Walter Arensberg. [noise from street; tape recorder turned off]

GARDNER: Now, you were talking about Galka Scheyer and Frieda Lawrence. . . .

ZEITLIN: Galka Scheyer brought in Frieda Lawrence, and they invited me out to Frieda's place that she rented--

no, to Galka Scheyer's house--to discuss what Frieda was going to do about the manuscripts of Lawrence which she had. I suppose Frieda needed money; I don't think she had a great income at that time. So I told her I'd like very much to try and sell them and [that I] thought I could get a good price for them. But what we thought was a good price then was miserably little; she would have taken $30,000 for all the Lawrence manuscripts at that time. She agreed to let me come out to San Cristobal, where the manuscripts were, on the ranch, in New Mexico. And I must say I'm very confused about this; it was in the fall of 1937. Well, let's stop just a minute; I want to get the exact date. [tape recorder turned off] It was agreed that I was to come out to the ranch at San Cristobal and see the manuscripts. I think it must have been in the summer of 1937 that I finally got out to the ranch. Drove up--it was some terrible, dark night; I don't know yet how I found my way up to the ranch. I had driven from Colorado, and the next morning I met Aldous Huxley and Maria Huxley there at the ranch and Angelino [Ravagalli] who was Frieda's Italian boyfriend. They showed me the trunk in which the manuscripts of Lawrence were kept. They did not show me the Lady Chatterley manuscript, which may not have been there then; it may still have been held somewhere for safekeeping in Europe. But it was a very pleasant visit.

I remember the squash blossom omelettes we'd have for breakfast. I remember also that Aldous Huxley would get up and type; he was then writing Ends and Means, which was, I think, the first book in which he seriously expressed his general philosophy both about mysticism, pacifism, and the sources of human motivation and man's relation to the universe. And he talked to me--he told me something about what he was writing. I said to him that there would probably be a place for him in Hollywood if he would like to come out and work for the pictures. And he said, well, he would think about it . . . he might be inclined to do so. . . . I said to him, "I don't want you to make any contracts or any agreements, but would you be receptive if a proposal came to you, if there was someone that said that they would offer you a job?" And he said, yes, he would be, and he wrote me to that effect, saying essentially that he would be open to proposals, that he was not committing himself in any way, there was no exclusive agreement between us, but if I could bring someone to him, he would be interested.

And I remember we went down to Santa Fe. We met Witter Bynner there, and all drove to Santo Domingo for the rain dance. It was a wonderful occasion to be sitting there on the ground watching this Santo Domingo rain dance with Aldous Huxley, Frieda Lawrence, Witter Bynner, and

Angelino. And next to us, sitting on the ground, was a very inconspicuous little man with dark skin, whom I didn't recognize at all when we first sat down. But he finally came over and said, "Hello, Jake." And it turned out to be Stanley Marcus, the head of Neiman-Marcus.

So the Indians danced the rain dance, and it rained--and it rained torrents. We got back to Santa Fe, I must say, a little bit concerned about the flash floods that were coming down, but we got back up and back up to the ranch. I drove back from there to California. And sometime afterward, they sent the trunk to me, and I suggested to Larry Powell that this would be a great job for him--if he would like something to do, he could come and catalog the Lawrence manuscripts. And this he did extremely well. Frieda came in and he met her. He wrote the catalog description of all the manuscripts which we printed in 1937. Aldous Huxley wrote a foreword, I wrote a foreword, Elmer Belt and Susannah Dakin paid for the printing, and it was printed by Ward Ritchie. It was exhibited at the Los Angeles Public Library, and Aldous Huxley was invited to come and speak. This job provided an opportunity for Larry to really use his talents in a productive way, something that combined the use of his literary talents for literary purposes and for commercial purposes. And he did an excellent job. He wrote the

essays on each one, short annotations--some longer, some shorter--about the manuscripts. He described them very well, and this catalog now has become a landmark, and it sells for quite a bit of money when it turns up.

GARDNER: Tell me a little bit about Frieda Lawrence. What was she like in those days?

ZEITLIN: Well, Frieda Lawrence, in those days, seemed to be a very large person. She had this voice that people speak of which really was a vibrant Germanic kind of a voice, but it reached out and struck you; it was like beating on a bronze cymbal. She had a wonderfully direct way about her. There was no doubt that she was an exceptional person, a person who had met the world with open eyes and had lived her own life quite frankly and in terms of what she felt was the honest way to live. On the one hand, she seemed to be this very strong person; in other ways she was a very weak, dependent woman, and she needed Angelino. They [the Lawrences] had rented a house from him in Italy, and I think there's no doubt that she must have had an affair with Angelo while Lawrence was in his last year. He promised Lawrence that he would look after Frieda. And afterward, Angelo left his family and came to the United States, helped her look after the ranch, and finally did marry her, and they moved down to the ranch.

Of course, the ranch, San Cristobal, was given to Lawrence by Mabel Dodge. Lawrence wouldn't take it as a gift, so he gave her the manuscript of Sons and Lovers as a token purchase price for the ranch. She also gave him a house down in Taos, a little piece of land, and Frieda and Angelino moved down there, and they spent the summers in Taos and the winters in Port Aransas, Texas. While I was at the ranch, I met the Lady Brett, who had been a sort of a follower of Lawrence. She was never a striking beauty; she painted, but she didn't paint what then seemed to be very good paintings. Later in the years, she developed into a very impressive artist. And she carried around this horn which you had to talk into. It was a speaking horn that deaf people used to use in those days. I didn't meet Mabel. I was always afraid to meet Mabel; I always felt that she was a woman that devoured people. If she took a fancy to you, she sort of took you in and overwhelmed you, and then when she got tired of you, she shucked you off. I didn't want to be one of the people that got caught in her gristmill.

GARDNER: You talked about Galka Scheyer very briefly. She was really very important in Los Angeles art, and obviously also had contact with you. What was she like?

ZEITLIN: Well, Galka Scheyer was a little woman. She never asked people to do things--she told them. And

her great devotion was to this group of artists who she felt were very important, would someday be numbered among the great artists of their time--and they have become so. She lived not too well, but she lived off of acting as their agent, selling their things, making a commission off of them, but kept pushing these things at people whether they wanted them or not. She was fortunate that Walter Arensberg was forming his collection, that he appreciated what these people were, and he bought quite a few of them. And some other people did, too, but not nearly as many as should have.

GARDNER: And would have, twenty years later.

ZEITLIN: She also conducted classes in art, and one of the things that helped her live, I think, were the classes. They were not so much classes in how to paint as how to look at paintings and what the elements of the new art were. She was a great apostle for the art of the twentieth century.

GARDNER: How did she happen to come to Los Angeles?

ZEITLIN: I have no idea. I never knew. She had a nephew living here, but whether he came afterwards I don't know. But I can't say, unless it had to do with a man by the name of Herman Sachs. Herman Sachs was a German architect and designer who came here. He had been associated with the Bauhaus school, and he came here and became associated

with the Parkinsons, who were one of the leading architectural firms in town, and he did a great many interior designs for them. They worked on such things as the tile design for the interior of the Union Station downtown, and many other designs in connection with buildings and furnishings in the Los Angeles area. I think they must have had a hand in what went into Bullock's Wilshire, which was certainly a revolutionary design, both in the way of structural architecture and the interior and all the furnishings that went into it.

GARDNER: Let me finish up with one more subject, unless you feel like quitting now.

ZEITLIN: Go ahead.

GARDNER: Okay, I thought to finish up this evening we'd talk about the show you brought in 1937, which was [of] Käthe Kollwitz.

ZEITLIN: The Käthe Kollwitz exhibition came as a result of my receiving a lithograph--I think it must have been in 1933--as a gift from Herbert Klein, who was then a newspaper correspondent in Berlin. Mina Cooper, who was one of the loveliest people I ever knew--beautiful young woman, marvelous spirit, great sensitivity--had met him here in about 1928 or '29. He came in one day and said he was going to go to work for what was called the Community Chest in those days (the United Fund drive now).

And I said, "Well, you're going to meet a very lovely person down there, Mina Cooper." And he went down, he did meet her, and fell in love; and ultimately, when he went to Germany as a correspondent, she went over and met him, and they were married. And one of the people that came there while they were in Berlin to see them was Larry Powell. That was during the time that he was going to school at Dijon.

I was very much struck with this lithograph that Herbert and Mina sent me; I think it was for a wedding present. It was so full of emotion, called The Mothers. I wanted to know more about Käthe Kollwitz, so I started reading what I could about her. I think the best article I read was by Mary McCarthy in the magazine published by the American Art Association. And so I wanted to know more, and finally I heard that there was an exhibition of her work in Minneapolis at the Walker Gallery, and that there was a gallery in New York also called the Walker Gallery that was handling her things in the United States. I wrote to Berlin and got in touch with Käthe Kollwitz, and she in turn got the Walker Gallery in touch with me, and I asked if I could have an exhibition. In 1937, in the midst of the agitation against Nazism--there was an antifascist movement in this country which was very radical, of course, and was looked upon as being

very dangerous and communistic, which was developing--I decided that it would be a great idea to hold an exhibition for the benefit of the League against Fascism, I think it was called at that time. So I arranged to get this group of prints here. I got the sponsorship of the anti-fascist organization (I've forgotten what it was called, but I've got all my files on it here), and it was agreed that Melvyn Douglas would chair the opening. One of the speakers was George Antheil, and the other speaker was the man who wrote *Masse Mensch*--Ernst Toller, one of the most important men in Germany at the time of the Spartacist revolution in the twenties, late twenties. He later committed suicide. He delivered a very fine talk on this evening. We had a very large attendance, got good publicity both in the *Los Angeles Times* and in the *Los Angeles Record*. And that was the first show of Käthe Kollwitz on the West Coast. I didn't sell many of her prints to people in Los Angeles, but Albert Bender, who was the patron of everything good in San Francisco, came down about that time, and he bought a complete set of the *Peasant Rebellion* and a number of the other prints. Of course, the prices now seem pathetically low--like eighty-five dollars for a complete set of the *Peasant Rebellion* series, and the prints were selling anywhere from fifteen dollars to seventy-five dollars. I think

the highest price was something like seventy-five dollars. I must say that the show got a great deal of attention and moved people emotionally and was a sort of a landmark exhibition. That was the first exhibition, as I said, of Käthe Kollwitz on the West Coast, and later, one of the galleries in Munich published a hundredth-anniversary booklet on Käthe Kollwitz. In it they reproduced a letter of Käthe Kollwitz in which she said, "I've just had a letter from Jake Zeitlin in which he proposes to have *eine Ausstellung* in Los Angeles, in California." It wasn't until quite a few years later that I discovered that I had a facsimile of this letter. Someone was researching Käthe Kollwitz in Berlin and came across the original letter there and sent me a Xerox of it, and then I discovered that I had a copy of this all the time. But it was very nice to be mentioned by her, and this was, of course, the farthest away from Berlin that anyone had ever shown her work.

TAPE NUMBER: VI [video session]

SEPTEMBER 9, 1977

GARDNER: We're here to do the video segment of the oral history interview we've been working on now for a month or two. What we're going to do today, at first at least, is talk about Mr. Zeitlin's personal collection and some of the many things that he himself has acquired through the years. Where would you like to begin?

ZEITLIN: Well, I think that it would be very appropriate to talk about some of the books which I have kept over the years, because books are for me the symbols of my ideals, the symbols of my friendships, and the symbols of some of my ambitions. And without books, I'm afraid my life would be hardly anything at all. I've piled up here a few books in a rather haphazard way, and there's going to be very little connection between one and the other except as they pertain to some part of me, either my past or my present. I'd like to say, first of all, that I'm not a book collector in the sense that some people are. I have never attempted to compete with my customers, and there have been times, a number of times, when I've taken home some favorite book like Darwin's _Origin of the Species_ in a very fine copy, and the first man that came along and said, "You know what I really

would like is a fine copy of *The Origin of the Species*," I could never resist saying to him, "I've got the book for you." That says something about me. It isn't that I'm entirely commercial about this; it's that it gives me such tremendous satisfaction to have the right book for the right man when he wants it. On the other hand, books have been a very important part of my life. They have amulet value, in a way. There are many books I've kept which I haven't read, but I have them on the shelf there because, in some way, they have symbolized an ideal of mine. And, of course, I've always had the feeling, just as most people who accumulate books do, that someday I was going to get to it and read it, and I wanted it there when I did decide to get to it. But in the larger proportion, the books that I've kept have been books that I have read either in whole or in part.

I wonder if I could go back and determine which books have been the most significant in my life and have formed my character mostly. I can only remember a few. Certainly Victor Hugo's *Toilers of the Sea*, which I read when I was somewhere between ten and twelve, must have had a considerable influence on me. I think it had a lot to do with forming my social and political notions. Later on it was the books of John Burroughs which appealed to me very much because of my interest

of Ashley Montagu's *Man's Most Dangerous Myth: The Fallacy of Race*. It's inscribed, "To Jake Zeitlin, father of this book, with love, from Ashley Montagu, 5th May, 1974." And in the preface, he says, "It was my friend Mr. Jake Zeitlin, bookseller of Los Angeles, who originally persuaded me to write this book." What happened was that I had read an article of Ashley Montagu's in the journal called *Psychiatry*, published by St. Elizabeths Hospital in Washington, and that article was entitled, "Problems and Methods Relating to the Study of Race." I wrote to him and said, "I think you have a very important idea there, and I think you should go ahead and expand it and make a book out of it." And I said, "My friend Aldous Huxley might very well write a preface to it, because he approves of your approach to the reasons for racial prejudice and racial aggression." So with that stimulation, he started to write, and he sent me chapters which I read and, in a small way, criticized and returned to him. Finally he produced a manuscript for a book. He'd hoped, and I hoped, that I would publish it; but very fortunately for him, I found that I was in no shape to undertake any publishing. I did get Aldous Huxley to write the foreword to it, and, with that, he was able to go to Columbia University Press and get the book published in 1942. It's interesting to see that since then it's gone from a small book of this

size to a considerably thicker book of this size in thirty-two years. It has no doubt been the most widely circulated and, I hope, one of the most influential books on the question of race and race prejudice. I hope that it has played an influential part in changing people's attitudes toward the notion of the myth of race.

GARDNER: I see a Sandburg down there.

ZEITLIN: Well, the Sandburg American Songbag is another book which I've kept because of my close association both with Sandburg and my interest in folk songs. When I was a boy, I worked on ranches in Texas and also had listened to some of the people that worked for my father who went along when I drove a truck--or a team of horses before then--on the long drives, and they would sing songs. I don't know where I got the notion that these things constituted a form of literature, but I felt that I should put them down. So I collected a good many of these songs. Also, on the back lot of a house which we owned in the black section of Fort Worth, there was a Holy Roller church, and I used to go there and hear them sing, and I absorbed some of their songs. Very early I had the audacity to write to Frank Dobie, and I got a letter back, and I joined the Texas Folklore Society and received some of their early publications, which have now become immensely valuable. I was surprised to see some

of these things, which were a dollar and a dollar and a half when they were published, selling for as much as $250 now. I'm glad to say that I stowed some of those away as they came in. But the American Songbag of Carl Sandburg was really his first book, outside of his poetry, that brought him to national attention. It was the first attempt, I think, to introduce the American people to the idea that the folk songs which were sung by the working people and the tramps and the cowboys and the poor Southerners were something which were entitled to be sung in the concert hall and the parlor, as well as in the back room in the bar.

I met Carl Sandburg on a very cold February night of 1922 in Dallas, Texas, and he was giving one of his lectures and guitar recitals at Southern Methodist University. We seemed to have the right chemistry for each other immediately, and after the concert was over and the party that followed, he asked me to come up to his room in the Adolphus Hotel. And we sat up till four o'clock in the morning, with my singing a number of songs and his attempting to record them with his own peculiar type of notation. Of course, tape recorders like we have here were hardly thought of, and nobody had one or a lot of people would have saved a great deal of work and a lot of good material would have been preserved,

as it should have been, instead of through the filter of the bad methods of recording that we had in those days. He told me that he was going to write this American Songbag, and he would like to use some of these songs. Later, in 1925, when I moved to California, he kept in touch with me, came to see me when he came out here, and he used some of these songs. I must say that he was one of the men who always took the trouble to give appropriate credit to anyone he took a song from. He made a great many friends that way and, certainly for me, it was a great satisfaction to feel that these things which all my friends thought were trivial and hardly polite were worth recording. He sent me this here and inscribed it, "With thanks, and hoping health and love keep you, Carl." Until his death at over eighty a few years ago, we remained in close touch, although I never had the good fortune to go and visit him in Chicago or at his goat farm in Wisconsin, or, later on, in North Carolina. His daughter [Helga] later came to see me, and we have kept in touch for the years that followed.

GARDNER: Maybe we should have you sing one of those.

ZEITLIN: No, I think that that might crack the record. Now, everyone likes to think that at one time or another he was early in discovering a talent, and one of the books that I feel most proud of having spotted early in its

publication is The Time of Men, by Elizabeth Madox Roberts. I think it's a very important novel, and I think it's important not only for the story it tells but for the way in which it tells the story. The language is pure, the purest kind of poetic American English. There's a cadence to it which I think is unique, and as soon as I saw the book and read a little of it, I took a copy home in its dust jacket, and it has remained with me ever since. It's one of the books which collectors value because of what's called "the point," the point in this being that the title is printed not in black, but in dark blue ink, and I defy anyone to tell the difference unless it's brought to their attention. However, that makes it a first issue, which is not so significant as the lovely language which she used. There is a particular passage I wish I could find in which the man who sold apple trees describes the different kinds of apples. There's nothing I've ever read which gives me so much pleasure for the pure, poetic quality and the simplicity of it; it's the language which these people she describes would have used. I notice, now that I look at it, that this is not a copy that I bought when it first came out; it's a copy that I bought as a remainder from J.W. Robinson Company for fifty cents. I must have given away the copy which I bought when it first came out. This is another example of what happens very often to good books.

First editions of Faulkner's Soldiers Pay and Mosquitoes were remaindered, and we bought them for thirty cents and sold them for fifty-nine cents at Bullock's in 1926 and '27. Now they bring $250 to $450 each, so it may be one of the best marks of a book for it to have been above the head of popular taste.

One of the friendships that I've always been most proud of, a friendship which I feel very strongly about for a number of reasons, is that which I had with Rockwell Kent. I'd first heard of Rockwell Kent through Merle Armitage, although, of course, I had seen Rockwell Kent's illustrations in Vanity Fair along about 1922, '23, and had seen some of his books, like Voyaging and Wilderness, very early. But the first person I knew that knew him directly was Merle Armitage, and Merle Armitage in the late twenties and early thirties used to boast of his friendship with Rockwell Kent. Later on, I'm sorry to say, Merle Armitage decided that his superpatriotism couldn't tolerate the point of view of Rockwell Kent, and so he not only disavowed him but he attacked him violently. That was one of the several reasons why, in our later years, I was not as close as I had been to Merle. If Rockwell Kent was good enough for Merle to use as a sort of a stepping stone during the early part of his career, he should have been good enough to maintain a loyal friend-

ship for later on.

I have a great many photographs of Rockwell Kent. My first personal contact with him was when I asked him to do some illustrations or decorations or initials for Larry Powell's book on Robinson Jeffers. I have a copy of that here; it was the first book that Larry Powell published. I might say that it all began when Larry Powell came in my shop on Hope Street about 1928, and he and Ward Ritchie were delivery boys for Vroman's. We talked about a lot of things, and I expressed my great enthusiasm for Robinson Jeffers, and he and Ritchie both bought copies of Jeffers's books. They had, of course, a good reason to be interested otherwise, because Jeffers had been an Occidental student at one time, and both Powell and Ritchie had gone to Occidental College. So, later, Powell went to Dijon and there got his doctorate; and his thesis for his doctorate was An Introduction to Robinson Jeffers. He sent me a number of copies, which I sold for him. I think the original selling price must have been no more than two dollars and a half (there were only sixty copies printed in all), and the last time I saw one of these sold was at a book fair in San Francisco where someone paid $450 for it.

GARDNER: This is the original Dijon.

ZEITLIN: This is the original Dijon edition published in

1932. Later, when I started the Primavera Press, I got the idea of getting out another edition, a regular edition of this book. I wrote to Rockwell Kent and asked him if he would think of doing it, and he said, well, he would be coming out very shortly, and he would come and see me. So he did come out, and I drove him down to San Diego, where he lectured. We spent a wonderful night driving back and stopped early in the morning to eat hijacked lobsters and clam broth with a couple of longshoreman friends who lived along the coast of Palos Verdes. And he agreed to do something for the book. He decided that he would do initials instead of illustrations, and he did do the initials which were part of the book. In the meantime, we got acquainted, and we developed a friendship which we continued. I also wrote Kent, I think. It was March 22, 1932, that I got a letter from Rockwell Kent's secretary replying to a letter that I wrote him. [pause, outside noise]

GARDNER: Now then, before we were interrupted by the local trash pickup, you had found a letter that you were about to read.

ZEITLIN: I had a letter from Rockwell Kent's secretary dated March 22, 1932, in which she says, "Mr. Kent has been in Greenland since last April, and Mrs. Kent, who is on her way to join him there now, has been away much of

the time." Then she goes ahead and says that she has written to Mr. A.N. Kemp telling him Mr. Kent will return sometime in the fall, and suggested he write again at that time. Now, A.N. Kemp was one of my earliest customers. He was connected with the California Bank, which was the forerunner of the United California Bank here in Southern California, and he was a very important man in the financial world. He had the idea of having Rockwell Kent do a bookplate for him, and it was because of that that Kemp wrote Kent.

This particular book that I'm holding up here is a copy of Rockwell Kentiana, the works and a few words and many pictures by Rockwell Kent. This was published in a substantial edition by Harcourt Brace and Company in 1933. The interesting thing about this copy is that it is inscribed with a special photograph which we had put into a few copies, which says, "Yours truly, Rockwell Kent, to Jake and Jean." And this shows Rockwell Kent at what must have been the age of four or five dressed in a Little Lord Fauntleroy hat--not very consistent with the character we have of Kent as a man who went out into the wilderness of Greenland and Newfoundland and built himself houses in the wilderness.

This Rockwell Kentiana is both by Rockwell Kent and Carl Zigrosser, who did the bibliography and a list of his

prints. It was dedicated to C.Z. and shows a handclasp with "1910 plus," which indicates that they had originally met in 1910. Carl Zigrosser was a wonderful man. He was, I think, the patron saint of printmaking in America for a great many years. My first contact with him was about 1928 when I wrote him from my first shop; he was in charge of the print department at Weyhe's. Because of Zigrosser, a great many artists got their first showings of prints and their encouragement. Carl Zigrosser later went on to become the curator of prints at the Philadelphia Museum of Art. He wrote some of the most authoritative books on connoisseurship and the collecting of prints, and died a couple of years ago in Switzerland, where he'd gone to retire. It was very much to his credit--is very much to his credit--that he discovered Paul Landacre here in Southern California and encouraged him, came to see him, exhibited his prints at Weyhe's in New York, and helped create a reputation for him. Hardly anyone else in the East has recognized Paul Landacre's genius since then except, of course, George Macy, who used him to illustrate a number of the Limited Edition Club books. And now the director of the Philadelphia Museum of Art came to me a few weeks ago and said that they were getting together material for a full-scale exhibition of the wood engravings of Paul Landacre.

One of the photographs which I have of Rockwell Kent shows him here with Rosemary Haskell. Rosemary was an extraordinarily beautiful young woman, and Rockwell Kent had a great taste for beautiful young women. This was done, I think, sometime around 1942, when he had come out originally. I had introduced him to Dorothy Wagner, who was another very beautiful young woman. Dorothy was a premier dancer for Misha Ito, and it seemed that wherever Rockwell Kent went, he always attracted extraordinarily beautiful women who attached themselves to him without hesitation or delay. Rosemary Haskell later married Albert Maltz and finally committed suicide after a long depression. One of the most amusing experiences I ever had was long before I met Rockwell Kent, when I was invited to a friend's house to meet him. And I went there, and here was a fellow, about five foot four, with curly black hair and a mustache, who was representing himself to be Rockwell Kent. It turned out to be Mike Romanoff. Can I stop here a minute? [tape recorder turned off]

GARDNER: We have a few minutes left to wrap up.

ZEITLIN: Of course, Rockwell Kent was over six feet tall and had a bald head, so there was no resemblance at all between Mike Romanoff and Rockwell Kent. But he used this little gambit on people who had never met Kent, and he got

away with it several times.

GARDNER: Well, Romanoff was a great impostor, anyway, wasn't he?

ZEITLIN: Yes, he was an amusing impostor, and nobody ever got very mad at him or prosecuted him because he never used it to take advantage of anybody or get money out of them or anything like that. Of course, later on, Michael Romanoff opened a very fine restaurant in Beverly Hills, and we got to be very good friends. He had quite scholarly tastes and used to buy some most erudite books from me, including Greek-English dictionaries and some of the more highly esteemed editions of the classics. Well, I think we've come very close to the end of our time, so I hope that this has given you some idea of the sort of books of a certain type which I've collected. Although this doesn't cover the books of people with whom I've had no personal association and which I've collected for other reasons.

GARDNER: Now, you did mention very briefly (before we close up here) the collecting of the Brueghel. Is that about the only area that you collect outside of the incidentals? I take it you wouldn't sell the Brueghel material if someone came along and knocked on the door and asked for it.

ZEITLIN: The collection of books about Brueghel we're

not going to sell. But some day we're going to give them somewhere where we hope they'll be kept together and used as a source of reference and study by someone who may want to write more about Pieter Breughel, or by some of the print collectors. It would be a shame for it to be dispersed after these books have all been brought together, and we think that either the Los Angeles Museum or the National Gallery of Art will want to keep them together. In the not-too-distant future we're going to see what we can do about that. It's been a great pleasure for Josephine to get these books together and to read a great many of them. Of course, as always, a great part of the fun is in the chase.

GARDNER: Well, Mr. Zeitlin, thank you very much for your time, and I'll be back next Tuesday.

ZEITLIN: Thank you.

TAPE NUMBER: VII, SIDE ONE

SEPTEMBER 29, 1977

GARDNER: Now, as previewed, you said that there was more than one article that you wrote for Reader's Digest. The only one that I had read about was the one in 1936.

ZEITLIN: Well, I think the first one I did was in 1935, and this was the result of my acquaintance with the Reverend Charles Ferguson, whom I had known when he was a young, rather controversial Methodist minister in Fort Worth, Texas. He didn't last long with his congregation there, but I knew him only slightly, in the twenties, when we both lived there. He commenced to write for [H.L.] Mencken's American Mercury. He wrote several articles about American religions, and then he later did a thing called "500,000 Brothers" (as I remember the title), which had to do with American organizations such as the Shriners, the Odd Fellows, and all the other civic organizations. In addition, he wrote about American religious cults and American orthodoxy. He naturally followed the general point of view of Mencken and [George Jean] Nathan, which was to ridicule the boobs. And then, much to my surprise, after I got out here and had been here for some time, I heard from him again and discovered that he was an associate editor of Reader's Digest. He came out here to visit me, quite without any special plan,

and he and a man by the name of Charlie Dunning and I went out to the Huntington Library.

Charlie Dunning was a newspaperman who had done public relations work for the movies; before that he had been on the Chicago Daily News and was a friend of Carl Sandburg. It was through Carl Sandburg that I met Charlie Dunning. Charlie Dunning, at the time I met him, was publicity man, general P.R. man for Estelle Taylor. She was married to Jack Dempsey, who had abducted her. She was quite a successful figure in the movies, and Jack Dempsey had got a great passion for her and kidnapped her and took her down to Agua Caliente, which was a great resort then, and married her. She was in mortal fear of him, and I think that she was afraid to not marry him.

But in any event, Charlie, who was a pretty heavy man with the bottle, and Carl Sandburg would go off for weekends, usually around Laguna, and stay in a state of mild intoxication for several days and then come back to Los Angeles and visit around with their friends. And Carl would do his usual concertizing. So I got to know Charlie Dunning quite well, and he did some very kind things for me when I had problems later on. But Charlie Dunning came with Charlie Ferguson and me out to the Huntington Library, and we met a Dr. [Lodowick] Bendicksen,

a Dutchman who was then in charge of the photographic laboratory at the Huntington Library. Dr. Bendicksen had originated some documentation techniques, including the first microcards and microfiche that I ever saw, and he demonstrated those to us, and he also demonstrated microfilm. So Charlie Ferguson got the idea that this would make a good story, and it was agreed that Charlie Dunning and I would collaborate. So we interviewed Bendicksen, got all the information that we could, and then, between us, we did the articles.

Now, a regular practice of Reader's Digest was to buy articles from other magazines. But they very often would inspire an article and then refer the editor of the particular magazine to the writer of the article and he would buy it. For instance, the editor of World's Work, where our article "Lilliputian Libraries" first appeared, paid us $45 for it, and then Reader's Digest would buy the reprint rights and pay us $2,000 for it. So we suddenly landed with a very substantial sum of money for each of us. It was this kind of break once in a while which kept the book business going.

GARDNER: This was the first writing you'd done in a while, wasn't it?

ZEITLIN: No, I'd always done some writing, but it never appeared in anything except, you know, local magazines,

and usually it was about books. Or I tried to write some poetry, which also appeared in places like the San Francisco Review and some of the other little poetry magazines.

Then the year following, I had talked to Ferguson about the fact that a great many valuable materials, the ephemera upon which history is based, the things which historians need really to write accurately, were the things that weren't worth very much money but that in time would become very valuable and very useful. And I talked about such things as the road maps that filling stations gave away and still give away; over the course of a year, a series of road maps, showing the highways of the United States and their growth and the changes that had taken place, really constituted a valuable documentary source. And I told stories about different things which had come my way which had turned out to be valuable, such as a road map used by the immigrants--T.H. Jefferson's Emigrant's Guide from St. Joseph, Missouri, to St. Francisco, published in 1848. This particular one that a lady had brought in to me, which was folded up in a little container no bigger than a cigarette pack, had written on the face of it, "With the compliments of T.H. Jefferson to Benjamin Holliday of the Holliday Stage Lines." So this was a very vitally important map of the Overland

Road, the road used by the immigrants, and later it was used by Ben Holliday for setting up the route of the stage lines. I asked the lady how much she wanted for it, and she said twenty-five dollars. And it seemed to me that that was a reasonable price. I really had no idea what that was worth, and so I bought it and then went to Robert Cowan, the man who had done the definitive bibliography of California and who was the librarian for William Andrews Clark, and asked him about it. And he said, "Has it got the little pamphlet giving instructions to the immigrants on where to camp, how to avoid some of the hazards of the overland crossing?" I said yes. "Well," he said, "the only other copy known of this doesn't have that." So finally he suggested I ask $1,000 for it, but I decided that was too much, so I offered it to Mrs. Doheny for $750, and she bought it. The next day I got a wire from Ed Eberstadt, who was a great dealer in Western Americana in those days, offering me $1,500 for it. So I figured I'd lost $750 on that transaction! Well, it was stories like this that I put into this article, which I called "Trifles Today and Treasures Tomorrow." And this, I think, appeared first in the Saturday Review of Literature, also at a price of something like forty-five dollars, and then it was purchased in Reader's Digest. It was pretending to be a digest of the best stories appearing in other magazines in

the country, but they had found that in order to maintain a certain level of the type of story they wanted (which Ferguson said to me was a story that would interest the average streetcar conductor in the United States; now, that dates them very much--you'd have to go a long way to find a streetcar conductor now), they had to resort to this policy of inspiring stories, planting them in other magazines, and then buying them from the other magazines and reprinting them. It was a very nice little arrangement.

This article brought me an enormous flood of letters, over 5,000 letters in all. I never was able to answer them all, but I did answer quite a few, and I got a number of very good things. I got an original Audubon pastel. I don't remember all of the things I got, but one of the most interesting was a twenty-five-page letter from Timothy Pickering. [He] had been postmaster general and quartermaster general [among] many other things under Washington during the Revolution and during his first administration. [The letter was] written after Washington had died, giving Timothy Pickering's reasons why George Washington should not have a monument erected in his honor. It was a characteristic letter, it turned out: it seemed that Timothy Pickering was a man of many grievances who enjoyed his grievances hugely, and he also was a man who felt that people of less talent and less

ability had been selected for higher office and honored, when he was more deserving. So he stated in this letter that George Washington had never made any of the important strategic decisions during the Revolutionary War (they'd all been made by General [Nathaneal] Greene), that he was a man who looked very well in the saddle and on the platform, but was a man of very limited ability to make decisions or judgments, and that all this was a great myth. Well, there were many other letters; I never got them all answered. One of the more interesting letters was from a gentleman in Kentucky who said that he liked the tone of my letter and that he didn't have any rare books, but he wanted his daughter to go to Hollywood--she was a beautiful eighteen-year-old girl--and could he send her to me, because he knew from the tone of my article that I was an honorable man and would see that she was protected from the lures of Hollywood. I never could figure out whether this one hadn't been written by one of my friends as a practical joke.

GARDNER: She never showed up?

ZEITLIN: No, she never showed up, thank God. But a number of people did, most of them who had things which were worthless, and it was very pathetic and caused me a great deal of distress to see these people come in. One of them was an old gentleman from Wisconsin who'd read this portion about the Overland map, and borrowed money and came across

the country to try and sell me a map, and it wasn't worth fifty cents. So there was quite a bit of that. Some people were very graceful about it and took it in good spirit, and others were very much upset and felt that I had misled them.

But in any event, this sort of set the style for collecting ephemera. It stimulated people into keeping not only first editions of famous books but first appearances of significant articles and magazines or significant pamphlets. I suggested that people should save things like the old commercial almanacs that the baking powder people used to give out, and the ladies' cookbooks from the church sewing circle. This article really did stimulate, I think, the whole general movement towards collecting the sort of thing that was looked upon as being insignificant and of very little value. Later on, Van Allen Bradley started a column in the Chicago Daily News called "Gold in Your Attic," and that was a direct descendant of the thing that this article started. It was, of course, very useful to me because a great many people read Reader's Digest, and I think that if I had known how to exploit this, I could have done a great deal better than I did out of it. I think if I had systematically sent somebody around the country to follow up these letters to the various writers from which

they came, I would have gotten a lot more stuff; and the curious thing is that for twenty-five years afterwards, people would pick up that article and write me about things. It continued to bring stuff in for a long, long time.

GARDNER: Now, I knew about the poetry, but I wasn't aware that you wrote other articles. You said they were in local publications. What were some of those?

ZEITLIN: Well, the other day I picked up something I had done in 1927 for _Publishers Weekly_ on how we promoted fine-press books and developed an interest in the collecting of press books. I did an article (and I can't remember just where it was now) for one of the Southern California magazines--it may have been _Arts and Architecture_--on the book as a work of art. And later I wrote an article for _Arts and Architecture_ called "What Is Planning?" I became interested in the whole business of housing and planning, read a good deal about it, and then wrote this piece, which was noticed by a number of architectural schools. And reprints had to be made and sent out to places like the school of architecture at Harvard, and so on. Then I did a column for _Arts and Architecture_ here that was entitled "Doubletalk," and this was an analysis of such things as the current attack that the American Medical Association had launched against the advocates of health insurance, social security, and the

idea of a national health system. It's ridiculous to think now how far we've come since then. They had printed a brochure which was being distributed through the drugstores all over the country which was a direct attack upon the advocates of health insurance, social security, state-supported health services, and even such simple things as group medicine. And I tried to make a semantical analysis of this; that's what the substance of these articles were--attempts at semantical analysis of different forms of propaganda. And the L.A. County Medical Association Journal got ahold of this--or some member did--and they published an editorial attacking me quite violently, saying that the County Medical Association Library had been a good customer of mine, and here I was biting the hand that fed me. I had advanced my thesis as a sort of a counterattack, to the effect that the good old family doctor had contributed very little to the reduction of mortality from the great killers, but that it had been state-supported researchers, some of whom weren't medical men at all--like Pasteur who, with the help of public funds, had provided the great discoveries which had reduced death from smallpox, diphtheria, and all of the infectious diseases. And this they really pounced on.

So the first thing the trustees of the Los Angeles County Medical Association wanted to do was see that I was

made to resign from my job as the secretary of the Barlow Society for the History of Medicine, an organization which I had helped found, and for which I wrote the constitution and bylaws. Much to my surprise, I learned a number of years later that my chief defendant--the man who had stood up for me and refused to let the motion go through--was a man by the name of Dr. Donald Charnock, who was as conservative a Republican as ever existed, but who just believed fundamentally that I had the right to speak my piece and that it would be an admission of error if the [L.A.] County Medical Association took this step. So I was rebuked by an editorial in the L.A. County Medical Association Journal, but I was not asked to resign. And they did not take away their book business from me, although for a while they stopped buying from me. In more recent years, I have sold very little to the Los Angeles County Medical Association.

GARDNER: For any particular reason?

ZEITLIN: For no particular reason except that the members of the library board were not the kind of people who were interested in the history of medicine or in expanding their historical collection. They had bought a great many sets of journals from me in the earlier days--that is, in the thirties and perhaps early forties--but then they had reached their capacity so far as the number of journals they could house. They also didn't have the funds to continue to fill in the

gaps in their journals, which I had made a strong drive to fill in. But it was a very good working relationship while it lasted, and it was good for me, and it was good for them, too, because it helped to build a good medical reference library. And the Barlow Society for the History of Medicine has continued to exist, by some peculiar miracle. It never has elections; it never has meetings of its members or board for other purposes except to hold the annual George Dock lecture. But it does go on and, somehow or another, has remained as a paper entity.

GARDNER: Well, if that's all your writing. . . .

ZEITLIN: Well, as I say, I was writing this column for *Arts and Architecture*. I wrote about books for places like the *Publishers Weekly* and in some of the other magazines around here that weren't very important. Then I published a poem in the *San Francisco Review*, I think it was called--it was one of these short-lived literary magazines in San Francisco--for which I was given a prize. And all these things managed to get noticed and help build up a reputation for me. The whole point was that I wasn't doing something so very great or special, but nobody else in the book business was doing even as much.

GARDNER: Well put. [laughter] Well, in 1938 you made a major move away from Sixth Street to Carondelet.

ZEITLIN: Yes, in 1937 Jake Zeitlin Books became a corporation. It was a very poorly managed operation. I think it

must have been 1935 that a friend of mine, Oscar Moss, who was an accountant, advised me that my business had to have something done to it to feed some capital into it, and the only thing to do was to incorporate; and that, therefore, I should try and get some friends to advance some money to help me put some capital into the business. But the whole point was that the total amount that we capitalized for, in addition to the worth of my business, was $10,000; and $10,000 was hardly enough to see a downtown business through a rather difficult time. And so we struggled along. I was able to make a few good sales and save the day from time to time. I sold some rather large items to Hugh Walpole, who was out here working for the movies at that time. And I had the manuscripts of D.H. Lawrence to sell, and I sold quite a few of those (not a great many, considering how many I had and how important they were). One way or another, we managed to just about keep our doors open, but it became apparent that we couldn't any longer maintain a staff and keep going at the level which we were trying to maintain. And then the owners of the property served notice on us in 1938 that they were going to raise the rent substantially. This place that I was in at 705 1/2 West Sixth Street was really a very beautifully designed place that Lloyd Wright had done for me, with a balcony, with a

very original style of shelving and decoration, and so on. It had a nice, small gallery in which we held a number of good exhibitions. We had one exhibition that Kennedy sent out, of first-rate Rembrandts and Dürers, which I wish I had now. We had the first show on the West Coast of Käthe Kollwitz. We showed the work of people like Magritte and a number of other important artists of the time. We had exhibitions of photographers. I carried and sold continuously the work of Edward Weston. I had a good working relationship with the Walker Gallery in New York; had drawings and watercolors by people like Thomas Hart Benton and John Curry; and original drawings, as well as lithographs, of George Bellows. In addition, I would show local people like Millard Sheets and Tom Craig, Milfred Zornes, Phil Paradise, and quite a number of others of the Southern California watercolor school, which was coming into being at that time. Because of these exhibitions, my shop attracted a great many of the people interested in the arts, the younger people who were looking for a place to show their work. I also utilized good printers and good design in all of the printed matter that I sent out--the catalogs--and I think the distinction of our printing, the kind of exhibitions that we held, did an awful lot to offset the fact that the business was very poorly managed, and that kept us

alive. But finally the time came when we had to go somewhere, and I appealed to a friend of mine by the name of A.G. Beaman, who was also my insurance man. A.G. Beaman was a sort of an unofficial greeter for all the literary people, the artists, the collectors who came to town. If a man like A. Edward Newton came to town, it was A.G. Beaman who made it his business to take him around, see that he was entertained, and see that he was taken from one speaking engagement to another, and to meet all the collectors and bookshops. He knew everyone in the burgeoning world of literary and artistic activity--all on the fringes of it, I'd rather say. It was one way that he attracted business (he specialized in fine-arts insurance and so on), but he was a very good-hearted man and very much concerned about people like myself. He was sort of a counterpart of Albert Bender in San Francisco, who was a great patron, and fortunately fared better so far as finances were concerned and was able to be a patron more successfully. But he was a good man. And he in turn enlisted the help of John Anson Ford. The Otis Art Institute, which was owned and operated by Los Angeles County, had taken over, in addition to the property of the original Harrison Gray Otis house, the property next door which had belonged to Harrison Gray Otis's onetime friend but later archenemy, E.T. Earl, the

founder of the Pacific Fruit Express and the Los Angeles Express, a rival newspaper which was founded out of spite by E.T. Earl. E.T. Earl had built a beautiful house on the corner of Carondelet and Wilshire, and in accordance with the style of the times, he had a fine carriage house in back, two stories--upstairs where the servants lived, and downstairs they kept the horses and the carriages. And this carriage house was ivy-covered and had a curved brick driveway coming up to it. It was obvious this was a dream for a bookshop. And so, at the suggestion of Gay Beaman, and with the help of John Anson Ford, I decided that the way to avoid the problem of increased rents and the way to stop trying to be a downtown bookshop was to move away from the busy downtown area out here, to give more exhibitions, to deal more in rare books, to send out catalogs, and sort of set the style for an antiquarian book business which was not dependent on the street. And the other advantage was that the rent was only something like sixty-five dollars a month. So, with the help of some contractor friends, I got a design by Walter Bearman, who had come out here to head the new school for industrial design that was being propagated in Pasadena, backed mostly by Susannah Dakin and then enthusiastically pressed forward by Dr. Remsen Bird, the ebullient president of Occidental College who

supported a great many things, sometimes with more enthusiasm than good foresight. But Remsen Bird was a warm-hearted man, a man capable of enlisting support. So, with the help of all these people, I closed the downtown shop and moved out on Carondelet Street. In 1938 we held an opening there, sent out an announcement with a map--Paul Julian drew the map, and Gregg Anderson designed the brochure, and it was printed by Anderson and Ritchie--which went out to people inviting them to the opening. It attracted an enormous number of people. I asked Helen Brown, the wife of Phil Brown, to cater this for me. She had come out here and she and Phil Brown had gotten married. She knew a great deal about food and cookery, and she said she wanted to start a catering business. So I said, "Why don't you start by doing something to help this affair? People will come, they will taste whatever it is that you provide, and maybe you'll get some business out of it." She produced the most marvelous shrimp Americain sauce which everybody raved about. We had wine. I remember Phil Hanna sitting up beside the bowl of sauce and dipping shrimp into it until he literally had to be hauled away. So it did bring her to the attention of a lot of the gourmets in the community, and started her off with my mailing list and with the chance to show what she could do. She did become a very

successful caterer, and her husband and she wrote some cookbooks together. She died. Phil is now the advertising manager for Jurgensen's [Grocery Co.], and is really a noted authority on food and wine.

GARDNER: He remained in the book business for a long time, didn't he?

ZEITLIN: Oh, yes. He was in the book business in Pasadena with the son of Charles Yale. Charles Yale had been the manager of Dawson's Book Shop, and then he left Dawson's and opened a bookshop of his own in Pasadena. His son came in, and then later Philip Brown, who had come out here from Owatonna, Minnesota, with Karl Zamboni. Zamboni had worked for me altogether about ten years, the brightest and most promising of all the young bookmen that ever worked for me--a man that really, I think, could have become and should have become the outstanding bookman on the West Coast. Brown came out, and I think he worked for a while on West Sixth Street for Bunster Creeley at the Abbey Book Shop, and then he joined the Yales, and later it became Yale and Brown. Philip Brown practically carried on the business; unfortunately, Phil Yale, his partner, became an alcoholic, and gradually they separated, and the business was finally closed down. But, by that time, Philip Brown and his wife had successfully established a

catering business, and Philip had also gotten a job writing gastronomic articles for Jurgensen's bulletin. He went ahead and has really become quite a distinguished person.

GARDNER: Anyway, back to Carondelet. . . .

ZEITLIN: Well, Carondelet Street opened with this small gastronomic triumph, and a great many people came, I must say, to the opening, and I continued there. But just before Pearl Harbor, one of the men who had become a stockholder--his name was Preston Harrison--and Oscar Moss, who had been my advisor and who originally urged me to incorporate, were so hostile to each other that it became a battle of nerves; and I was in between, and I got so I couldn't function. I went to bed with stomach ulcers, and it became obvious that the business could not go on. So I went to a lawyer friend of mine, a man who had been very supportive and generous to me, a man who had been a tremendously successful lawyer in the oil-lease world, L.R. Martineau. I went to him and I said, "What am I going to do? I can't go on this way." And he said, "You're not worth a damn this way. Nobody would invest another cent in you because you're not your own man. If you were your own man, I'm sure that a lot of other people would feel like I do. But my advice to you is get rid of this. Liquidate it. If you end up broke, you'll be better off." So I think it was 1942 that I finally called in an attorney, who in turn undertook the settlement. Now, I

turned over assets enough to him to completely pay off all the creditors, but what I didn't know then is that lawyers who operate in this kind of a business, in the world of liquidating businesses, don't usually manage them for the benefit of the creditors; they manage them for the benefit of themselves and their friends.

TAPE NUMBER: VII, SIDE TWO

SEPTEMBER 29, 1977 and
OCTOBER 4, 1977

ZEITLIN: I published a notice in the Publishers Weekly and, at the same time, sent out a letter to all the creditors advising them that I would personally pay off the balance of anything that wasn't paid by the receiver. And later I did pay 100 percent of every claim there was against the firm that I could get anyone to file. My greatest difficulty in that was to get my biggest creditors to file, like Maggs Brothers, who simply didn't want to add to my burden by filing any claim at all. They finally did, at my own request, and engaged a lawyer who filed a claim. In any event, I came out of it with the corporation wiped clean and no money and all of my employees gone. I had a couple of friends who lent me, I think, one of them $300 and another $250. I'd been able at the auction to buy back with my friends' money some of the books that had been part of the stock, but the major part of the books were gone, so I had to go out and buy stock again. I had to restore the confidence of my customers, and I had to produce enough working capital to keep going.

GARDNER: How did you do that?

ZEITLIN: I don't know. I still haven't figured it out. It was really a miracle. Josephine [Ver Brugge Zeitlin] worked

hard. I ran hard from one customer to another with a bag full of books. I had some credit with printers, got out some lists and catalogs. I had one particular friend, and that was John Valentine, who provided the capital with which to buy a couple of large libraries, and it was out of those libraries that I got my start again.

One of them was a library up in the San Joaquin Valley of a big industrial concern called the Chemurgic Corporation. The war came to an end in 1945, and shortly afterwards the Chemurgic Corporation must have gotten into difficulties. I had a letter from them asking me if I would be interested in a set of chemical abstracts, and I didn't answer the letter. One day I got a phone call from a man up there who said, "We wrote you asking you if you were interested in a set of chemical abstracts. We're about to hold a sale of this entire library up here." And I said, "Have you got a library? Have you got more than chemical abstracts?" And he said, "Oh, yes, we've got thousands of volumes of important journals--scientific and technical journals--and a complete library dealing largely with physics and chemistry." So I went up there. I got in a car and drove up that night, and I got there the next day in the morning. The man who was in charge of liquidating this firm, who was supposed to be representing the bank, was very much irritated to see that I had arrived. Some other member of the office staff

had called me because he saw that something funny was going on. And what was going on, I learned, was that the liquidator of this company had made a deal with a chemical company in the Bay Area to sell them the entire library for something like $2,800, and their bid had already gone in.

The bids were going to be closed at one o'clock that day, and I quickly looked around and I saw that this was a fantastically good library, and that you could get $2,800 out of the first set you sold. So I called up John Valentine, and I said, "John, there's a library up here, and it's fantastic. It's a great collection, and I would like to bid $4,200 for it, and I haven't got any money." I said, "I have to walk in with a check if I buy it." He said, "You go ahead and write the check. The money will be in your bank."

And I waited until five minutes before one o'clock and walked into this administrator's office and said, "Here is my offer of $4,200. Well, the man was furious. He had set the time for the closing of bids. He told me to get out of his office, and he tried to reach the competing bidder whom he had already made a deal with to let him have it for $2,800. One o'clock passed, and he came to the door, and he called me in and he said, "You son of a bitch, you've bought it." It took about four big trucks and semis to haul

this collection out of that place. We filled the entire garage of the carriage house, and we filled the basement of a place I had rented over on Alvarado Street with these journals and books. This was the time when Los Alamos, Oak Ridge, and Hanford were all buying as rapidly as they could to try and build up technical libraries in order to develop all of the processes involved in the making of the atomic bomb. And I had managed to establish a contact with the people who were doing the buying for these libraries. I'd been invited to go up and see them. They had sent me their want lists. They had given me exclusive rights to go out and buy whole sets for them, and I bought things from places like Finland and all over the world, and had them flown in. It was another one of these lucky breaks which gave me the opportunity to build up a business in the field of technical books and journals.

GARDNER: That's amazing. So the years on Carondelet were difficult years.

ZEITLIN: They were very difficult years, but they were also the years which pulled us out of the hole, primarily because Josephine had founded, on her own, a periodical business called Zeitlin Periodicals.

GARDNER: Maybe before you go into that (we'll come back to that, I think), we ought to introduce Josephine into the narrative at this point, because I don't think you've

really talked about her.

ZEITLIN: No, there's a lot to be said about Josephine and the role that she played, because, in truth, I didn't take her into my business; she took me into her business. She had started a separate business before we were married which dealt in periodicals, and I had encouraged her to do this. There's more to tell about how this came about. The important thing is that when Jake Zeitlin, Incorporated, was liquidated, we then started a new firm which was a merger of Ver Brugge Books and Jake Zeitlin, and that was Zeitlin and Ver Brugge.

GARDNER: Well, why don't you tell the story of how she arrived in your life. I know that exists in other places, but you can tell it briefly.

ZEITLIN: Well, this is a story I wouldn't really want to tell too briefly, but I can say that it was the most important thing that happened in my life to sort of turn me into a much more whole person than I was before, and to give me the solid continuity and backing which I needed in order to make a businessman out of me--and to give me a sense of security.

While I was still on West Sixth Street, in the summer of 1937, I received a letter of an application for a job, and in it, the person writing the letter described them-

self as a young woman, approximately five foot, eight inches tall, blue-eyed, dark hair, and personable. And she had a bachelor degree from Park College in Missouri and then had done graduate work at the University of Iowa in English literature, and had been teaching school in Missouri and Kansas. She had always wanted to work in a bookshop. She knew something about bookkeeping, she knew something about business because she had helped her father in his hardware business in Reading, Kansas, and she would very much appreciate an interview. I was very much impressed with the style of this letter and also with the description of herself as five foot eight, blue-eyed, black hair, and personable, and said to my secretary, "Well, I haven't got a job, but this Miss Josephine Ver Brugge, who wrote this letter, is entitled to an interview. So why don't you tell her to come in and see me if she can tomorrow afternoon."

And the next afternoon, in came this very beautiful Dutch girl. I sat her down in my office and looked at her, and I said, "I know I asked you in here because I thought of you as a possibility for a job, but now that I've had a look at you, I'm not going to give you a job. I like you too well. But don't you leave town or I'll be on your pa's doorstep by the time you get back to Kansas. Come across the street and let's have a cup of

coffee." So we sat down across the street, and then we talked some more, and then I went back and called up my friend Remsen Bird and told him that I had a very remarkable young woman here that I wanted to see in a job somewhere, and could he suggest something. And he said, "I think they might need a secretary at the Haynes Foundation, but I don't know whether this job is going to be open right away or not. However, you tell her to go and see Miss Mumford, the lady who is the secretary of the foundation. And in the meantime, just sit tight." So with that, Josephine decided not to go back to Kansas to her schoolteaching job. She went and got a job at Bullock's, where they told her they were going to train her as an executive. I think the job must have paid something like twenty-two dollars a week, and this was the way that Bullock's had of getting top material for low prices, with the idea that they were going to be given an opportunity to become executives. Most of these people never got out of the credit office or the book-keeping office, the little jobs that they were locked into. Well, she remained there for a while, until finally she was asked to come over and go to work for the Haines Foundation.

And while she was working there, I went up to San Francisco and visited my friend Nathan Van Patten, who

was the librarian of the Lane Medical Library as well as the Stanford University Library. And Nathan Van Patten took me up into the attic of the Lane Medical Library, and here there were thousands of journals and duplicate books, and he said, "We're going to have to get these out of here, and I think I'm going to have to dump them." And I said, "Well, before you dump them, what will you take for them?" And he said, "Well, what about $600?" And I said, "Well, give me a little time." I went back down, and I talked to Josephine and told her there was a great opportunity to buy this stock of back files of medical journals. She had a little money that she had gotten from her mother's estate, and she rented a store building on Seventh Street for something like seventy-five dollars a month. There was a man who had been working at UCLA Library by the name of John B. Lee who needed a job, and John B. Lee came to work for something like no more than $100 a month. A friend by the name of Preston Tuttle, and John Lee, and I went up to San Francisco, tied this library into bundles, and we agreed to pay Mr. Van Patten $100 a month for six months. Josephine scraped together enough money to pay for the carriage of the books and stuff down, and they were dumped in the middle of this store that was rented on Seventh Street--on the floor into a mountain.

We then proceeded to go out and buy apple boxes (in those days you could buy apple boxes for five to ten cents apiece), and we put the apple boxes together and made bookshelves out of them. We got a copy of the _Union List of Serials_, and with that, she and John Lee (she working at night and after hours) proceeded to sort this mountain of journals and put them into order and to catalog them all according to the _Union List of Serials_. They had printed postcards in which they offered to all the libraries listed in the _Union List of Serials_ such pieces which they had as were lacking in these libraries. They got out mimeographed lists, and the first thing you know, they were doing a little business. And that was the beginning of Zeitlin Periodicals. With her hard work and with John Lee's expertise and devotion and hard work, they were able to bring that up to the point where she could quit her job at the Haines Foundation and carry this on, on enough of a paying basis. And later, after we were married in 1939, and after Jake Zeitlin, Incorporated, was liquidated, we merged our two businesses. But we maintained a separate location for the journals and the periodicals.

And the journals and periodicals were for quite a while a substantial part of the business; they provided a very large business because we had very little competition.

Walter Johnson had not come into the scene, H.P. Kraus had not gone into the periodical business, and it was possible then, with hard work and with the luck of getting this stock, to start a business. On top of that, the Chemurgic Corporation stock contained a number of rather complete files of practically every important technical journal that could be had, and a great many of the reprints that were done by Edwards Brothers under the license of the alien property custodian. We built up a technical-book business, mostly out-of-print technical books and out-of-print technical journals, which really provided more of the basic capital which we developed for the rare-book business.

GARDNER: How long did you maintain the periodicals?

ZEITLIN: We maintained the periodical business until approximately, I think it must have been, twelve years ago, and then we sold it to our nephew. We enabled him to buy it; we sold it to him on very liberal terms so that he could pay it off out of the earnings from the business. But it became a management problem. We couldn't find capable, trustworthy employees, people that we could really with confidence put to work running a periodical business. And we had a choice either of closing it or closing the rare-book business, and we decided to close the periodical business.

GARDNER: Was that on La Brea then?

ZEITLIN: No, we were on West Adams at the time--that is,

the periodical business was on West Adams at the time. We transferred it to Stanley, and he ultimately moved it.

GARDNER: Well, since we've gotten you through Carondelet. . . . See how quickly we're moving? We're up to 1948 already.

ZEITLIN: Oh, not quite '48. We're up through 1939, 1942.

GARDNER: And then through past the war, when you're buying . . .

ZEITLIN: Through '45, when I was buying the Chemurgic Corporation library. I must say that without the help of John Valentine, the wonderful friendship and confidence that he had in me, I would never have been able to take advantage of these opportunities and to build up the stocks that were necessary in order for us to develop a real business. It was John Valentine who provided the funds not only for the Chemurgic library but for the [Charles] Kofoid collection, a collection of duplicates of books that had been left to the University of California--28,000 books on the natural sciences and some on the physical sciences--and later, the collection of books on economics and political science, Otto Jeidel's library, which I bought in Santa Barbara. All three of these, which were very crucial,

and a fourth one which really launched me into the rare-science-book business, were all due to the very wonderful friendship of John Valentine.

GARDNER: What was the fourth one?

ZEITLIN: That was the Herbert Evans library (that was Herbert Evans number two). The Herbert Evans library is a story in itself, and I think that's about all I can do tonight.

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GARDNER: Now, as I mentioned, I thought we'd begin today, since we covered the Carondelet shop last time, with your move to La Cienega Boulevard. How did that come about? What made you choose to move?

ZEITLIN: Well, I didn't choose to move. We remained at 624 South Carondelet from 1938 to 1948, which is a good, round ten years. I actually opened my downtown shop in 1928 and moved to Carondelet in 1938, so that at the end of another decade, it seemed to be the end of a cycle and the beginning of a new one. What actually happened was that the property we were occupying was part of the property belonging to the Otis Art Institute and that, of course, in turn meant that it was owned and operated by the county. The E.T. Earl residence was at the corner of Wilshire and Carondelet, about halfway

along the block on the east side of the street. It was a brick driveway that curved gracefully up to the front of an old ivy-covered brick carriage house with high gables. We had maintained our business there for these ten years.

I think there must have been a number of elements which contributed to our having to move, but it seemed that the precipitating element was that I had erected a sign at the corner of Wilshire and Carondelet, a swinging sign pointing towards our driveway. The chairman of the board of Otis Art Institute (a man who managed to be chairman of a great many things) was Edward Dickson, a man who later became chairman of the Regents of the University of California. Edward Dickson was a rather narrow-minded man and also had a tremendous sense of power. He was sort of a little tyrant. He had somehow or another managed to become the spokesman, as it were, willing to serve on boards and to participate in all kinds of cultural community activities on behalf of the "forty thieves"--people in downtown Los Angeles, mostly, who have always controlled the destinies of all of the institutions like the Philharmonic Orchestra, the Music Center, university, and, among other things, the Otis Art Institute. He had been referred to by one of the great senators from California, Hiram Johnson, in a public address as "Little

Eddie Dickson." Among other things, he had been the editor of the *Los Angeles Express*, so he must have had some talents. At the time when I knew him he was in a stock brokerage investment business downtown, so he must have, in one way or another, been entrusted with a considerable financial clout as well as political power.

During the period when I was at Carondelet Street, I had been very active in the organization of a Democratic Club. I had been chairman of the campaign committee of Helen Gahagan Douglas. I had become involved with the Political Action Committee of the CIO through an organization which was affiliated with them, a group called Architects and Engineers. (I've forgotten the rest of the group; they were architectural draftsmen, people that worked in relation to planning.) And I had written an article for one of the local magazines which specialized in architectural and design matters . . .

GARDNER: *Arts and Architecture*?

ZEITLIN: *Arts and Architecture*, called "What Is Planning?" I was adopted by this group, who then made me a member in full standing of the union, and out of that I was appointed to be the chairman of the Political Action Committee, and as chairman of the Political Action Committee, I sat at the downtown meetings of the Political Action Committee of the

CIO. And very soon [I] was heavily involved in local politics. The CIO carried a substantial political sock and had a lot to do with the selection of candidates for Congress. We had a war chest with which we could distribute funds for the support of people running for the assembly, for the state senate, for the United States Congress and for the United States Senate. It was an important element in California politics at the time, and, I suppose, indirectly, national politics. Well, it was pretty heavily dominated by a left-wing group--Slim [Philip] Connelly, among others--and in the course of that time, I had helped gain the support of the CIO and helped elect a city councilman by the name of Ed Davenport. Ed Davenport turned out to be the worst lemon I ever picked. He was reactionary, he was crooked, and he was a lush. What other vices he had I don't know, but he quickly aligned himself with Forest Lawn Cemetery groups and all the other groups through whom money was dispersed, and very quickly he started in on a witch hunt. So that the next time he ran for city council, I picked a candidate to run against him, and he resorted to smearing the candidate, who was a very good man and had "Q" clearance with the armed forces intelligence. He was a top man, a major in the United States Army. Ed Davenport was a master of demagoguery. He was a master of the hanky panky that went with getting

elected to office and to staying in office. So he defeated the candidate that I helped select, Douglas Behrend, and caused Behrend a great deal of trouble and embarrassment. In the city council, he announced one day that the Communists were meeting regularly in my bookshop for the purpose of defeating him. He tried to get the [Jack B.] Tenney committee on my neck, and, of course, news of this filtered into the press, and, I'm sure, got to Eddie Dickson. So one day, Eddie Dickson came and ordered me to remove my sign from the corner of Wilshire and Carondelet Street, which I did very reluctantly. And then he announced that I had to move, that the county did not wish to extend my stay there. Well, it was really a very favorable situation that I had been enjoying. I had the use of the entire building for something like sixty-five dollars a month for ten years. Mr. Dickson, I don't think, consulted anybody else; he just notified me, and then he went to whoever was in charge of leases and rentals and told them that I had to go.

GARDNER: Had you had any dealings with him prior to this?

ZEITLIN: Oh, he would come in once in a while to see me, and he always behaved most amiably, except on the occasion when he told me I would have to remove my sign.

GARDNER: Did he ever buy any books or art?

ZEITLIN: He had bought some books from me when I was

downtown, and it was during that time that Larry Powell, when he was working for me, had met Edward Dickson. But he never bought anything substantial either in books or art.

I had no choice; I had to find a place. I think I was notified in something like June; I had July, August, September, and October in which to move, and I immediately went searching for a place. We were driving along La Cienega Boulevard one Sunday, and I saw this red barn which was occupied by Pascal's Antiques. I had always said that that was the place I would like to have a bookshop in. Well, the idea of moving a book business as far out west as La Cienega Boulevard seemed just like disappearing into the woods. But I had concluded by that time that my business did not depend so much on the drop-in trade; it depended upon the letters we wrote and the announcements and catalogs we got out, and the exhibitions we held, which would bring people to our place. We had accumulated a mailing list, and that was our chief asset, as it should be in every good book business.

GARDNER: Were there bookstores out this way?

ZEITLIN: Oh, there were no bookstores on La Cienega. The only things there were at all were some antique stores. And then a fellow by the name of Stoeffen had a framing shop. His wife, Esther, had some cabinets with decorative

prints which she sold to interior decorators and people who wanted prints to be framed by her husband, and that was the nearest thing to a bookshop. There wasn't anything between downtown and Beverly Hills that I can remember.

The red barn was up for sale because the man who owned the property and who had financed the business, Ernest Pascal, had somehow fallen out with his brother, who was managing the business. They had originally started in to sell American antiques and had built up a very fine business. Ernest Pascal himself had great taste and knowledge in American antiques. And then, for some reason, they switched over to English antiques. English antiques didn't fit in an old red barn, and there were other complications of which I know nothing; but in any event, the brothers fell out and never spoke again, I understand, and the building was put up for sale by Ernest Pascal. I got in touch with Pascal, and he wanted $33,000 for the property. I said to him, "You know, I don't have enough money to pay a down payment." And he said, "Well, I'd like to see you there. You've got a good reputation, and I think you would do well there, and I think it would improve the neighborhood. So write your own ticket. Tell me what you can do."

I actually didn't have any money, but I went to

Susannah Dakin and told her my situation. Susannah Dakin lived over in Pasadena at the time. She was one of the loveliest people I ever knew, and she had been a friend of mine for a long time. She was a niece of Sarah Bixby Smith, whose book called Adobe Days I published, and who was a very dear friend. (Sarah Bixby Smith was the wife of Paul Jordan-Smith.) Susannah was interested in art. She was interested in California history; she wrote a couple of good books on the subject. And she had a great deal of money. Her mother was Susannah Bixby Bryant, which meant that she was one of the Bixbys and had inherited a great deal of Signal Hill and some of the other oil properties in Long Beach. She had married a very fine man by the name of Dr. Ernest Bryant, who had been associated with Dr. John R. Haines. John R. Haines was the father of the Metropolitan Water District and the municipal Department of Water and Power, he was one of the progressives of the era of Spreckels and some of the other reformers (they were called "millionaire socialists").

GARDNER: That's the Haines Foundation.

ZEITLIN: He was the founder of the Haines Foundation. Dr. Bryant was in the office of John R. Haines and partook of the philosophy of John R. Haines, which was that of responsible, forward-looking capital. Bryant partook of

the general idea of social responsibility but was not a progressive or pro-labor in politics, whereas John R. Haines had been very pro-labor in politics and had been responsible for the enactment in California of the initiative and referendum and had participated in a great many progressive political movements. He had been among those who fought the Southern Pacific, backed up the streetcar men when they organized their strike against the streetcar company. So Dr. Bryant was indeed a very fine man socially, and as a person as well, and Susannah partook, to a great degree, of his philosophy and of his character.

Susannah had come in to my shop when she was quite a young woman, before she had her first child. I remember she and Arthur Millier and Dr. Remsen Bird and some other people used to meet and have lunch, and we were always engaged in little conspiracies. I went to her, and I told her I had to move; I told her that I had this opportunity to buy the building on La Cienega Boulevard and that I didn't have any money. And she asked me how much I thought it would take to make a down payment. I said I thought I could make the down payment for $9,000; that they would accept that and let me meet the other in a series of payments in addition to the regular installments. She said, "You go down to our bank, to the bank where we

do business--the Security bank--and see Mr. So-and-so, and I will tell him about you." I went down, and he lent me the money on my note, which was, of course, countersigned by her. So I was then able to go back to Mr. Pascal and make him a proposal of paying $9,000 the first year, so much a month for a year, and then meeting another substantial payment, and so on for three successive years. Afterwards, I would pay so much a month. And he was satisfied to let me come in and do that. My next job was to bring the building up to standard, because as long as Pascal occupied it, and he didn't need to get a permit to remodel, everything was all right; but as soon as I wanted to move in and occupy it, I had to get a permit.

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GARDNER: We'll continue now with a description of the barn.

ZEITLIN: The floor was three-quarter-inch tongue-and-groove yellow pine (the kind of wood you can't get now), but it had to be all taken up. The entire foundation had to be reconstructed. I got ahold of a contractor who had been recommended to me by Mr. Pascal, who had done work for Pascal. His name was Paul Lamport, and he later became a city councilman. Well, Mr. Lamport agreed to take out the floor and put in the new foundation and do the necessary reconstruction work. He pulled out all of the flooring, threw it down on the ground, and he and his workmen walked away and left the thing for about two months without doing a thing. In the meantime, the dead-line was approaching when I was having to move. I went to my attorney, and I said, "What can I do?" And he said, "What kind of a contract did you write? Did you get a completion clause into it?" And I said no. And he said, "Contractors have so much work these days that they don't have to please anybody." (It was right after the end of the war.) He said, "All you can do is speak nicely to him and see if you can't get him to come back to work on the job and get his work completed." Well, I

went back to Mr. Pascal, told him about the situation, got hold of Lamport, and Pascal, who had given Lamport other work and had other jobs at his disposal; finally got Mr. Lamport to finish the place, but only about September 1, so that I had a month in which to move everything.

I rented a big five-ton truck and hired a couple of men from the slave market, which used to be down at the corner of Third and La Brea, where men would stand out on the sidewalk and wait to be picked up for odd jobs. And I also got ahold of my old faithful, Bill Ulevick, who really should deserve some notice. Bill was a Czech who never had any education, grew up somewhere in South Dakota, never had a good job, never made any money, but somehow or another managed his life in such a way that he now, as an old man, is able to live on his social security and the odd jobs he gets. He knows how to take advantage of every benefit that he can properly and legally enjoy. He's part of the oldsters groups, and so he is enjoying a great life. He also knew where things were happening, and he had curiosity enough so that he would take his bicycle and go on a day's ride just to discover where a new freeway was going, or to see try-outs of new automobile equipment, things like that. I've always admired him for somehow or another, with all

the handicaps and the limitations he had, having worked out his life as well as he has. But he was always available to me to do lifting and carrying, packing, hauling, shipping. And on many occasions, when I got hold of a big library, it was Bill Ulevick who saved my neck and made it possible for me to pack and load it and bring it down. So Bill Ulevick and one crew stayed at the shop and packed boxes. When I arrived with the truck, they would load them, and I would drive across town to La Cienega and unload them, and the men there would then stack them up. So that between the two groups, I managed to move the entire shop by going back and forth, day after day, for what I think must have been an entire month, and finally got everything moved. We had the building repainted. We bought apple boxes and lined the sides, put strips on the front, stained them, made them look like shelving. We built two bedrooms upstairs and our living room, and we enclosed the back section, and that is where we moved in and lived for quite a few years.

In I believe it was October of 1948, we opened our shop on La Cienega Boulevard. I must add that it was not only because of Susannah Dakin that I was able to move and open up, but a great deal of the credit for providing me with the day-by-day funds that I needed, for giving me the moral support as well, goes to a man by the name of John Valentine.

John Valentine was a man who had gone to Williams College. He'd grown up in Chicago, had gone out to Decatur, Illinois, and he had made what must have been a substantial amount of money as an oil distributor. He was an enterpriser in many ways, and he acquired master leases to some important property. His heart was in books, however. He'd been in World War I, and following the war, he had remained in Italy as consul in one of the Italian towns for some time. He was a man with a great deal of feeling, outwardly not very impressive--he was quite conventional in his appearance--very frugal, very much aware of the value of money and very well able to manage money. He had financed the Abraham Lincoln Book Shop in Chicago--his partner was Ralph Newman--and he had kept it going during the period when Ralph Newman was in the services. When Newman returned and was able to take over management again, John Valentine made an arrangement which allowed Newman to buy the business. Valentine had a great deal of knowledge of Lincoln, middle western history, and middle western literature. He was very knowledgeable not only about the early history of the Middle West and the Civil War and the literary men of the early days of Illinois, Iowa, Wisconsin, and so on, but he also had known personally and had formed an outstanding collection of the books of people like Vachel Lindsay, Carl Sandburg,

Sinclair Lewis, Edgar Lee Masters, Sherwood Anderson. He knew their works, and he loved them, and he read them and collected them. He was also a very ardent Democrat and a great collector of anything that had to do with Franklin Delano Roosevelt. He started the Franklin Delano Roosevelt collectors' Newsletter, and he built up quite a large group of collectors of FDR material. He encouraged the publication of bibliographies by men like [Ernest J.] Halter and books about Roosevelt. He became the outstanding dealer in the country in that material after he moved out here. He was a very warm, outgoing, sprightly man, and to me he was really the difference between failure and success. John, for some reason, took a liking to me; he spent a great deal of time--and for a short while he actually worked for me--in the bookshop. But, of course, I had no business (and he knew it) employing a man that was so much my superior as a businessman, and financially much above me. But I think he did all this out of sheer devotion, and it was John Valentine who came forward with loans from time to time when I had opportunities to buy collections, provided the money and was patient about getting it paid back, and was very generous about the terms on which he lent it. No one person has ever contributed so much toward helping me recover from the failure of 1942 and getting back on my

feet as John Valentine.

He was good company, too, and we made a great many very enjoyable trips together. Among other things, we drove all night up to Berkeley once to bid for the duplicates from the library of Dr. Charles Kofoid, who had given a large collection of books--hundreds of thousands of books--to the University of California biological sciences. He'd had an arrangement with the university: they provided him with the space and the clerical help for forming a great library on the biological sciences. He was an outstanding protozoologist, but in addition to his accomplishments in this field, he was an absolute madman about books, and he accumulated them by the thousands. He bought whole bookstores at the time of the inflation in Germany and Holland, and he had them shipped to the University of California; the life sciences building gave him a whole section of one floor into which he crammed these books, and [he] had help with the cataloging. The understanding was that he was to leave the books to the university upon his death. So he very happily pursued the dream of every bibliophile--buying and buying and buying--and the university enjoyed the benefits of all this by accumulating this library.

The duplicates from the library amounted to 28,000 books at a minimum, and these 28,000 books were put up at

auction. He had provided that all duplicates were to be sold for the benefit of a fund to be used to help the university professors who married young and who wanted to have children: because he and his wife, when he had started in his academic career, had been too poor to have children when they were young, and later they couldn't have them. It was his idea that the money coming from this fund could be used as loans to young professors and their wives who wanted children. He had made money, among other ways, by buying some real estate along Wilshire Boulevard way out beyond where the pavement ended, along between La Brea and Fairfax, which later became known as the Miracle Mile. But when he bought it, there weren't many people who wanted it. It became very valuable later on, and this provided a great deal of money with which to buy the books that he had accumulated, and for other endowments which he left.

John Valentine drove up to San Francisco, a strenuous drive, all night long; he wouldn't stop to rest. He finally died when he was only sixty years old because he was a man who drove himself too hard. He had this middle western Calvinistic spirit, this form of self-denial, this feeling about frugality which was in some ways really unnecessary. If we went into a restaurant to have lunch or dinner, his check always came out fifty cents to a

dollar less than mine, and he seemed to eat just as well as I did.

So it was John Valentine, to a great extent, along with the loan that Susannah Dakin made me, that made it possible for us to move from Carondelet Street to La Cienega. At the end of a year, Susannah Dakin sent me a check for $9,000. She said, "I want you to take this down to the bank and pay off the loan which they made you and which I guaranteed." She said, "I have invested a great deal of money in many cultural activities in this community. Yours seems to be the best investment I've made, or at least one of the most promising in terms of the value it has to the community and the promise of continuity. So it's quite consistent with my idea of what I should do with my money in supporting cultural activities for me to do this, and you would be pleasing me if you would accept this." I remonstrated, but she insisted, and I can't say that I remonstrated to the point of returning the check. I did go down and pay off the note to the bank, and was therefore free of a substantial encumbrance which might have hampered me later. This was a fine and wonderful gesture, and she came with her husband and a couple of friends the night we held our opening of our new shop on La Cienega Boulevard.

GARDNER: Well, last time you described with a little bit

of epicurean detail, what the opening was like on Carondelet. Did you have a similar sort of thing?

ZEITLIN: We did have an opening on La Cienega Boulevard. I can't remember the printed notice of the opening, but hordes of people came, and it was a very enjoyable event, and there was lots of enthusiasm. But my memory is very vague about the precise details, except that I again asked Helen Evans Brown to cater, and by then she was a very well established caterer and an authority on cookery, and had published several books.

GARDNER: So she catered them both then?

ZEITLIN: She catered both.

GARDNER: That's wonderful.

ZEITLIN: I don't know whether we repeated the shrimp _Americain_ which had been the great dish of our first opening, but we may well have. Can I stop a minute? [tape recorder turned off] You asked me about book clubs.

GARDNER: Let me ask you formally (as long as we turned it off and on). You had membership in many of them, and I guess we'll touch on them all, but I think we probably should start with Zamorano since it's the one of most local interest.

ZEITLIN: I was not a member of Zamorano until very recently. The fact is, Zamorano had a policy from its beginning that booksellers were not to be admitted. That

was a peculiar policy, considering the fact that the man who was their first secretary--and really, I think, the reason for forming the club was Irving Way. Irving Way had been a member of the firm of Way and Williams Publishers in Chicago, which had produced some very fine books. He was also a bookseller, and it was he that introduced Thomas Wise to one of the customers that was most important in Thomas Wise's career. It was a Major [Wrenn], whose collection that he bought from Thomas Wise, was the core of what later became the great University of Texas collection. (I will remember his name shortly.) In any event, Irving Way had come to Los Angeles--I don't know just when; he must have come in the twenties, late twenties, I think--and he had made his living by going around selling books to people who were interested in building libraries, mostly Spring Street lawyers and businessmen who sent him from one to the other. He was a bookish man, he was knowledgeable, and he wrote extremely well. He wrote a pamphlet for Ernest Dawson which John Henry Nash printed, and which is still one of the most charming things ever written about book collecting and certainly one of the best printed items ever done on bibliophily and bibliomania.

Well, a group of men, including Arthur Ellis, who was an outstanding attorney in those days here; John

Treanor, who was head of the Riverside Portland Cement Company; Will Clary, who was one of the senior members of O'Melveny and Myers; and A.G. Beaman, who was an insurance man that I mentioned before, decided that Los Angeles should have a club that would correspond with the Roxburghe Club of London, the Grolier Club of New York, the Rowfant Club of Cleveland, and the Club of Odd Volumes in Boston. So they resolved to organize this club. Part of its purpose was to provide an occupation for Irving Way, who was growing older and in failing health, and so they set up at the University Club a clubroom which was to be a library. They provided a small salary for Irving Way, who was to serve as secretary, and they started in with a group of bookish people, then, from various professions. They also included Robert Cowan, who was then the librarian of the Clark Library; and Henry R. Wagner, who had moved down to Southern California, was living in San Marino, and who was certainly one of the outstanding collectors as well as sellers of collections. Both of them had done what are still the outstanding bibliographies on California and the Spanish Southwest. The Overland Route, Plains and the Rockies of Henry Wagner and the Spanish Southwest, Henry Wagner, are certainly classics which have not been superseded. And then they did include C.C. Parker, who had Parker's bookstore

on West Sixth Street. He was an old gentleman; he was what they call "clubbable," and for some reason, they didn't regard him as a bookseller, even though he was a bookseller.

GARDNER: There's obviously something else beneath the surface here--do you want to elaborate?

ZEITLIN: Well, yes, they didn't want what they felt might be an element of commercialism in there. They looked upon Ernest Dawson as not being a "clubbable" gentleman.

GARDNER: Why?

ZEITLIN: Well, Ernest Dawson, for one thing, had declared himself to be a communist. He was a very idealistic man. And for another thing, Ernest Dawson didn't drink, Ernest Dawson didn't smoke, and Ernest Dawson was really an outdoorsman: he was a Sierra Clubber rather than a Zamorano Clubber. And they also just looked upon him really as too much in trade. They did include Bruce McCallister as a printer, and they included Leslie Bliss of the Huntington Library as a member. I don't remember who else among librarians was included. From time to time, they would allow booksellers like me to come if some guest insisted upon their being brought along. They didn't have any Jewish members for many years; and the first member that I can remember who was Jewish was Saul Marks, who was brought

in because he was obviously an outstanding printer and a man that was very much respected, and it would have been a reflection upon the Zamorano Club if they hadn't brought him in. The only time I came was when people like Dr. Rosenbach were invited and insisted that they wanted to bring me, or Frank Hogan was invited and said, "I'd like to bring Jake Zeitlin." So for a period of many years, there were no booksellers of the tradesman variety in the Zamorano Club. In fact, until about five years ago, when I was asked to join, the official policy remained intact, in spite of the fact that some of the leading bookmen from around the world that would come to Los Angeles would come to see me, would be my guests, would spend their time with me while they were here, and none of the Zamoraners would see them. So I think that ultimately it got to be a sort of a shame.

GARDNER: The impression I get is that, except for a few of the members, it was more of a club than a book club.

ZEITLIN: No, it was founded directly for the purpose of being a book club. It was to encourage the collecting of books, the exchanging of knowledge about books, to encourage the publication of bookish works, the bibliographical works such as the _Zamorano Eighty_, and to sponsor fine printing--the same ideals as similar book clubs.

GARDNER: Have other book clubs had similar restrictions?

ZEITLIN: I don't know. Certainly the great Roxburghe Club in London had among its earliest members Bernard Quaritch, and the Grolier Club had had among its members publishers like Charles Scribner and booksellers like Dr. Rosenbach. But it was really not until fairly recently, sometime in the thirties, that David Randall was made a member of the club, and it became sort of an overt policy to have booksellers as members of the Grolier Club in New York. That came about because Charles Scribner, who was one of the leading members of the Grolier Club and had been a president, simply put it on the line and said, "Unless you admit David Randall into the club, I shall resign and I shall also spread the word among others." So David Randall was admitted, and from then on, other tradesmen were admitted.

The Zamorano Club had, I suppose, the notion that if they favored one bookseller and admitted him, other booksellers would feel they'd been excluded and would be resentful. But then they admitted some printers and didn't admit others. Bruce McCallister, Saul Marks, Ward Ritchie were members, but a great many other printers in this area were not invited or admitted to the club, and certainly some librarians were not invited or admitted. But that was a kind of a traditional rule in the Zamorano Club up to the time I was asked if I would accept membership.

I was called by Ray Billington, who is a very fine man--a very warm, outgoing, warmhearted personality. He asked me if I would accept membership in the Zamorano Club if I were put up for membership. Well, there evidently had been some scuffling among the members about this whole matter, and I think that what happened is that some of them decided that the time had come to make an issue of it and put it up to the board and make me the test case. I was invited to attend as a guest, as I had been in the past, but this time I was invited to attend as a guest in order that I might be scrutinized. And I evidently passed. In fact, there was hardly anyone at any of the meetings that weren't people that I knew personally and weren't personal friends, so that the whole question of admission to membership was kind of secondary. And, frankly, I told Ray Billington at the time he asked me that it would have meant a lot to me twenty-five years ago to be made a member of the Zamorano Club and have the opportunity to mingle with collectors and with the visitors, to bring my guests to the club, and to feel that I was part of the community of bookmen other than booksellers. But that time had now passed, and I really didn't have that much urge to go out at night to sit and listen to a variety of speakers, scme of whom might be interesting, and a great many of whom by now would be dull to me. But on the other

hand, I didn't feel that I should refuse because of the precedent it set. And so I was elected membership, and at the same time Glen and Muir Dawson were elected, which I was very glad for. In fact, I've said often before that the Dawsons were more entitled to membership than I was, and that the first members among the bookselling community here in Los Angeles should be the Dawsons. And they were proposed and elected to membership at the same time that I was.

GARDNER: Now, you mentioned that Saul Marks was the first Jewish member of the Zamorano.

ZEITLIN: As far as I know, he was the first Jewish member. Bob Weinstein, I think, had been a member before, but I can't remember any others, except an architect by the name of Gordon Kauffman who had removed himself from all things Jewish and identification as a Jew a long time ago.

GARDNER: Were there any notable collectors who might have been in Zamorano but weren't?

ZEITLIN: Well, no, frankly I can't remember any that might have been invited and weren't invited; of course, I don't know all of them. Certainly, men like Elmer Belt were members. I don't think that Bob Honeyman ever would have accepted an invitation to membership, because he is not what they call "clubbable": he doesn't care for that sort of thing, although he is by far the greatest collector

this part of the world has ever known, if you except Williams Andrews Clark. And I would include Mrs. Doheny among those that he surpasses, or Mrs. Getz--not, of course, Henry Huntington--but certainly among the men who didn't have vast fortunes to spend, he's by far the most distinguished collector this area has ever known.

GARDNER: It's an easy move from there to the Book Club of California. Now, you were a member of that for a long time.

ZEITLIN: Oh, well, the Book Club of California never had any restrictions, except at one time they restricted the number of members; that was more or less a come-on. In other words, when they couldn't get more than 150 they set the limitation at 200. But the Book Club of California was started in San Francisco by Albert Bender, Jim Blake, and one other person whom I can't identify at this moment. But in any event, it was these three men who were the organizing committee. (It might have been John Howell, and it might have been Oscar Lewis, but in any event, these were the men who started the Book Club of California.) Their first publication was Robert E. Cowan's Bibliography of [The History of] California, [and the Pacific West], which was printed by John Henry Nash.

GARDNER: Was it a similar organization?

ZEITLIN: Well, yes, the general idea, though, was not so much having regular meetings and dinners as sponsoring publications for distribution among the membership. Later on the Roxburghe Club was formed, which was more of a social club, like the Zamorano Club. But the Book Club of California was always open to women. There was no reason why it shouldn't be; their money was as good as anybody else's. And it opened up offices on Sutter Street where they held regular exhibitions. Later it started publishing a quarterly newsletter. It would get out these annual (I don't know what they call them) broadsides or leaflets, which have continued. They get one out every year on some subject, and it's certainly been a great supporting force for the publication of finely printed books, and for publication of books about books. It's encouraged a great many printers, encouraged scholars, and it's encouraged collecting. It's been a very fine organization, and it's continued to have a good tradition all along. It's remarkable how it's gone on now for, I suppose, well, certainly over sixty years. The Roxburghe Club was formed much later, something like 1937.

GARDNER: Did you ever have any connection with that?

ZEITLIN: Oh, yes. I've been a member for many years and have spoken for them on two occasions--no, I think three occasions. I spoke once on Galileo, the "Bibliographical

Misadventures of Galileo." The other time, I can't remember the subject. I can remember being there and speaking, but I'm very vague about the subject. Oh, yes, it was on Aldous Huxley and Huxley as a critic of the arts, especially of Brueghel and [Jacques] Callot. And the third time, it was an autobiographical talk, "Rambling Recollections of a Rambling Bookseller." All of which they were very nice about, seemed to not sleep through.

GARDNER: It follows that they didn't have the same policy as the Zamorano.

ZEITLIN: No, they apparently never did. And in San Francisco, that could hardly have been possible because among the great leaders and patrons in all the arts were the Jews. They've always had a patrician group up there; people like Albert Bender, Morgan Gunst, Ted Lilienthal, Albert Sperisen, and Jim Hart have been leaders, have been outstanding men in the world of book collecting, and in support of all cultural activities. In fact, I can remember that Mayor Robinson of San Francisco said that without the philanthropy of the Jews there would be no opera, no philharmonic orchestra, no museum, and practically no arts in San Francisco. But, of course, I think that's true of a great many communities; the Jews seem to support these things

disproportionately to their numbers, partly because they represent a cultural tradition and partly because it is a means for achieving distinction while bypassing the usual channels of social advancement.

GARDNER: There were no restrictions, then, on booksellers either?

ZEITLIN: No, in San Francisco, so far as I know, there were never any restrictions, because men like David Magee and John Newbegin and John Howell were always leaders in the development of these clubs. Jim Blake was a bookseller. One of the three or four founders of the Book Club of California had worked as a clerk at Newbegin's, to begin with, and later became the western American representative for Harper and Brothers and was always looked upon as the dean of the book travelers on the Pacific Coast during his lifetime, greatly respected.

GARDNER: And what about your association with the Grolier Club?

ZEITLIN: Well, my association with the Grolier Club doesn't go back very far. I can't remember now how long I've been a member, but I suppose it would be twelve or fifteen years. I was put up for membership by Bob Honeyman and Bern Dibner, as well as I can remember, and have enjoyed it very much: primarily because the clubhouse provides a meeting place for bookish people and it also

provides a place where I can meet people from out of town in New York sometimes. The dinners have always been outstanding, and the trips have been one of the great pleasures of Josephine and me. They have always been real red-carpet, red-letter experiences, and the members who have had the privilege of participating, I'm sure, remember these trips as great events in their lives.

GARDNER: What sort of trips?

ZEITLIN: Well, these are trips which are undertaken once every three years or so to various parts of the world.

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GARDNER: We were talking about the membership trips of the Grolier Club.

ZEITLIN: Well, the trips of the Grolier Club are usually arranged to cover one or maybe two or three countries. They are about three years apart, usually. Arrangements are made in advance by a tour party which makes a dry run by visiting the countries that we proposed to go to and setting up programs and itineraries with the local book clubs and other organizations. Very often the visits of the Grolier Club enjoy the benefits of being sponsored by governmental agencies. The two which we have gone on were, number one, the trip to Denmark, Sweden, Holland, and Belgium; that was the first one. On those trips we stayed at the best hotels. All we did was pack our baggage and leave it at our door, and when we arrived at the next hotel, we were given our key, and we went direct to the hotel room. Passports were all taken care of en bloc; transportation was by the most comfortable buses or trains or planes, sometimes special trains. We were received at palaces and castles and the leading libraries and museums of the country, with special showings usually with banquets and entertainment, and fed to the point

where we were bulging.

Each morning you would start off in a bus and travel a considerable distance to your first location, where you would be met with champagne. Then at noon, you would arrive at another museum or library or palace or private collector's home and sit down to a magnificent, lavish dinner. Some of the dinners were given by the Bank of Paris; in the Low Country, in Antwerp, the bank occupied what had once been the palace of one of the Hanseatic merchants. There was a waiter in back of every other seated banqueteer, seven wines and liquors, the most unbelievably lavish food, and all of the things that went with it. But the main thing is that we were given opportunities to go into the stacks of libraries; the cases were opened up, and we were allowed to handle magnificent manuscripts and original documents and great books. And also, everywhere we went, they had prepared specially-printed gift books which represented the best quality of printing of the country and, very often, some of the best facsimiles of some of the best examples of the rarities of the various libraries we visited. It was more like a royal procession than an excursion, and you always came back exhausted, surfeited with good books, wonderful experiences, and an abundance of food and drink and good company. Nothing that I can imagine could compare with

these trips. We did not go on the Italian one, which was evidently the greatest that was ever put on. The high spot was the banquet in Rome at the Castel Sant'Angelo with a torch procession.

GARDNER: Oh, my Lord!

ZEITLIN: But I did go on one tour to Vienna with the Bibliophiles, where we were banqueted at the Schwarzenberg Palace, ballroom music by the best Viennese musicians, and then finally the ballet of the opera danced for us on the lawn, accompanied by the Viennese Philharmonic Orchestra, and a grand finale of fireworks. It would be impossible for a lone individual [not] to enjoy this kind of a trip, and it was only because of the imaginativeness and knowledge of the people who arranged the trips--people like Mary Hyde and Gordon Ray and a number of the others--that we were able to have access to so many great collections and be entertained as we were.

GARDNER: Are there many local members of Grolier?

ZEITLIN: No, not many local members. I think Elmer Belt, Marcus Crahan . . . Larry Powell was a member, I think. Homer Crotty has always been a member, and Bob Vosper is a member, but he has never gone on one of these tours. Neither has Larry Powell. Elmer and Ruth Belt have gone on several of them; we've always enjoyed their

company. Warren Howell [of] San Francisco has gone, and I can't remember who else from California.

GARDNER: Well, that's okay. I just wanted to get an idea of what sort of people. Generally you seem to be the only Southern California bookseller.

ZEITLIN: Yes, I have for a long time been the only Southern California bookseller.

GARDNER: What qualified one for membership?

ZEITLIN: Well, you're supposed to be an outstanding bookman; you're supposed to have made some contribution to the world of books, either in terms of publishing or writing or somehow advancing bookish activities and bookish interests.

GARDNER: So it's really the most difficult of the clubs.

ZEITLIN: Well, it has been, although there's some peculiar people who've gotten in from time to time. I've never heard of a member being dropped, but I suspect that on some occasions, not all members receive the programs of forthcoming events.

GARDNER: Well put. [laughter]

ZEITLIN: I think this is enough for this evening, and I hope it's been satisfactory.

GARDNER: It has.

NOVEMBER 30, 1977

GARDNER: Well, as we've just discussed briefly today, I guess we'll talk about some of the many, many collectors who've availed themselves of your services over the years. And since you mentioned him first, and he would be one of the ones that I would think of first, Frank Hogan might be a good person to start with. He was sort of tangential to your circle, wasn't he?

ZEITLIN: No, not really. Frank Hogan was the greatest trial lawyer of his day. He had his offices in Washington and was a little Irishman, not much over five feet tall, immaculately dressed always, great style about him. Like a number of other men who had risen to great success, he started as a male secretary. There are a number of cases I know of men who started as male typists and secretaries and developed great careers, and I think part of that was due to the training of keeping good notes and precision which being a secretary required, and also the intimate association that they had with some very capable executives and men of consequence. Frank Hogan's first job as a secretary was to the president of some railroad. There have always been a few men in executive positions who have preferred to have male secretaries; Kenneth Hill, for instance, is one of those men, but there have been a number of others. However, Frank Hogan was a very poor

Irish boy who put himself first through secretarial school and then through law school, became a law clerk in a good office, and ultimately rose to be the most in demand of all trial lawyers. He used to say that the best client is a scared millionaire, [laughter] and he loved to say that he'd earned as much as a million dollars in handling a single case. He came into public attention as a result of being the lawyer defending E.L. Doheny in the case connected with Teapot Dome. This was a case in which Secretary of the Interior [Albert B.] Fall was convicted for taking a bribe from E.L. Doheny, and Frank Hogan was so clever a lawyer that he got E.L. Doheny off with an acquittal.

GARDNER: How did you meet Hogan?

ZEITLIN: Mrs. Doheny had become interested in collecting first editions--I don't know how or why--but the first thing she started collecting was the Merle Johnson list of American high spots. I had sold her a few things along that line, but not very much. I think it must have been in 1937 that Frank Hogan first came in to call on me, and he was such a genial man and he had such a genuine enthusiasm for literature that I was charmed by him. And he must have liked me and thought well of me; he invited me to come up and have lunch with him at the California Club, and it became a regular custom, whenever

he was here in California on business having to do with Doheny and other matters, while he was staying at the California Club, that we would have lunch every Saturday. He liked that not only because I came to lunch but I also brought Karl Zamboni, who was working for me then, and Karl Zamboni's very pretty wife, [laughter] which was a very important factor in itself. Cathy Zamboni was one of the most beautiful young women that ever lived. She looked like a Tahitian and was very charming and ingratiating. And he would also have Lucille Miller, who was Mrs. Doheny's librarian, and a woman whose first name was Jean, who worked in the office of the law firm that represented the Dohenys here in Los Angeles. By a curious coincidence, this Jean had also been a member of the jury that had acquitted E.L. Doheny; I just can't say what the connection was, [laughter] but she had a job for the rest of her life.

We would start off with silver fizzes for lunch, and after having imbibed a couple of those, we would proceed to have a very luxurious lunch, well laced with wine, in a private dining room. At the end of the lunch, Mr. Hogan would say, "What did you bring in your bag this week, Jake?" Well, I had done, I think, a good job of convincing Mr. Hogan that he could become a distinguished collector--as he did--if he insisted on two things: one, that the

books he bought be important books; and the second, that they be in the finest possible condition--original boards, uncut if possible. I got for him the Grolier Club list of [One] Hundred Books Famous in English Literature, which became a sort of a guide to him. He also had A. Edward Newton's list, and he had already bought a few books: they were all cripples--the kind of books that a man commencing to collect would buy, like an imperfect fourth folio of Shakespeare. He was enchanted by the idea that you could own a Shakespeare at all, and the first time he saw a fourth folio of Shakespeare, he thought this was like realizing an impossible dream, so he impetuously bought it. I got for him a number of books in fine condition. Naturally, I didn't have a very good stock of my own, and I depended on books coming from other people. One of my best sources was Byrne Hackett of the Brick Row Book Shop, who, I think, thought that he was really getting away with murder because he sold me a copy of Boswell's Life of Johnson--the original boards, uncut--for something like $1,500, and I turned around and sold it to Mr. Hogan for $1,800. I wonder what a copy of that, as fine as that, would bring today.

Hogan set out to buy the hundred books famous in English literature, and he was, as I say, a very impetuous man. He was an enthusiastic man, and he went direct to

whoever was the best in the field he was interested in. He became a personal friend of A. Edward Newton. They exchanged visits, and he became a regular visitor at Newton's house; I think it was along the railroad outside of Philadelphia. I sold him a substantial number of books, and it was a great pleasure because he would open them up and he would read passages that appealed to him. He had a fantastic memory; he could remember, verbatim, almost everything he'd ever read. On one occasion I brought him a copy of Logan Pearsall Smith's book on William Shakespeare. He read it through and, ever afterward, was able to quote that book in full length if necessary. He was the kind of collector that you enjoyed because you not only got well paid and promptly, but you also had the pleasure of sharing the enjoyment of the books with the customer.

I remember I introduced him to the poetry of Charlotte Mew, a rather obscure English woman poet who wrote some very poignant, very touching lyrics--not a major poet by any means but, on the other hand, a poet of real quality. She published only two books and one pamphlet, as well as I remember, and I got both of those for him, and then he said, "Well, we're going to have to find some manuscripts." And through the Poetry Bookshop in London, I was able to get some manuscripts of Charlotte

Mew, and I remember how we would sip our silver fizzes and read aloud from Charlotte Mew's manuscripts and weep as we read these lines. [laughter] Every Saturday that he was in town was the occasion for one of these meetings, and considering that I was a little bookseller who could hardly pay his rent, he was really God's gift. Sometimes I would come away with a check for $2,000 and sometimes a check for $3,500, and on one occasion, I think he paid me as much as $7,200 for one Saturday afternoon's sales to him.

I remember being with him on one occasion just after I had read that Dr. Rosenbach had bought the Lord Roseberry First Folio of Shakespeare in London at Sotheby's for $85,000. I asked if that had been bought for him, and he said, "Yes, and I'm just about to consult the best bankruptcy lawyers." He had gone to see Dr. Rosenbach, and Dr. Rosenbach maintained an apartment and a chef in connection with the house in which he kept his books in Philadelphia and the beautiful apartment which he had in New York. So if you were a really important customer, you were housed in his apartment. You were dined and wined by his private chef, and by the time dinner was over, and he was ready to show you his books, you were totally without any capacity for resistance. The doctor was a charming man and knew how to say the right things about the books

he had; and he did have, undoubtedly, the greatest collection of important rarities in English literature of anybody in the world in his day.

GARDNER: I'd better break in here to say that your wife is just signaling that our own dinner is ready.

ZEITLIN: Oh, right. [tape recorder turned off] Frank Hogan had already started to buy the books on the Grolier Club list of a hundred great books of English literature. There were two volumes issued. One contained bibliographic description; the other were issues, essays, and I think George Edward Woodberry was the author of the essays. I had introduced him to this idea and brought him the Grolier Club books, and I supplied him with a few things--I think, [Thomas] Gray's "Ode," and perhaps [Oliver Goldsmith's] _Vicar of Wakefield_, and Jane Austen's _Pride and Prejudice_, which he considered her best novel.

The copy of Jane Austen's _Pride and Prejudice_ which I supplied him with was three volumes in the original boards, uncut, some repairs to the binding, and restoration of the labels, and yet it seemed to be about the best copy you could possibly hope to find of a book so fragile in its original format. Several years afterward, Lionel or Phillip Robinson of the Robinson Brothers in London came around and said to Mr. Hogan, "You know, that copy of _Pride and Prejudice_ was made up, and it was made up in

Newcastle-on-Tyne by a man named Arthur Rogers, who took three different copies and put them together and then had them bound by a very skillful binder in such a way as to look like the original boards uncut.

Well, Frank Hogan didn't say anything. They knew that he'd bought them from me; and the Robinson brothers, I'm sorry to say, liked to discover good collectors and then spoil their association with whoever was their bookseller, and then they would move in. They liked nothing but big collectors whom they could take over, and they were very good at it, I must say. They once did it to the bookseller who used to come to them and buy books to sell to Dr. [Martin] Bodmer in Switzerland. He was an old gentleman who'd been a bookseller in Germany and had settled in London. And when they discovered what fine books this man was buying from them and taking to Bodmer, they wheedled out of him who was buying these books. And they went direct to Bodmer and said, "Why do you buy these books from this old man when we're the ones that have these books, and he gets them all from us?"

However, they later came out here and told me, "You know, that Pride and Prejudice you sold Hogan was a made-up copy." I was very much embarrassed and very distressed; he'd paid me something like $2,500 for it, which was a lot of money, even then, for a Jane Austen. So I called

up Hogan and said, "Mr. Hogan, I wouldn't want you to keep that book. I can't afford to give you back the money--I haven't got it--but I will give you credit on anything else you want to buy. You can turn in the book, and when there are other books you want, you can just take the other books in exchange." "No," he said, "I'm not going to do that. I'm going to keep that book because I don't like tattletales." He didn't really care for the fact that the Robinsons had come to him with this story, because he understood what their motive was.

Frank Hogan, as I say, was invited to visit Dr. Rosenbach. He called Rosenbach from Washington, and by that time, Rosenbach knew more or less who Frank Hogan was, and [Rosenbach] said, "Well, come stay at our house." So Dr. Rosenbach put him up in grand style, wined and dined him, offered him his best cigars afterwards. And after regaling him with stories of the great collections he'd formed, the great rare books he'd bought, and the high prices he'd paid, he proceeded to show Mr. Hogan very fine copies of most of the other books in the [Grolier Club] list of one hundred great books in literature--the ones that were hardest to get, such as the [William] Caxton Chaucer. Hogan was so enchanted that that night he proceeded to indebt himself to Rosenbach for about a million dollars.

GARDNER: That's enchantment! [laughter]

ZEITLIN: Yes. Here he saw, all in one place, all these great books in English literature, famous copies with wonderful provenance, and he had the feeling that he must get them all now. So the next time Mr. Hogan came out to California and I brought him a satchel of books, we had lunch, and then I started to unpack the satchel, and he said, "Jake, it's no use. I owe Dr. Rosenbach more money than I'll be able to pay him in my lifetime. I'm indebted for the next ten years, and I just can't buy anything else." Well, I must say that I wasn't very happy that Dr. Rosenbach had capitalized on my having educated a collector. Later on Dr. Rosenbach came out to California; I think it was '38. He came to my shop, was very friendly, not condescending, made me feel that he was honored to be able to call on me, invited me to dinner. He was staying at the Town House. Frank Hogan was also in town, and we arranged a dinner for Rosenbach to which Frank Capra, Frank Hogan, Lucille Miller, Frank Capra's wife, and Jo Swerling were invited, along with Jules Furthman, who was in those days a considerable collector of rare books. The Wine and Food Society had a grand banquet one night later. I took Dr. Rosenbach as my guest; they made a great fuss over him, and I was given the privilege of introducing him at the dinner.

Mrs. Doheny gave a tea for him to which I was invited (it was about ten or twelve years after I'd worked for Mrs. Doheny as a gardener). I must say he was very gracious about asking people to invite me. Jean Hersholt gave a grand evening lawn party for Dr. Rosenbach. (Dr. Rosenbach, I'm sorry to say, was disgracefully inebriated before the evening was over.) At the end of his visit here, he went back to Philadelphia, and he hadn't sold one dollar's worth of books. With all the grand books he brought out--which included the original manuscript of James Joyce's Ulysses, the original manuscript of The Red Badge of Courage, the original manuscript of Oscar Wilde's Salome, a choice selection of important English books, like [Robert] Herrick's poems (first edition), and the first, second, third, and fourth folios of Shakespeare, and a number of other very outstanding items--he hadn't sold anything. There just were no buyers; even Mrs. Doheny didn't buy anything from him. And to add insult to injury, his brother Philip--who was always sort of downgrading Abe, his brother, because he didn't think Abe was a good businessman or knew how to make money (Philip was a man who dealt in antiques and old silver, and so on, the same business)--came out here. He was a rather vulgar man; he knew how to live in style, but he certainly was not an aesthete or a cultivated man. He always brought out some blond cutie with him. He came out and

called on Mrs. Doheny and sold her a tapestry--the kind that most people wouldn't give house room to and which were being sold at auction houses at knocked-down prices. He sold her the tapestry for, I was told, $100,000. Then he went back and gloated over poor Dr. Rosenbach and said, "You're no good as a salesman."

GARDNER: Why was the market so difficult?

ZEITLIN: Well, a lot of people's stocks had sold so low; either they lost all their investments by buying on margin, or what they had left couldn't be sold for enough to buy a piece of cheese with. And the doctor was having a very hard time. He told me that he had to sell something; he owed the banks $300,000. And I said, "Don't worry, if you owe them that much money, they'll never close you down." And that was true. Well, he lived it out, although he himself never really hit his stride again as a great bookseller. People would come because going to Rosenbach's was like going to Tiffany's.

GARDNER: What happened to Hogan?

ZEITLIN: Hogan formed a beautiful collection. He came out here once and was given a special dinner by the Zamorano Club. He invited me to be his guest at that dinner. He brought along some of his choicest books to display. I know he had a copy of "Endymion"; he had a book which contained Milton's "Lycidas"; he had Shelley's

Revolt of Islam and Keats's poems (I've forgotten which one just now)--all special copies, either presentation or association or annotated. He brought along a little satchel of his choicest books to show the Zamorano Club and asked me to be the one to show them to the members of the club--and that was about twenty years before they decided to admit booksellers like me to the membership. I must say that when they invited Dr. Rosenbach to the Zamorano Club, he also was kind enough to ask me to come along as his guest.

Frank Hogan defended Andrew Mellon, who had been accused of some kind of improper action at the time that he was secretary of the treasury under Herbert Hoover, I suppose, or maybe under Coolidge or Harding. In any event, he made a deal directly with Franklin Roosevelt that if the government would not prosecute, Andrew Mellon would give the nation the National Gallery of Art and his entire personal collection of art. I think, a very good trade-off. [laughter] It saved Andy Mellon from disgrace and saved the government from very expensive and difficult legal proceedings, and got us the National Gallery of Art, of which Paul Mellon has remained a member of the board of trustees, and to which the Mellon family has made a great many very generous contributions.

Frank Hogan finally fell ill. I don't know exactly

what it was; it was something that was a degenerative condition having to do with the circulation, I think--probably arteriosclerosis. He settled in Palm Springs for the last year or so of his life, and he died out there. He died at a rather early age--I don't think he could have been more than sixty when he died--and he certainly left a reputation among book collectors and booksellers like no one else in my time. He was very enthusiastic about the books he bought. He gave dealers pleasure when he bought books. He also was very generous: he underwrote people like Jake Blanck. He enabled Jake Blanck to begin the Bibliography of American Literature. He liked booksellers, and he was willing to see that they made a good profit and to make them his friends. When selections from his library were sold at, I think it must have been, the American Art Galleries (before Sotheby Parke Bernet took over the American Art Galleries), it was a very bad time and a lot of his books didn't bring as much as they should have, but some of them brought very good prices. Today the same sort of a collection would make a sensation on the market. I suppose in all he didn't have a great many books in quantity, but he had a remarkable number of choice books. There isn't anyone I know who was more loved by the bookselling world, more respected by the legal world. He was the president of the American Bar

Association for a term and, incidentally, was influential in the passing of the child labor laws. In other ways, he couldn't have really been called a friend of the laboring man and the poor, but he did exert himself in certain areas. He was a man of great tolerance, a wonderful storyteller, and a man everyone loved. I can't remember anybody except Walter Barrett who, as an individual, made himself as much a part of the bookselling world and the collecting world as Frank Hogan, considering the few years in which he was active as a book collector. And I remember getting a letter once from A. Edward Newton saying, "If you haven't met Frank Hogan, you should do so. He is a delightful storyteller, a very generous man, and he has a memory like Macaulay." [laughter] Later Frank Hogan wanted that letter, and I couldn't find it. I searched and searched, and I would have given anything to find it and give it to him. Because in the last days, when he was quite ill, he sent someone to me and said, "Couldn't you possibly find that letter of A. Edward Newton's?"

TAPE NUMBER: IX, SIDE ONE

NOVEMBER 30, 1977

GARDNER: I suggested that next you talk about Elmer Belt.

ZEITLIN: Well, I think that would be a good subject. I'm not sure that I haven't talked about him before; but even if I have, whatever I may have said is worth repeating. Elmer Belt, like a number of the other great collectors, is remembered first of all for being a fine human being. He was, I think, one of the most truly endowed physicians that I ever knew. He is the kind of man who makes people feel better just by coming into the room. He creates an air of assurance when he talks to them and when he listens to them. He has the faculty for making each person he talks to feel like he is totally concentrated on what they have to say and totally interested in what their particular problem is. And I think that many patients feel better after their first meeting with him, simply because they feel that here is somebody who understands them; and that in itself, of course, can be a tonic.

GARDNER: How did you first meet him?

ZEITLIN: He came into my shop with his nurse, Miss Katherine Theil. Wherever Elmer Belt was in those early years (my acquaintance begins in 1928), Miss

Theil was there, too. She managed his office; she managed his appointments; she managed every activity that took place in connection with his practice and, I think, took care of most of his social engagements as well. She knew as much about him and his life as he did himself (and perhaps even more), and she was the perfect secretary-assistant. She was totally dedicated to him. Her day began much before he arose, even though he arose very early, and ended long after he left the office.

He and Miss Theil came into my shop, and he immediately cast that peculiar Elmer spell on me, which has lasted until now. He asked if I had any old medical books, and it happened that I had just one medical book. It was a very thick, small folio having to do with pathology. The vellum binding was very wrinkled; and it was a book, I would say, about ten inches high by about eight inches wide, figuring from the back to the fore edge. I remember the title. The title was Bonetus's Sepulcretum, and it consisted of an immense number of post mortems. So in 1928, I think it must have been September or October of that year, I sold my first medical book and the first book that I sold Elmer Belt--Bonetus's Sepulcretum.

The book wasn't mine; it had been turned over to me to sell by a Dr. Charles Lincoln Edwards, a wonderful old gentleman who at that time was connected with the public

school system. He had maintained a sort of a museum of natural history to which classes in the public schools came. He gave lectures on birds and natural history of all sorts. He and his wife were quite elderly even at that time. He'd had a considerable career. His first position that I know of was at the University of Texas, where he was in the zoology department. Either while there or shortly before, he compiled what I think is the first book on folk songs that is separately and strictly devoted to folk songs. It was published by the American Folklore Society in 1895, and it is called Bahama Songs and Stories. I am very proud to possess a copy which he inscribed to me.

Dr. Edwards came under fire while he was at the University of Texas because he was an advocate of the theory of evolution according to Darwinian terms; and of course in those days, to be a Darwinian and an evolutionist in Texas was to be a candidate for burning at the stake. He was dismissed from the University of Texas just about the time David Starr Jordan was forming a faculty for what was to be Leland Stanford, Jr., University, and he recruited Dr. Edwards, who went to Stanford and remained there for a great many years, until, I think, his retirement. Then he came down to Southern California and, after his retirement, commenced his new career of

teaching children in the public schools about natural history. He had a number of assistants who later became outstanding: one of them, whose name I can't remember right now, became one of America's foremost herpetologists. He had over the years acquired a number of books; some of them, I think, just because he knew they were good books and he saw them going for very little. This Bonetus's Sepulcretum he must have acquired for that reason, because I don't think he or many other people--outside of the men who were interested in discovering the causes of death by dissecting the cadavers of the deceased--would have been interested in this book. He brought me a number of other great books--[John] Gould's One Hundred Birds of the Himalayas; a number of other of Gould's important books, which I sold for very, very little money. Now, some of those books are bringing $25,000; we probably sold them for $700 or $800 or $1,000. I'm very sad because Dr. Edwards and his wife could well have used the money.

Dr. Belt told me something about his interests, and he said, "In particular, if you get anything of Leonardo da Vinci, I would like to have it." So I've forgotten, but something came along that was related to Leonardo, and I called his office. Miss Theil said, "He's very busy, but why don't you come up here and wait until he's

through with his patients, and then he can see you and see the book." So I came up, and I brought along a satchel full of other books, and I discovered that Elmer Belt not only was a very kind and considerate man but that he had very little resistance to books. And he bought several books from me--which fortunately enabled me to pay the rent that month, as well as the payroll--and also that one book having to do with Leonardo.

He said, "There's a book I want you to get for me, and I want you to get two copies. Send off to Italy and get me two copies of [Ettore] Verga's Bibliographia Vinciana," which is the bibliography of all books by or about Leonardo da Vinci, up to somewhere like 1912, I guess. I sent off to Italy and got the two copies of the book, and when they came, I brought them to him. And he said, "All right, I will keep one and you keep one, and I want you to get me every book listed in here. I can't afford very much money--I can probably afford $200 a month--but buy them as you find them. If you see something very important that's more money, speak to me about it, and maybe I can find a way to buy it. Now," he said, "I'm going to leave the price up to you, so go easy on me. Don't overcharge me. If you do, I won't buy anything else from you." Well, that was good enough incentive, and a caution to me. I wanted very much to

keep Elmer Belt happy, so I added a very minimal profit to most of the books I sold to him. But having a customer who'd buy as much as $200 a month steadily was a very valuable thing to me. And also having this opportunity to do what I think every good bookseller would like to do--that is, build a collection from its very foundation--was a great inspiration to me and a great satisfaction.

So from that time on, through the years, I've continued to send Elmer Belt books, sometimes no more than one a month and sometimes two or three a week. If it was in the Verga bibliography and he didn't have it, he wanted it. And with that as an incentive, of course, I was able to buy a lot of books which I wouldn't have bought otherwise and sell them to him at a short profit, because I was sure of a sale when I bought them. And having a sure sale made it easy for me to put on a small profit, whereas if I had to buy them for stock and keep them at the risk of waiting a long time before selling them, I would have had to put a larger profit on them. So it worked out very well for me. And as time went on, the collection grew.

Then along came a little woman by the name of Kate Steinitz. I think she arrived here about 1942. Kate was a rather overwhelming little German woman who had a way of commanding attention. At first when I met her, he [Dr. Belt] invited me to come over to his office, and he

said, "I want you to meet someone." Here was this little woman who had come into his office to have an examination because she had kidney stones. Her husband had been a doctor in Germany; they'd come to New York as refugees. Her husband couldn't get a license to practice. He committed suicide, and Kate was left with three daughters to support and very little money. She managed somehow--I don't know how, but she manged to carry on. She came out here, and somebody told her to go see Dr. Elmer Belt about her kidney stones, and she went to see him. And Elmer Belt said, "Well, we'd better make an appointment for you to go to the hospital tomorrow." And she said, "Oh, no, I'm not going to go to the hospital. My husband always told me that doctors want to cut easy and that people die more from being cut than from anything else, and I'm not going to go." "Well," he said, "it's your choice."

But then she saw all these books in his office, and she started to talk to him, and it turned out that she was very knowledgeable in the history of art. She had this quick intelligence and quick perception of people and what they were interested in. So Elmer Belt thought, "Well, this is an interesting person," and he invited me to meet her, and we got acquainted. And I must say, I was put off at first. I really thought, "My God, she's just too much." I don't know how to cope with a woman who

overwhelms you with conversation, and in sort of a compelling way.

But she didn't let him operate. She stayed around a while, and then she went back to New York. And she wrote me a letter, and she said, "I understand you're supplying Dr. Elmer Belt with books connected with Leonardo." She said, "I have to stay here in order to get my citizenship papers before I come back to the Coast--I'm going to go back out there--and I'd like to scout for you and pick up books for you." Within a very short time, she reported some outstanding things, including one of the best books that's in Elmer's collection, a copy of [Luca] Pacioli's Divina Proportione. It was published, I think, in 1508 or 1509, and it is the only book of his time for which Leonardo actually supplied the drawings. It is a very rare book indeed and today up in around the $10,000 class. I think she got it for him for something like $450 from an old sea captain. It was a curious story which I won't go into. And then she haunted Weyhe's and the other art-book stores and found other Leonardo books, quite obscure ones which I certainly would have missed and Elmer wouldn't have had the time to hunt up. She would send them out, and I would tell Elmer where I got them; that she had found them for me. She would write him also [in that] peculiar

scratchy hand of hers with corrections every other word.

When she came back, the story I have is that she went to see Dr. Belt; and Belt said, "See here, Mrs. Steinitz, I think you should have those kidney stones removed, and I'll tell you what I'll do: if you will let me remove your kidney stones, I will let you come to work for me as my librarian." Well, that was a temptation beyond Kate's power to resist, and very shortly thereafter, she was operated on, her kidney stones removed, and she started in to be Elmer Belt's librarian.

She was a most peculiar librarian: she didn't know anything about librarianship in the ordinary sense, so she had to learn all about the systems of classification and descriptive bibliography. But she learned very rapidly, and she knew how to consult the right people, how to consult the right reference books, and nothing ever put her down. She had this belief, which I think is very important, that if somebody else could learn it, she could too. She learned Italian, started to translate from the Italian, took lessons in conversational Italian. She, of course, knew German and French already. And she had this very quick perception. She had this curiosity about everything on earth and, I must add, the most broadly tolerant understanding of anybody I ever knew. There were many things in art and human behavior which

I found rather hard to tolerate, but I never found her unable to or unwilling to tolerate. She always knew there was something justifiable, something worth learning about every form of expression in art and every form of human behavior.

GARDNER: How did Elmer Belt get interested in Vinciana?

ZEITLIN: Well, Elmer Belt, when he was a medical student, of course, had to learn to do anatomical drawings, and in the course of learning to do anatomical drawings, he was shown some models in Folio A or Folio B of Leonardo, the edition published in Paris. And I think it was George Corner--there were two men who both, I think, were very influential in introducing Elmer to Leonardo. One was Dr. George Corner, who's still alive. He came to Berkeley as a professor as a very young man, and the students couldn't believe that this man who looked younger than most of the students could be a professor of physiology or anatomy. His senior there, the man under whose sponsorship he came, was Dr. Herbert Evans, who was a very colorful man himself, about whom I shall talk later. Herbert Evans not only was a great lecturer and a great physiologist, but he also had great facility at teaching anatomy by drawing on the blackboard as he lectured. He also had the trick of drawing with both hands.

I think he and George Corner together could have

shown some of the anatomical drawings of Leonardo to Elmer; and Elmer, of course, quickly recognized the quality of these drawings, in terms of their anatomical correctness and the extent that Leonardo was able to describe what he knew. The thing about anatomy through the ages is that anatomists never drew more than they were capable of seeing through their knowledge of anatomy. And as their knowledge increased, their capacity for drawing increased--unlike the artists, who could draw the human figure with a great deal more accuracy and putting in more of the details of what was there than the anatomists. The anatomists drew diagrammatically, I think one should say, and they drew from the standpoint of knowledge of the function of what they were drawing, the same way that primitive man never knew what he was looking at and could never draw the human body as he saw it, even though he'd cut it to pieces many times.

So Elmer started off, when he was able to (I think, at that time, he was a very poor medical student, and he couldn't afford it) by getting himself the Folio A and B of Leonardo, which had to do with anatomical drawings. It became his ambition to form a library of everything by and about Leonardo, so that anyone else coming after him could go to one place and find every-

thing that he might want to refer to if he wanted to learn more about Leonardo. In later years, when he put his collection at UCLA, his dream was realized, most significantly when Ladislao Reti, who was chosen to edit the newly discovered Codex Madrid, decided to come to UCLA and stay close to the campus and use the Elmer Belt Library [of Vinciana], because he felt that no place else in the world was there everything that he would need in order to translate and comment on the Madrid Codices. Not only did Reti use the library in that way, but so did a great many other scholars.

Kate Steinitz played a very important role in making the library known. She would issue catalogs of acquisitions; she wrote essays; she communicated with scholars; she answered queries. Elmer did his share by studying the things which came. He had a quick eye: as the books arrived, he would look into them. Kate would point out some things; a great many things he was quick to see, so that he did some very good lectures on Leonardo the anatomist. And between Kate and Elmer, they made what could have been just an accumulation of books into a great tool for scholarship and an inspiration. It was Kate who perceived the capabilities of Carlo Pedretti when he was a young man in Bologna and had practically no recognition. When

he wrote her and she saw what great capacities he had, she encouraged him to go on. She arranged for Dr. Belt and Bern Dibner to put up the bond to sponsor him for his immigration to the United States. She attracted a great many other scholars to the Belt Library. When she traveled in Europe, she called on the libraries and museums--the curators and directors--and the bookshops; she had every bookseller in Europe and the United States writing to her whenever they got anything of a Leonardesque nature, and she got her pick of a lot of very good books that way.

She went to the town of Vinci. It was partly through her contacts--more because of Elmer's own visit there--that the town of Vinci, which was Leonardo's birthplace, acquired a library of Leonardo books which Elmer gave them. They had nothing in the way of books or any collection at all of Leonardo material in Vinci until Elmer Belt started sending them material and gave them the nucleus for a library. Following that, the city of Vinci founded an annual Leonardo lectureship, and both Elmer Belt and Kate Steinitz, as well as Ladislao Reti and Carlo Pedretti, were in various years the Vinci lecturer. And when Kate Steinitz came there to lecture, the Italian Air Force staged a fly-by over Vinci.

Elmer Belt is an unusual individual. He's touched a

great many people. He has encouraged a great many people; he's been part of the lives of a great many people; and I don't know anyone, no matter how famous they are, towards whom so many people have a great feeling of love and devotion. When the national library at Madrid agreed to lend a group of the drawings of the Codex Madrid to the Smithsonian Institute for an exhibit, Elmer Belt and I were invited to come be present at the opening and to attend a dinner on the occasion. Silvio Bedini, who was in charge of this, had first invited me and then sort of tried to disinvite me, for reasons that I have to reserve until another time. When he invited Elmer Belt, Elmer said, "I'll only come on one condition, and that is that Jake come with me. Otherwise, I won't go." So I went with him, and we stayed overnight at the Cosmos Club, attended the lecture and the opening festivities. The next morning, we took the plane back to Los Angeles. On the way back, he fell asleep, and the stewardess looked at him, came over and arranged a blanket over him, and she said, "Who is that wonderful man?" He hadn't opened his mouth, he was asleep, but she said, "He must be somebody special."

GARDNER: Wonderful. [laughter]

ZEITLIN: And I said, "Yes, he is." And later on, when I told the story somewhere, I said, "That's our Elmer.

He can charm them even when he's asleep." [laughter]

GARDNER: What about the giving of the library to UCLA? What were the circumstances of that?

ZEITLIN: That became rather complicated. I'm not acquainted with all the details, although I was involved. He had expressed his intention of giving it to UCLA, and at that time, Larry Powell was the librarian, Bob Vosper was the assistant librarian, and Franklin Murphy was the chancellor of the university. And Elmer Belt had told them that he wanted to give the collection. I then was engaged to make an appraisal of it, and then he didn't hear anything from them for quite a while. He rather felt that it was up to them to make the next move, but they somehow or another let it drift, until one day I heard that he was being courted by the Huntington Library. Well, it happened that the evening after I heard this, I had been invited to a little gathering at Chancellor Murphy's house, and at the dinner table I said, "Look, I have something important; I want everybody here to listen to me. UCLA's going to lose a great collection unless they do something very quickly--Elmer Belt's Leonardo collection. He thinks you don't appreciate it." (This was another case of their not moving in like they should have, except this turned out successfully.) I said, "Now, don't lose any time. Get

ahold of Elmer as quickly as you can. Tell him that you will provide space for it, offer him a plan of what you will do, and don't let this library get away from you."

So they very quickly did get over to see Elmer, and Franklin Murphy deserves a great deal of the credit--also Larry Powell, but Franklin Murphy had a way of showing his interest and also making a proposal that was definite and had something distinctive about it. He proposed to Elmer Belt that they would set up the Elmer Belt Library of Vinciana in separate quarters, and that they would conserve it properly and not distribute it in the stacks in the university or let it get dispersed or lose its identity. And this, of course, is what was needed in the case of a collection like this, and I think it was very much to the benefit of the university as well as to the satisfaction of Elmer Belt and very much to the credit of Franklin Murphy, that the library did come to UCLA.

Now, at first it was housed in a separate couple of rooms, but at least it was kept segregated, and Kate was made sort of an honorary curator. Elmer paid her salary, but Kate was there in charge. I'm sure that the people at the university did not appreciate Kate. They saw her as this little, gnarled, rather demanding old woman [who was]

temperamental and hard to understand [and] a little bit absentminded: she wouldn't always lock the room when she left it, and so on, which was terrible for them. And I think they far underestimated what a great person they had there and what an important asset to the university she was, in terms of bringing a great many important scholars there to visit, see the place, and meet the other faculty members. They failed to accommodate her as much as they should have. Even if she was troublesome, I don't think she was that troublesome. I know some other people who made that mistake, too. One art dealer here in town who I tried to get interested in selling something for Kate sneered at it and said, "That gabby little old woman. I don't want to be bothered with her." It turned out that this was one of the very important works of Kurt Schwitters, who was the hottest thing in the European market. And she had more of them, which this man might have gotten hold of if he'd just had the perception to see what kind of a person Kate was.

Well, Elmer is thoughtful in so many ways, it's hard to conceive of how he has time to be as considerate of everyone as he is. You never fail to get a note of appreciation from him, usually written in his own hand, for the slightest thing that you might remember to do for

him. And it's been my pleasure to be with him on two journeys to Europe. It has been my pleasure to be present at a number of his birthday parties, to enjoy his confidence, and to share lots of things with him. I can't think of a more wonderful man. Ruth Belt and he both came to my seventy-fifth birthday party, which was a great compliment. Elmer is now about eighty-six or eighty-seven years old and isn't too spry, at least certainly not in the evenings. And Ruth Belt doesn't go out at all--she is totally housebound--but she made the effort and came to my birthday party and sat next to me, and I couldn't have had a greater compliment.

GARDNER: Would he be about your longest-running continuous collector?

ZEITLIN: I suppose so, now. I can't remember anyone else who is still alive that bought books from me earlier. I have had people turn up lately whom I knew as early as 1925, when I first went to work at Bullock's, but I can't remember that any one of them--well, yes, there are two people whom I remember who came first as customers. One of them was a lovely woman who was a very young, wonderful creature. Mina Cooper she was then; she's married to Herb [H. Arthur] Klein now, and lives in Malibu, and she's still a very dear friend. And the other was a young woman intern by the name of Esther Somerfeld, who was interning at County Medical. She came in

to buy a book for a wedding present for a couple of friends, and then she came to buy a present for another young intern there by the name of Eugene Ziskind, and later they were married. A few weeks ago, we went to their fiftieth wedding anniversary party, and she introduced me to the woman who bought a copy of Shelley's poems from me, which was given to the husband on the occasion of their wedding.

GARDNER: That's marvelous. [laughter] You have a group of golden-anniversary people all over the city.

ZEITLIN: Yes, right now I've been attending more than one fiftieth wedding anniversary, and so I'm glad of that.

GARDNER: To move to your list--I guess, after Frank Hogan, among the older collectors or the longer-ago collectors, you have Albert Bender.

ZEITLIN: Yes. I want to say one more thing about Elmer Belt. Elmer Belt's not just a collector in one field. Some people may think that Leonardo da Vinci has been Elmer Belt's exclusive collection. Of course, he's formed a very great collection of rarities in medicine. He has some important books in the history of science, such as a fine copy in the original presentation binding of [William] Gilbert on the magnet [De Magnete], a very fine copy of Tagliacozzi on plastic surgery, of course the first and second edition of Vesalius's Anatomy [De Humani

Corporis Fabrica], and a good many of the important classics in medicine. But in addition to that, he had a collection of Upton Sinclair which was quite extensive, not only in English but in translations into many languages, and that collection he gave to Occidental College. He formed a collection of the works of S. Weir Mitchell; a collection of the works on nursing, including letters and books of Florence Nightingale; a collection of D.H. Lawrence; and a very exhaustive collection of books on whaling--he had become interested in the anatomy of the whale because of a peculiar anomaly having to do with the kidneys of whales. (I suppose peculiar anomaly is a redundancy--an anomaly is a peculiarity.) He has collected a lot of fine-press books and books on art outside of Leonardo da Vinci. He is an omnivorous reader in a great many areas. Elmer Belt's collecting is a reflection of the breadth of his mind and also his infinite capacity for fine detail as it expresses itself in surgery and in his knowledge of medicine. In some ways, you could take his library, and it would be a portrait of the man.

GARDNER: Have you ever dealt with him on a professional basis?

ZEITLIN: Yes. He's operated on me.

GARDNER: That seems to be the thread that runs through

many of our oral histories.

ZEITLIN: Is that so? Elmer Belt? Well, he had, at one time, the largest surgical practice of any single man in the United States.

GARDNER: Is that so?

ZEITLIN: Yes. It's not very much now, simply because he isn't able to keep up with it. His staff has diminished. His son has left his office; his nephew has left his office for various reasons, and I don't think that it was incompatibility. They had ambitions of their own. And so, while he has a continuing practice, it's not what it was.

GARDNER: Is he still able to. . . ?

ZEITLIN: Well, that's the point. I don't feel that Elmer should continue to do anything but consult. He's certainly a very competent diagnostician and consultant.

TAPE NUMBER: IX, SIDE TWO

DECEMBER 13, 1977

GARDNER: You mentioned that you wanted to finish up with Elmer Belt.

ZEITLIN: Yes. I think it ought to be pointed up that Elmer Belt demonstrated something very special about himself when he saw the possibilities of Kate Steinitz, [when] most of us (and I'll include myself) had no idea what her possibilities were--what capacities she had and what potential she had when we first met her. And it's because he had this confidence in her, because he was willing to give her his support and to underwrite her that she developed in her own knowledge and that she became such an important person in the world of students of Leonardo da Vinci, and that she contributed to the literature, and that she corresponded with all of the Leonardistas in the various parts of the world. She became in her time, among the scholars who were interested in Leonardo, something like [Father] Mersenne was in his time among the men interested in science in all the various parts of the world. Through corresponding with him, they created a sort of a crossroads for the exchange of information, and this really sparked everyone involved. And it was because of Kate Steinitz and the central position she held through being Elmer Belt's librarian

that a great many things happened in the world of Leonardo research. It was Kate Steinitz who picked Carlo Pedretti, a young boy in Bologna; realized that he had the possibilities of being a great Leonardo scholar, and arranged for him to come over here. She got Elmer Belt, Bern Dibner, and Ladislao Reti all to put up money for a fund with which to support Pedretti and enable him to come over, and to stay here and get the degrees that were necessary for his progress, and do the work that he did and is still doing. So that he has now become one of the three or four outstanding scholars among the Leonardistas. This, again, was a case of Elmer perceiving that Pedretti had these possibilities and being willing to help him.

I think that it was true also in my case. Certainly, without Elmer Belt and his continued support, I might very well have not been able to stay in business. And the fact that I had one customer whose business might amount to, say, no more than $400 a month, but it was a regular $400 a month, really made all the difference between success and failure. And so I think that it has to be said above everything else that Elmer Belt deserves very high credit for his ability to appreciate people of talent, sometimes even people with whom he didn't agree--like Kurt Schwitters, whom he met in Sweden when he went

over there--but whose qualities he appreciated and whom he was willing to recognize and give support to. This, I think, entitles him to very high marks as a sponsor of culture and as a human being. It was out of my association with Elmer Belt and Kate Steinitz that I met Bern Dibner. As well as I can remember, this must have been about 1946, right after World War II, that Kate Steinitz brought Bern Dibner over to my shop on Carondelet Street. He was a very unimpressive looking little man with a small moustache, very brusque, and very much alert and quick to observe and remember everything you said and any new information that came his way. He was a Russian Jewish immigrant who came to the United States and got a degree in electrical engineering in Brooklyn. I think he got most of his schooling at night. I think he had an uncle who had a radio business, which gave him an opportunity to earn his first living in electrical engineering. And I think later he and a brother--I'm not exactly sure what the relationship was, but there was one other person, also, with Dibner who was involved in Bern Dibner's beginning in electrical manufacture. They started a very small business.

Bern Dibner decided quite early that the field which had the greatest possibilities for advancement, the greatest possibility for widespread utilization in all fields of electricity, was electrical connectors. So he proceeded to

study all the types of electrical connectors that were known, and he specialized in them. It would seem strange that anything so insignificant as what connected two electrical wires could become that important, but every time you look up at an overhead power line, you see that the wires are at some point connected to each other and that these connectors are very important, that the connectors which are part of switches are essential and must be able to bear the surges of the current, must be able to maintain a constant flow between the two bodies that they're connecting. And so he studied this and acquired patents and developed patents and built up what became Burndy Engineering.

Now, Elmer Belt first heard that there was a man in New York who was competing with him in buying books on Leonardo sometime about 1942 or '43, and so he wrote to this man and said he would like to meet him. And the man said, well, he was very busy, and it would be rather difficult, but if he would come out to see him at his factory, he could spare some time to him. So Elmer went out, and he found that this man that he met had a security guard with him at all times. He was admitted to this place with great care being taken to check him in and out, to make sure that there were no questions asked or no discussion of what this man was doing. When Elmer Belt

asked to see the books, the man took him out to a warehouse and showed him a pile of boxes and said, "This is my library. And until the war's over, I'm not able to look at them, and I can't show them to you or even see them myself." It was only afterward that Elmer learned that Bern Dibner was involved in a very essential part of the war, top secret development of proximity fuses and other ordnance. Bern Dibner, at the end of the war, went over as part of an inspection team to assess the effectiveness of various war measures, such things as saturation bombing and things like that, to try to determine whether they really were worth the money and effort that were put behind them, or whether they were superfluous and overkill.

After the war, Bern Dibner did unpack his library, and when he set up his plant in Norwalk, Connecticut, he incorporated his library as a separate entity and set it up as sort of a nonprofit institution into which he poured a certain amount of the money which he was earning from his busienss. But his library was distributed throughout his research plant at Norwalk, Connecticut, the first time I met him. Over in one section, he had all his books about Volta; in another consultation room, he had all of the books about Einstein; and in another room, he had all his Curie books and materials. This, he felt, would serve

as an inspiration to the engineers working in the place. [laughter]

He and his wife had decided very early that the first time they were $1,000 ahead, they were not going to devote every day of every year pursuing the dollar and tending to business. As soon as they had $1,000, they decided they were going to go to Europe and travel; learn about the cities of Europe. In the course of traveling and very seriously studying the places they went and the languages of the countries which they visited, they went to the bookshops, and Bern Dibner developed a network of friendships with booksellers in all parts of Europe. So there is no bookshop that you could go to that might in any way have any book dealing with the history of science, or any of the sciences, that he is not known in. He had a capacity for making friends with booksellers, and he was not a hard bargainer. He encouraged booksellers. He expected them to make a living, and he paid fairly for what he bought. And as time went on, his visits were looked forward to. The booksellers would accumulate the best things and hold them until he came, and as a result of that, he got a great many good books which he might not otherwise have gotten. Many people, such as one man, A. Bader in Geneva, sold him things which he had inherited, collections of letters

from Volta and Galvani and Deluc, who was an early forebear of Bader's. He sold Dibner electrical machines which were heirlooms and really extraordinarily fine examples of the early electrical generators which were used for conducting electrical experiments and teaching the electrical sciences.

And it was the same with me: Bern Dibner came to see me, and he was warm, he was friendly, he would never go away without buying something. And he encouraged me to write him and offer him things. When he started to develop his list, which he called "Heralds of Science," which was a list of the outstanding books in all the sciences, he solicited the opinion of the notable scientists in the various fields, he solicited the opinions of the collectors in these fields, and he solicited the opinions of booksellers. And when he got together his material and published his work, he dedicated it to the booksellers of the world who'd helped him form his collection. His list, the "Heralds of Science," has become a standard guide to the outstanding books in the sciences--much more so than the [Harrison D.] Horblit list, which was much more handsomely published and which contained a great deal many more mistakes and contradictions, but which has, for some people, become a great list because it was called the Grolier Club List of a _Hundred Books on_

the History of Sciences.

Bern Dibner, as an example, heard that Herbert Evans was likely to sell one of his collections. It was the second collection that Herbert had formed; the first collection had gone to Mrs. Evans when they were divorced because it very rightly belonged to her. Most of the money which had been spent on buying it had come from Mrs. Evans, but it remained in Herbert Evans's custody until it was sold, and I purchased that collection for Lessing Rosenwald. That first collection, I must say, had some unique books, some very fine copies of things which never occur again in any of the Evans collections. This collection was purchased by me for Lessing Rosenwald, who gave it to the Institute for Advanced Study, and it is the collection which forms the foundation of their History of Science Library at Princeton.

GARDNER: This brings up an interesting question for me, before you continue, and then I'll try to get you back to your train of thought. With the number of customers that you had who were interested in similar items and subjects, how did you select those customers which would receive which item? Do you see what I mean? There must have been great competition.

ZEITLIN: Well, that was a valuable privilege. It gave me a great advantage.

GARDNER: But there must have been great competition also among your buyers.

ZEITLIN: Well, there was some competition. Naturally, the ones that treated me the most kindly got the preference. If they bargained too hard or kept the books too long before giving me a decision, or tried to force me to take back books of which they had purchased better copies later on, I sort of put them last on the list. It was a privilege which I had earned.

Naturally, Bern Dibner won a very high place on my list very early, because when he heard about the second Evans collection, he encouraged me to buy it. He said, "I'll tell you what I will do. I will give you a list of approximately 100 books I want out of that collection and I will advance you $10,000 towards your cost of purchasing. And when you have bought it, take the books that are on my list, check them over, price them, and send them to me. And whatever you say is the right price, you can charge against the $10,000 which I've advanced. When we've passed the $10,000, keep on sending the books that I want, and we'll go on from there--I'll pay you for them." This enabled me to buy a collection which I could have never bought with my own money. I was able to buy this collection also with the help of John Valentine and Justin Turner, who advanced the rest of the money. The total cost was $27,000.

I had only enough money to pay my fare to San Francisco and Berkeley, where Herbert Evans lived. I'd heard that Herbert Evans was of a mind to sell his collection, so I called him up one Saturday and said, "I would like to come up tomorrow morning and talk to you about your collection." So I went up. I had already discussed this list of what was in Herbert's library with Irwin Rosenthal and his son Barney, and they were of a mind to participate with me in buying it. We had concluded that we could afford to pay about $27,000 for the collection. I went to Herbert Evans, and I said, "I will give you $27,000 for the collection. I will write you a check for $5,000 now, and I will give you the balance when the books have all been checked out against your list and are packed and have left your house for the library in the Life Sciences Building at Berkeley." And Herbert said, "Well, I must think it over. I must talk to my wife, but I will let you know tomorrow morning." The next morning he said, "We'll take you up."

The collectors and dealers in the East heard about it. People like Dave Randall of Scribner's said, "How did you get Herbert Evans to sell you his collection?" And I said, "Well, you know you've mentioned a number of times to him that you would like to buy it, and a number of other people have, but I did one thing more: I offered him

money." [laughter] This was the clincher: the fact that I had found Dr. Evans at one of the points, which he had reached a number of times during his life, where he had bought more books than he could pay for. He had developed this fine collection, but he owed the banks money, and he owed the booksellers all over the world money. Dunning letters were coming in and threats of suits, and people were writing [Robert Gordon] Sproul, the president of the University of California, and Evans had to do something. The thing that he needed was someone who would come forward and say, "I will give you so much money down, and I will pay you the rest at such and such a time."

With the $10,000 that Bern Dibner had advanced and the additional money which John Valentine and Justin Turner lent me, I was able to buy the collection, and that gave me my start as a dealer with a significant stock of books in the history of science. I was able to get out two very fine catalogs, catalogs which were landmarks in that they contained a great many important books in the history of science, all of them fine copies or association copies. And there was no one else, certainly, in the United States, and only one or two people in Europe, who'd ever gotten out catalogs to compare with these. This gave me an immediate reputation. Of

course, all of this was premised by the fact that Bern Dibner had advanced $10,000 with which I could buy the collection.

GARDNER: So what you did basically was: he advanced the $10,000 for certain of the titles, and the rest of the titles you maintained for yourself.

ZEITLIN: So I proceeded to price them, and he never questioned any price I put on anything. I tried to be very fair and price them below the market in his case, because I wanted him to be happy. I felt I owed it. The benefits of having advanced the money considered that he was a partner in the enterprise, so he gained a lot of very fine books at what now are very low prices.

GARDNER: What year was that, about?

ZEITLIN: That was 1955.

GARDNER: In 1955, that late!

ZEITLIN: Yes, and I had this opportunity to sell all these books and to produce a catalog that gave me a reputation, that gave me entrée to a great many other collectors and made my credit good with a lot of important dealers in Europe. So that when I walked into a bookstore and presented my card, I was immediately recognized as the man who got out those catalogs. And I must say that they were very well annotated. I had a good man working with me, John B. Lee, and he and I worked very hard to produce good catalogs. I think I

can honestly claim that the annotations were not just superficial, that they were based upon a considerable amount of study of the books themselves and the books about the books.

GARDNER: Had Evans done any cataloging of his own?

ZEITLIN: Well, Evans was a discriminating accumulator. He loved the chase. He appreciated what the books meant, and he also canvassed a great many of the authoritative men. He wrote to some of the outstanding geologists around the world and asked them what, in their opinions, were the significant works in, say, geology. He did the same thing with the physicists and the chemists and the botanists and so on. Out of that he compiled a search list and went to work, after he'd compiled this list, to find the best possible copies of the books. In 1937 he held an exhibition of outstanding books in the history of science, for which he published a little catalog that was printed by the University of California Press, and that catalog is still the best guide to the significant books in the history of sciences. It sold for something like thirty-five cents, and Ernst Weil in later years, when he reviewed the Horblit book which was selling for $100, implied that the Evans publication was a better book.

GARDNER: I'm intrigued by one other thing, before we get

back to Bern Dibner. We've talked about four collectors, basically, in the last couple of sessions--Frank Hogan and Herbert Evans, Elmer Belt and Dibner. Two of them, Dibner and Belt, apparently maintained their wealth through the years; yet both Evans and Hogan found themselves strapped by their book purchases. Is that common?

ZEITLIN: Hogan was not strapped by his purchases.

GARDNER: He overbought, though.

ZEITLIN: Well, he overbought in terms of his capacity to pay immediately; but he didn't overbuy in the long run, because Hogan's fees were immense. He had very high retainers. I think that he got a million dollars for defending Andy Mellon.

GARDNER: Oh. Well, so there was no problem.

ZEITLIN: No, he did not die a poor man.

GARDNER: But is it common for book collectors? As you mentioned, it's common for bookdealers to do that.

ZEITLIN: Herbert Evans did not die a poor man either.

GARDNER: No, no, no, that's not what I mean. But is it common for book collectors to overextend themselves in the course of buying?

ZEITLIN: Well, it is. A book collector will temporarily overextend himself. He will buy more than he can pay for, and booksellers have to be careful to curb some of these men, because what is a pleasure can become a burden and can be spoiled. A man who is an enthusiastic collector

can be turned into a disappointed, unhappy man if he finds himself being driven by too much buying and being unable to pay. And if his creditors get on his back and press him, he is in trouble. It has happened that some collectors have had to sell their books at auction. Herbert Evans was chronically in debt--he overbought--but in the long run, he did not lose money by his collecting. His passion for collecting books outran his practicality. He could have done a lot better with selling the books that he bought; his collections were all sold too far below what they could have brought him. Warren Howell and I together sold several of his collections, and in no case did we get as much as might have been gotten for them if he hadn't been in urgent need of money.

GARDNER: Well, shall we return to Bern Dibner, then, and hear the rest of his story?

ZEITLIN: Well, Bern Dibner's backing of me in the purchase of the Evans collection was certainly very important in my development as a bookseller and my becoming established as a dealer in books in the history of science. We have maintained a constant correspondence, and over the years, I visit him and he visits me. I remember his coming out here once when the Red Cars were still running. He called me up--it was on a Sunday--and

he said he would like to come and see me if I wasn't busy and had time to take him over to my shop. This must have been about 1950. So he took the Red Car from downtown--from the Biltmore Hotel, I guess it was then--and he rode it out to Santa Monica and La Cienega Boulevard, where I met him. We went down to my shop, and we spent a very pleasant half-day there, looking at books and talking. I said, "Why don't you take a taxi? You can get back to your hotel so much faster. It took you at least an hour to get here." And he said, "You know, if I spent that money on taxis I wouldn't have as much to buy books. Besides, I wouldn't have as much time to read as I have when I'm riding on streetcars." He was always a man without ostentation, and no matter how powerful he has become, he has never lost his modesty nor his ability to live in terms of very modest personal needs. We traveled together with the Grolier Club on a couple of occasions and spent a great deal of time with each other, and he and his wife were very considerate, never complained, never grumbled. If the regular meals which were promised couldn't be delivered to us, and we were given a box lunch with an apple and a sandwich, he could sit down and enjoy it with just as much relish as he could the best dinner in the finest restaurants of Europe. I don't think anyone who's been associated with

Bern Dibner ever was made to feel that this was a man with the kind of wealth and power which enabled him to travel by his own private jet around the country if he wanted to. He has always driven his own car. He never has had anybody waiting on him.

He has built a library in Norwalk to house his collection, a very attractive building; and lectures, seminars, and meetings of various societies are held there. He has very attractive exhibits of electrical instruments, in addition to portraits and prints having to do with the history of electricity. In addition to the various fields of the history of science, he has emphasized particularly, of course, the history of electricity. And he bought a great many books of the fifteenth century; he has formed a very substantial collection--I think approximately 400--of books printed before 1501. As a private collection in our time it is certainly outstanding. It has been his idea to make this an endowed library to be continued in perpetuity.

I must stop here to say something about the collection of instruments which is in his library. It's to be seen in alcoves and on shelves and in niches all over the library, and this is a collection of electrical instruments of all types, dating from the beginning of the Voltaic battery and the electrical friction generator.

I had been told by a customer of mine that an antique dealer in New Orleans had bought an electrical museum which had gone bankrupt in Holland. For some reason the Dutch hadn't wanted to spend the money to support this museum, and it finally went broke, and the thing was auctioned off. The majority of the stuff was all bought by an antique dealer in New Orleans who had it in his place and whose idea was that people would buy it for bases for lamps (the great vogue of sewing machines that looked like lampstands and lampstands that looked like sewing machines was going strong). But he decided that before he broke up the collection, he'd see if he couldn't find a buyer for it all in one lot. He had written to a customer of mine (whose name I've forgotten right now), a man who lived in Santa Barbara, and the man in turn had mentioned this offer to me and said he wasn't interested, and he gave me the name of that man in New Orleans. So I called up the man in New Orleans and said, "I'd like to know about your collection. How much do you want for it, and what does it contain?" And the man said, "Well, I'll tell you, I can't offer it to you now because I have promised to give somebody in New England (a man by the name of Lincoln who was trying to start an electrical museum up in New England) first refusal, and he's trying to get

the money together right now. But if he doesn't buy it, I'll let you know. The price of it is $5,000." And I said, "Fine, I'd be interested." So about three weeks later, I got a call from this man, and he said, "Well, the collection is yours if you want it." And I said, "May I have a few days? Since you've taken this long, may I have a few days? I've got to get together my nickels." And he said, "Yes, you've got an option on this for ten days." And I said, "All right."

The next day I had a phone call from Bern Dibner, and he said, "What are you doing, trying to buy that electrical collection?" I said, "I don't see any reason why I can't buy it just as well as anyone else." He said, "I understand you have an option on it." I said, "Yes." "Well," he said, "I thought that this man Lincoln was going to buy it, and that's why I didn't get into the act. And between the time that he found he couldn't buy it, and the time I got back to this man, and the time he told me so, I found that you have an option!" He said, "I know how much you've been asked to pay. How much will you take to get out?" And I said, "I think $7,500--I'll take a $2,500 profit." He said, "All right, I'll mail you a check and all you have to do is tell those people in New Orleans that you've turned

over your option to me."

So he bought the collection, and I never saw it until about three or four years later, when I went to his place in Connecticut. Here were all these beautiful instruments, an enormous collection of them, all varieties of early electrical generators and storage batteries, and so on. And I said, "You know, it's a good thing I didn't see this collection before I took your proposition, or it would have cost you a hell of a lot more. You got a great bargain!" [laughter] He said, "Yes, I know I did. It is a great bargain, and I'm very grateful to you for letting me have it." That is the kind of man Dibner is. Now, you might say with the kind of money he's got, it was easy for him to be generous, but that's not usually true. Generally, the men who come up the hard way like he did, and who are used to moving around the world and making deals, are not very generous; they are the hardest bargainers of all. But he is truly an exception. In the course of the years, we've met at meetings of the History of Science Society. Our first meeting was 1956, in Florence, where we traveled together on the train to Milan and had a wonderful time. And from then on, over the years, we have met many times--Josephine and I and he and his beautiful wife, Billie. I have enjoyed trips together

with them and Ladislao Reti and his wife, Chiquita, and Elmer and Ruth Belt. It has been a wonderful association and friendship.

GARDNER: He is still alive, I take it.

ZEITLIN: He is still alive, yes. He is over eighty, and he has been honored in many different ways. The most important thing, I think, that's happened to his collection I was also involved with, and that is the presentation of it to the Smithsonian [Institution].

GARDNER: There's about two more minutes on the tape.

ZEITLIN: Two more minutes. Well, I think that this will have to wait till next time. I think one of the most important gifts the Smithsonian ever received was the Burndy Library, and it was I who went to him on behalf of the Smithsonian and asked him to consider their proposal to take it over, subject to certain conditions which I helped draw up.

GARDNER: Okay, you'd like to wait till next time to finish.

ZEITLIN: I think it would be best to wait until next time.