

Sibyl Barsky Grucci

May 31, 2005

Tape 1 of 1 - Side 1 of 2

Interviewee: Sibyl Barsky Grucci (SBG)

Interviewer: Margaret McElligott (MM)

Comments: Dr. Mark Rubinstein (MR)

MM: Do you want to see the letter?

[Pause]

MM: You can read that without glasses?

MR: Yeah.

MR: (Laughs)

MM: *-----(?-006)

MR: That's what I say. And she's only using one eye. The ophthalmologist said she doesn't have any vision in one of her eyes.

SBG: Oh, it's numbered.

MM: Yeah. She [Susan Melnick, Archivist at the Rauh Jewish Archives, Pittsburgh, PA] numbered... Well, you had... Mark gave her a list.

SBG: Oh...

MR: Did I give you a list?

MM: Yeah. I have it.

SBG: *-----(?-010) the ones that I was unable to match.

MM: She matched most of them. There are a couple that don't have a number. So, we'll see what we can do.

SBG: We can do the photographs. *-----(?-012) a release for Sibyl to sign. Look at this.

MM: Yeah. Why don't we just do that, so we can get that out of the way.

SBG: She wants an art history.

MM: Yeah.

SBG: Which I'm not able to give her, really. How do you describe an art history?

MM: Well, what we could do is look at some of these photos we have. And perhaps you'll recall. You already know some of the people you depicted.

SBG: I can't hear you.

MM: Oh, really? Oh. Ed keeps telling me that I'm talking too low. After all the years of... Okay.

MR: You just have to raise the volume.

MM: Okay. Can you hear me now?

SBG: Yeah.

MM: Okay. I sound like the commercial.

MR: Yeah. (Laughs)

SBG: It depends on the type of voice.

MM: Yeah.

SBG: It affects me. Where a man's voice is easier to listen to. It's on a lower level than a woman's voice.

MM: Yeah.

SBG: If a woman has a very high intensity...

MM: You can't hear.

SBG: ...it's just more difficult.

MM: Okay.

SBG: Depending on the enunciation.

MM: All right. I'll try...

SBG: And most people, as you well know...

MM: Don't enunciate.

SBG: That's right.

MM: And I'll try to keep my hands away from my face. (Laughs)

SBG: (Laughs)

SBG: Can I... Maggie, can I see the...

MM: Photocopies – of your work?

SBG: Yeah. That she sent you. She said they were all numbered, or something.

MM: They're numbered. But she couldn't... Yeah. I just want to ask you. I suspect this is a self-portrait.

SBG: Oh! These two... [Pause] This was his [MR's] mother.

MM: Oh, that's Belle.

SBG: That's Belle.

MM: Okay.

SBG: I think. Yeah. This, I think, was a self-...

MM: That's what I thought. I thought it was you.

SBG: Really?

MM: Yes. Yes.

SBG: When I didn't have any model, and I wanted to be sure...

MM: That's a lovely head. Do you know where they are?

SBG: Yes. This one is in her daughter's -- Bonnie.

MM: Bonnie. Yeah.

SBG: Bonnie has this. I still have this.

MM: You do?

SBG: I think that's the one I have. Oh, these are unidentified.

MM: That's right.

SBG: Let's see what else is here. [Going through photos]

Oh, this is a marble. And this was sold. And I know who has it. Mr. Robert Struble.

MM: S-t...

SBG: At State College.

MM: Robert Struble.

SBG: Struble. Robert Struble.

MM: Let me write it down, okay? It's this way.

SBG: Oh, wait. Hold on. No. It's Susan Struble who has it. Susan Struble.
And it's marble.

MM: Do you have any idea when you sculpted it?

SBG: Let me see the rest of them. (Looking at photos)

This one, really... What isn't shown here was this is all carved, and it was
meant as a hanging, and you put something on it. This is. This.

MM: Hm-hm. That's the sculpture piece.

SBG: But you can't see it in the photograph. This was some extra... I don't
remember. Some *-----(?-071) I had. Yeah. Susan Struble has
this.

MM: And this one?

SBG: I have this.

MM: Okay.

SBG: I don't remember about that.

MM: Okay.

SBG: I was very, very fond of this. (Looking at photos) Oh...! Where – did
you... That was a self-portrait. I gave it as a birthday gift, I think, to your
mother.

MM: Hm-hm. When did do you that? 1930? I can't see the date.

SBG: It's a charcoal.

MR: 37.

SBG: I never signed anything. Look at that. Hm...What do you have there? Oh, that's undone.

MM: That's your mother.

SBG: That's unfinished.

MM: That's Belle, isn't it?

SBG: Yes. This was Belle.

MR: This is you. You did it though, right?

SBG: Hm-hm. Yeah. It was unfinished. I don't know why you kept it.

MR: So! I'm sorry. (Laughs)

MM: That's lovely. You really... You captured her. Yeah. A couple of foxes, I'll tell you. I look at that photo of her.

MR: Hm!

SBG: Okay. This marble thing. Okay. Now what is this? Oh, the horse. No. Hm-hm. The horse has nothing to do with it. What's this? It's not a good photograph.

MM: None of them are good.

SBG: Can't see it.

MM: Well they're all copies of photos. That's why. And they're, you know, not good photos.

SBG: I can't explain this. This was... The horse has nothing to do with it – with me.

MM: That's not yours?

SBG: No. I just happened to have that... (Looking at photos) Oh, this was plans for a child's – children's *-----(?-096) I was designing something for a children's playground. But it was unfinished.

MM: So it was never produced?

SBG: No. I... I probably threw it away. Or have the drawing somewhere. But this is when it was *-----(?-101). Well that covers... (Looking at photos) No. Now what was this? [Pause] Oh! That's when he showed – it's a bad thing -- The Pearl Diver.

MM: Oh!

SBG: You see it?

MM: Uh-huh. Uh-huh.

SBG: (Laughs) The opera. You know...

MM: I see. I see it. So Mark made it into a collaborative. (Laughs)

SBG: He must have seen it lying around, and he picked it up. [Pause] Pearl Diver, I think it was. And it was intended to be. [Pause] It's a good thing I saw that. Now, what's that?

[Pause]

MM: Was that here? Oh, I see the head there. Yeah. That's not it, though.

SBG: It's a bad...

MM: No. I have a – I have a photo of that. I have that photo.

SBG: Oh, this is a sandstone. A pink sandstone that I picked up. And this is the...

MM: River.

SBG: This is river. And this is not a good photograph of it.

MM: I know. None of them are really good. I don't think they're going to use these in there. I don't think so.

SBG: I can hardly recognize it. I have it.

MM: You do?

SBG: Yes.

MM: It's pink sandstone.

SBG: It's a pink sandstone out of the Mississippi.

[Pause]

MM: Do you know the title?

SBG: That's not a...

MM: No. [Pause] Okay.

SBG: Will that complete the...?

MM: No. I think there's another page. Oh, no. There are three. Wait a minute.
Oh, this... No.

SBG: Did I miss any?

SBG: I can't even make it out.

MM: It looks like two figures. This is a back view of a female. And then here's
another...

SBG: Maybe this way.

MM: ...lying down. Maybe this way.

SBG: Oh! Oh, of course.

MM: Okay?

SBG: Yeah. This was made... Oh, no. Yeah. I had that in my bathroom. Two figures. Yeah. This is the way it goes.

MM: Hm-hm.

SBG: And that was made of...what – plastic.

MM: It looks like marble, but it's not. Was it fiberglass?

SBG: Where is it now? Somebody has it. [Pause] There is... Oh, that we don't have a photograph. Of an aluminum... Something in aluminum.

MM: It's in here.

SBG: You have that?

MM: Yeah. Here it is.

SBG: And who owns it?

MM: Number one. Gotta' get my list. That's owned by...

MR: Earl Katile. [#1 on "Sib's List" (MSP#423, Box 1, Folder 1) gives name as Carl Cataio].

MM: So who owns this? No. This is the one he owns.

[Pause]

SBG: I think this is Katile [Cataio?]

MM: Yes. Aluminum sculpture.

SBG: Oh! This is made of aluminum?

MM: Hm-hm. Right. That's what it says here. Number one on the list.

SBG: That's right.

MM: Okay.

SBG: This was made of plaster.

MM: And why is it shiny? What did you make... What did you put on it?

SBG: I don't know who – or what it is.

MM: Okay.

SBG: I don't have it.

MM: You don't have it anymore?

[Pause]

SBG: Anymore that I missed?

MM: Let me see. I think there's another page. I think there's another... Oh, it's a couple of portraits.

SBG: Let's see.

(Looking at photos)

SBG: Oh! This is a painting – an oil of one of my brothers – William. And...
This...

MM: Is it meant to be together?

SBG: No.

MM: No, it's not. Okay.

[Pause] (Looking at photos)

SBG: Look at this. This is also a drawing of one of my brothers. These are terrible.

MM: I know. I know. They just put them on a copying machine.

SBG: And you know... Do you have a big one of a wall thing that Bonnie has?

MM: Yes, I have that.

SBG: Is that a decent photograph?

MM: It's pretty good. This is, too. Let's see. Fran and Ed Kogan own this one.
New York City.

Let me find the one... Is this the one numbered 45? (Looking at photos)
Yes. Large wall sculpture. And there's another photo of that.

SBG: Even this is no good. But...

MM: Well, they must... The originals...

SBG: At least you can make it out.

MM: You can make it out. They must have the originals. The originals, I'm sure, are better.

SBG: They have the originals.

MM: Yeah. And I'm sure the photographs...

SBG: You know, originally, it was in Dr.... In his father's office.

MM: Oh, this is the one you talked about?

SBG: Hm-hm.

MM: Yeah.

SBG: And then my sister wanted it. And they gave it to her. And she gave it to the psychiatric hospital there.

MM: Uh-huh.

SBG: But she recalled it. She wanted it. (Laughs) So they gave it to her.

MM: And she gave it to Bonnie?

SBG: Uh-huh.

MM: Bonnie and [??]. Okay. Let's see. (Looking at photos)

SBG: These are certainly no good.

MM: No. Here's... (Looking at photos) Here's that one.

SBG: That is that.

MM: Yes.

SBG: That's right.

MM: Okay. Let me make a note here. [Pause] (Makes note) Okay.

SBG: Susan Struble has another piece of mine. The latest piece. But I don't have a photograph of it. It's something that I did to please me. And she saw it, and she wanted it. And I said... I hesitated. I didn't want to sell it.

MM: Hm-hm.

SBG: And... Well, she insisted, and wanted it. And she has it. And I don't have a photograph of it. I should get one.

MM: Yeah. Okay. Let me see now. You said Susan Struble has this marble piece.

SBG: Yes.

MM: And that's at Penn State?

SBG: At what?

MM: Is it at the school? Is it at the University?

SBG: It's not connected with the University.

MM: It's not.

SBG: In the University I have three pieces. I have the music plaque. Oh, I had the head of Pattee – bronze.

MM: And The Dancer.

SBG: And The Dancer.

MM: I have photos of those. Who is Pattee?

SBG: The dancer was stone – limestone.

MM: Hm-hm. Okay. (Looking at photos)

SBG: Is there anything else?

MM: Well, there are lots of things here. And they've been identified.

SBG: Hm-hm.

MM: But, I just... Mark, are you recording? I guess he is. [Pause]
I'd like you to sign this, please. It's an oral history release form.

[Pause]

SBG: Well... May be used for research. I suppose. *-----
-----(?-240).

MM: You know, when they – when they make a transcript of this...

SBG: Yeah.

MM: And you'll get... I'm sure you'll get it. And if you don't want anything in there, you say – I don't want this published.

SBG: I see.

MM: You have to say that.

SBG: Certain...

MM: Yeah. Certain things in this interview that you don't want published.

SBG: Yeah. I understand.

MM: So, I believe you have the right to do that.

SBG: Hm-hm.

MM: I'll check with Mark. But I'm pretty sure you have... So if there's anything that is not right. Or you would prefer not to have it known, you just let them know.

SBG: Now, you want me to sign this, too.

MM: Yeah.

SBG: *-----(?-252) my address *-----(?-253).

Interviewee signature. All right.

MM: Oh, we're not going to go over your family background again, because you went through that. But I would just like to know. When did your parents die? Did they die at the same time?

SBG: There were three deaths in two months.

MM: Was that the influenza?

SBG: Between March and May. There were three deaths. So you know what happened. I came out of it not normal.

MM: Well, heartbroken. And then you had to...

SBG: Which left me with various ideas. One *very* strong idea – that I was never going to marry. I was *certainly* not going to have any children.

MM: Weren't you raising your brothers?

SBG: I had three brothers.

MM: Three brothers. And you and Belle had to take care of them.

SBG: Hm-hm.

MM: So your...

SBG: They wanted, I guess it was my Uncle Barsky, he was still there. Though some talk... Oh, there was a woman... I think Duquesne comes to mind, who wanted to adopt one of the boys.

And I think it was my uncle who mentioned it. And I let out a scream. And I said... [Thank you.] And I said... No. Absolutely not. And that was the end of that. We never heard another word.

As it affected my sister, I don't know. Because she never mentioned it between us. And so...

MM: Was this... Were they ill because of the...

SBG: Were they what?

MM: Did your parents become ill because of the influenza?

SBG: No. Hmn-hmn. My mother committed suicide.

MM: Oh!

SBG: You see, I had a sister who was two years younger. And she and I were very, very close. When she became ill, I was the only one who was able to get near her. She was in the hospital. She had... What was it?

MR: Osteomyelitis.

SBG: Osteo... Yes. Osteomyelitis.

It seems that she had been invited to a party. She was what – thirteen years old, or so. She came down the steps and tripped, and nothing happened. And shortly after that, she was screaming with pain.

So far as I know, my parents got, with the help, I suppose of family, the outstanding doctor from the Allegheny Hospital, which was on the North Side. And it left... I think he operated. I'm not sure. But it left her with a limp.

Whether she went to a hospital later, I don't... She was in a hospital, in any case, when she died. No one was at home at the time. A cousin from New York, Betty Portnoy, was visiting... And I remember, I took her to town for some...

No one was at home when my mother got the news. And... we were never told just what happened. But, apparently, she drank something. She committed suicide.

MM: Your mother?

SBG: Hm-hm.

MR: But your father had already died, had he not?

SBG: And Mark... Between March...

MR: And May.

SBG: ...and May – which happened to be my birthday...

MR: Right.

SBG: And Belle's birthday in May, there were three deaths.

MR: Right. I thought that your father had died after Frances, and then your mother committed suicide.

SBG: Of course. Because then he got a woman to come in for the household or something. I don't remember that, except that it was a short sort of episode. And... I suppose a social worker to go over... I don't know. Because after the funeral, we never went back to the house.

MR: After which funeral?

SBG: We went to...

MR: No. After whose funeral? There were three funerals.

[Pause]

SBG: My mother... Wait a minute. No, that's not right. I think it was after my mother's funeral, because my father was still alive.

MR: Oh, really?

SBG: Yeah. After that.

MR: Oh, really?

SBG: And then he landed in the hospital and died there, from what, I don't know.

MR: Yeah. See, Uncle Saul had told me it was the other way. That Frances died, and then your father, then your mother. Is that right?

SBG: So... Look...

MR: All right.

SBG: His story's all together...

MR: (Laughs)

SBG: You know how people are. Each one has a different...

MM: Well, it's tragic. Well, it's a very tragic story.

SBG: But Saul was known for that.

MR: Okay.

SBG: No, no.

MR: I believe you.

MM: So Belle was – Belle was much younger than... This one sister was two years younger than you?

SBG: Yeah. Younger than me. Belle was older.

MM: Oh, Belle was older?

SBG: I came next. My sister came next. And the boys came afterwards.

MM: There were three boys?

SBG: Four boys. Yeah. One was a...

MR: Down's syndrome.

SBG: Yeah. And a social worker took over there. And he was put into an institution, which I visited for years after that. He was so... Mark, he was so close to normal, it just tore the heart out of me.

MR: Yeah. When he was in his 50's or 60's, they put him in independent living. And he finally, I think, died in his 60's of Parkinson's complicated by pneumonia, as I recall. But Aunt Sib used to visit him. And, of course, I didn't know anything about him until I got into medical school. I never heard of him.

SBG: You didn't know much of anything.

MR: Didn't know anything. Never heard of him.

SBG: Your mother didn't... She clammed up. And I wasn't near any of you.

MR: Right.

SBG: So no one knew. Well we were the only ones who knew anything.

MM: Well you both went through a really horrendous period there, where you had the responsibility of the boys. And...

SBG: Well... I don't know how we managed. But... [Pause] Well, there was a point there, we got a housekeeper.

MM: Hm-hm.

SBG: And German... Couldn't speak English.

(Laughter)

SBG: And what happened... At one time, Saul brought home a white mouse from high school, you know. Hector we called it. And we trained Hector to jump from the ceiling – the lights. And we had a ball until the housekeeper said she found him in the pots and pans and things. And she says either Hector goes, or she goes.

(Laughter)

So there was a nice little touch here and there.

MM: Amusement. But it sounds like hard work. I can understand why you didn't want to have children.

SBG: Oh, absolutely! I didn't want to marry.

MM: That clarifies...

SBG: I didn't want to marry, to begin with. I didn't want any *love* business of any kind.

MM: You closed down.

SBG: That's what happened to me.

MM: Hm-hm. Hm-hm.

Mark, I mentioned to her earlier, that they'll – they'll do a transcript of this conversation. And they still have the other one.

If there's anything – if there's anything in the report that she does not want to have published or carried through, she has the right to...

MR: Delete it.

SBG: You know, it's personal. No one would be interested in that.

MM: You don't know. You have no idea.

SBG: Why not?

MM: Well, there... You said we're going to be doing like an art history. So the University is doing this to create an art... You were important in that area. And it's important for them to have this information. So...

SBG: So far... Okay. So far as art is concerned, another picture... I can see another picture.

My father was really an artisan. And I remember watching him make the music cabinet that we had, and I still have. I hung onto that. I remember I must have been, I don't know, six, or whatever. And I remember watching him make that. As a matter of fact, I inherited his toolbox. And I think I still have it.

MR: Hm!

MM: Well, you did mention that in the initial interview. You mentioned that in that first interview. About your father being a cabinetmaker. Yeah. But we can – we can write that in here, you know.

SBG: Sure.

MR: Yeah. We can add it.

MM: What I remember from the interview... She [Susan Melnick] gave me some clues on how... I don't know. This is... She said discuss... I should discuss with you what she would like to cover – what you'd like to cover in this oral history. Here are some questions she gave me.

SBG: Yeah. What's the question?

MM: Okay. How... You did something about... How did you support yourself as an artist?

SBG: Support my brother?

MM: No, no. Yourself. You worked, I understand, in a shop. In a grocery store, wasn't it?

MR: She wanted to know how you supported yourself.

SBG: By my art.

MM: By your art. I understand that. But, you also... You said in the – in that previous interview that you... She raises the question here. Some of her works through the WPA.

SBG: *-----(?-425).

MM: You never worked for...

SBG: Oh, she... Oh, she... How do you support herself as an artist.

MR: Hm-hm.

SBG: (Laughs) Then she asks, does she remember other students? No.

Well, I'll tell you about this episode. I did not support... What came along was the Works Progress Administration.

MM: Yes. Yes.

SBG: When that was started in Pittsburgh, I didn't know much about it, except one of the artists, I think his name was [William L.] McDermott, came to me, and explained that this was a... But in order to be accepted, I had to go on relief. And I said... No. No. Absolutely not!

MM: My impression... What I've read about that Project – that whole WPA Art Project – was that they would contact an artist and offer a stipend. Did they offer you a stipend? It was not relief.

SBG: No.

MM: No?

SBG: So far as I know, as it affected me... I say McDermott, who was an artist, came to me to tell me that this was the set up. But that I had to go on relief in order to apply. And I said... No, I will not.

And... I don't know how much later, a week or something later... Apparently, they had to have a certain number in order to be established. I'm not sure.

But he came to me. He said, we're dropping that, you don't have to go on relief. And this is how I came on the Project.

They paid... You worked five days a week. And they paid a *wonderful* sum at the time – ninety-five dollars a month – which... The average workman of four – a wife, and son, and two children, earned twenty-five dollars a week, and was able to live comfortably.

And here I was, getting ninety-five dollars a month. My rent was fifteen dollars a month. I lived... At that time, the large estates had their garages...

MM: Carriage house.

SBG: There weren't garages then, there were carriages. And they had *wonderful* rooms. And the artists grabbed those, and paid practically nothing for them:

I was able to get just a small one of three – a bathroom and two rooms for fifteen dollars a month. And I was rich, you know.

MM: You were free. You were free to work.

SBG: And, of course, I saved. And I was able to win some money on that. And then along came... My brothers, at the time, were all – went to California.

And I can't tell you when they started to do this, but they sent me eight dollars a week. For a long... This is what I lived on.

MM: I remember your brother Saul talking about you and Belle.

SBG: Saul. I'd like to hear what he had to say.

MM: Oh! He just... He just adored you. And he said his sisters just took care of him. And he's forever grateful. And I, you know, used to see him when he'd come.

SBG: So when they all left, there was just the two of us. And by that time, Belle married.

And we were... We were really not close. We never were. It's a terrible thing. But we never were.

MM: That's the way siblings are.

SBG: We were so different. It was impossible.

MM: Tell me, when they arranged for you to – to work for this Arts Project – WPA... Did you have to give them your artwork?

SBG: That was a period of very... Well not a pleasant... Because there were about... Of eleven, six, I think, artists to begin with.

This McDermott called me to his office, shortly after the beginning of the project. And he became personal, and asked me to go out a weekend with him. What I had to say, I don't remember. But it was not a very happy answer.

MM: Yeah.

SBG: And since then, this group – six of them – five of them... They were Irish and Italians only. I was the only Jew. There happened to be... I still remember her – Helen Carnevale (sp?). And she and I became friends. And we sat together. But there was this group that were very close, and very ugly towards me.

We were on our own, each one creating what he wanted. And you had to make little things so that you could put them on the shelf, and so on.

But I can... The following day, all my things were thumbs down..

MM: Oh! Spite.

SBG: And that's what happened at that time.

MM: Do you remember any of the other artists that were involved in that particular group?

SBG: That particular... Oh, sure. McDermott. Oh, I could look... This big Irishman. He looked like a... I remember him very well. He had something in the Art Alliance [Associated Artists of Pittsburgh]. He... None of them went very far.

MM: They didn't go very far.

SBG: Not one. There was a little Italian fellow who had cancer, I think in his leg or something, who died. He was quiet. But the rest were girls and... When I think about them – very ugly towards me.

MM: Well, you know... Well that...

SBG: I think because I was Jewish.

MM: Oh, I don't think so. I don't think they offered it to...

SBG: I don't know.

MM: No. That's not the case. You know a lot of very well known people were in that program. Ben Shahn. Alice Neel. Oh, countless, countless people. And every time I read about that, it saved their lives. Just that it, you know, gave you freedom to do something, since you had some backing. A lot of people went on to do many things.

SBG: That was that period. Very bad. By the way, I kept a diary of everything that happened to me during that period.

It happened that this – this girl who worked for the Pittsburgh Press who interviewed me in the past... We talked, and I told her what was...

She said... I want to make that public. I want you to blah-blah-blah. I said... No. No. It will affect something... It will affect artists. No. Hmn-hmn.

And what I did, I tore up the entire thing. I didn't want anyone to know it. But it was a very bad period.

Ironically, later, a good friend of ours – John Robb – who is an attorney, and who was in Harrisburg during that period...

MM: Yeah.

SBG: I didn't know it. If I had known, and just gotten in touch with him, the whole thing could have been turned around. But... That's what happened.

MM: Do you know what I forgot to do? I was supposed to say at the beginning who we are and what we're doing.

MR: You can just say it here. And they can – they can rearrange it. It doesn't matter.

MM: Okay. We're taping on May 31st, at Dr. Mark Rubenstein's home in Walnut Creek. And I am interviewing Sibyl Barsky Grucci.

And my name is Maggie McElligott. And I'm an old friend of Mark's – one of his oldest friends. I live in San Francisco. And we are starting the second tape.

MR: Not yet. We're still on the first one.

MM: Okay. Now. Let's see. She says you were teaching at a time.

SBG: Oh! Now, wait.

MM: Was that so?

SBG: I was teaching only one semester. What happened was that Samuel Rosenberg who was a very well-known artist and professor at Carnegie Tech, whom I knew... It seems that he recommended me to the director of the Irene Kaufmann Settlement.

MM: Uh-huh.

SBG: And the director phoned, and asked me if I would take a summer class. And I thanked him, and I said I didn't think so. I don't think I could do two things at one time.

And he was insistent. And I said -- well, I'll try it. And I did. And I had a *very* rewarding experience there.

Oh! I said, now I'll accept it on one condition -- that there's no interference in the way I teach.

MM: Right.

SBG: And he said -- anything you say. And then I had this very, very interesting experience. I had children from nine to thirteen -- good age.

MR: Hm-hm.

SBG: In the autumn, he called me again. And he said -- the kids are asking for you, Miss Barsky, would you... And I had to be very... I said I can't do it. I'd like to. I can't do two things at one time. And that was it.

However, I mentioned Katz.

MM: Yes. Lois Katz Blaufeld.

SBG: She had a daughter who was interested. We were friends. And at a party she took me aside, and she asked me would I take her daughter. Again, I hesitated. And then... Do you remember? And her husband -- a well-known attorney.

MM: Nathan.

SBG: And I did. And everything was going very well, until... What was her name? Do I have her name down?

MM: Lois Katz.

SBG: Lois. Exactly. Until Lois, I forget, she said she wanted to do the mural – we were talking about painting – on the wall in her bedroom. I was excited about that. Her progress was good.

She came to tell me her mother would not permit it. I was surprised. She was supposed to be a very intelligent woman – her mother.

I was so upset. That was it. I didn't want any more parts of anything. And that was it.

MM: So...

SBG: So I didn't really teach. I mean, it was just...

MM: Well, she was a student. But... She stopped.

SBG: Yeah. Lois.

MM: Did you have any... Do you remember any of the other students that were in that summer session?

SBG: I had a student in State College. Same... Same thing. Same thing! The mother... She was way beyond her years, however.

As it turned out, I knew what happened – she was gay. At fourteen, she knew everything that was in the New York Times, politically, economically. I was amazed.

MM: This was your student?

SBG: This was a student in State College. She left for New York. And it's a kind of a mixed up thing – her background. She didn't evolve in any profession.

But I remember she came visiting. And I saw her. And she was dressed in a rather half-boy and half-girl, and a cap. And... That was it. And her mother was a teacher. You explain that.

MM: There's no explanation. That's nature. That's just the nature of the person.

SBG: You might have read. Her husband's name was Morse (sp?). He used to write for the New Republic very, very often. A very good friend of ours. Southerner, whose father was a professor in the South somewhere.

MM: Yeah. But... So my question was... To get back to the WPA for a minute. Did you have to... You were supposed to do small pieces. Were you supposed to... They displayed these small pieces?

SBG: Oh! Oh!

MM: Were they for sale?

SBG: No. Then I went into large pieces.

MM: Yes.

SBG: And... I gave them... Where they ended up, I don't know.

MM: Oh, so they did. They did take the work?

SBG: Oh, sure! Oh, sure!

MM: Yeah. That's what I understand. That they have... They have hundreds and hundreds.

SBG: They're probably in schools and in playgrounds and in...

MM: That's right. That's possible

SBG: But I never did know. Except that it did have some literature – some letters from some of the officials who were very much interested in what I was doing.

MM: She said... She's asking if... Did they ever commission you to do a work?

SBG: No. Hmn-hmn.

MM: No. No. You just had to work on your own.

SBG: Hm-hm. That's right.

MM: And they would take the material.

SBG: They supplied the material.

MM: They supplied the material. And the stipend. Yeah.

I remember from the first interview, that you went to Carnegie Tech, but you left. You didn't like it.

SBG: I had a checkered career.

MM: Yeah.

SBG: The painting class was so large. And I had just started. I never saw the professor.

MM: Uh-huh. That's difficult.

SBG: And the end of that season came along. And I get a B. And I looked at that. And I thought – why should I sit in a class and never see a professor. The hell with it! And I dropped out. There was just no point to it. What you started was with charcoal.

MM: Yes. Typical.

SBG: Roman heads and...

MM: Yes. Yes. So, was that the only...

SBG: So I didn't get any instruction. And as for carving... I'm really a carver. Because I didn't do little things in order to do big things. I attacked it... Whatever it was.

MM: The material. Hm-hm.

SBG: Yeah. But they didn't teach that.

MM: No. No.

SBG: At that time.

MM: No. No. But it's a... It's a college, isn't it? Or a university – Carnegie?

SBG: That's right.

MM: Yeah. So in most universities, the teachers do very little teaching.

SBG: They...

MM: Especially art.

SBG: Maggie...

MM: Yeah.

SBG: There was... You sent me... You and Yvonne sent me a book. What was his name? He was a... Not Yugoslavian. But a...

MR: Oh, yes.

SBG: What's his name?

MR: Yeah. I know who you mean.

We saw... We visited his city. I'll get it from Yvonne. I know who you mean. Yeah.

SBG: Well, he... He was in the States. And I would have *loved* to have been an apprentice of his. I *loved* his work.

MM: Hm-hm.

SBG: But I just looked at his things. And, of course, I couldn't... Another thing, you know *The Dancer*...

MM: Yes.

SBG: Another bad experience. Did I tell you about it?

MM: No.

SBG: There was an international American artist – international – right at the time of the War – Second World War [possibly the 1939 World's Fair Exhibition of Contemporary Art]. And that engulfed the entire world.

And I sent in my piece. I sent in The Dancer. And it was accepted. And I was the only one in Pittsburgh who was accepted. And the telephone started ringing. And the press wanted stories, you know. It was a terribly exciting time.

MM: Of course.

SBG: But me. I was up in the clouds somewhere. And the day after, I get a telegram... To hold – letter follows. To tell me that a Philadelphian, who was not accepted, and who had political power was accepted and my piece was taken out.

End of Tape 1 of 1 – Side 1 of 2

Tape 1 of 1 – Side 2 of 2

SBG: So that I got this. And then another letter followed. And it had to do with one of the committees in Philadelphia...

MM: Uh-huh.

SBG: ...who is a very well-known artist. And his name... I can't, at the moment, remember [Wharton Esherick]. And he was incensed with the whole thing. He said he's going to fight it, and do what he can. Apparently, he wasn't successful.

In the meantime, he also wrote and said... Why don't you come to Philadelphia. We'd love to have you here. You'd have more opportunities. And... And so on. And that was the last I heard.

MM: He invited you, and then didn't follow through.

SBG: Yes. Talk about my hearing. (Laughs) See what I mean. I never know.

MM: Yeah. Yeah.

SBG: It has to do with certain sounds.

MM: Right. Vibration.

SBG: In the meantime, this artist, whose name I used to see very, very often in the New York... His widow set up a museum of his work in one of the little – one of the little towns outside of Philadelphia [Paoli, PA] – artist towns.

I... It'll come to me. But I can't...

MM: And he's a sculptor or a painter?

SBG: He was a painter. Hm-hm. And that's what happened.

MM: Not Wyeth? It wasn't Wyeth?

SBG: You know, Maggie, after that...I couldn't work.

MM: Oh, it's so discouraging. Oh!

SBG: It was the most *awful* thing.

MM: Was that artist, by any chance, Wyeth – Andrew Wyeth?

SBG: No. No. I wasn't in touch with him after that. I didn't answer. It was just nothing.

MM: Hm. Well let's see what else she wants to know. [Pause]

So you, actually, from what you've been telling me, you didn't have many teachers. You worked on your own.

SBG: Hm-hm.

MM: And what influences... What... What... Whose work influenced you? I thought I saw in one piece Brancusi might have had an influence.

SBG: You saw what?

MM: In one of the photographs of your work...

SBG: Yeah.

MM: ...I thought I saw an influence of Brancusi.

SBG: Really?

MM: Yeah. Was there anybody that you were looking at...

SBG: Oh! The first thing I did... And a niece of mine bought that. And I never showed it. Why? Because later, when I got to know about artists, sculptors, it looked exactly like a piece by the Italian – handsome guy – what was his name? A Jew.

SBG: You would know. He did elongated...

MM: Oh, not Giacometti? No.

SBG: Not Giacometti. I can't think of his name. It doesn't matter. It looks so much like his...

MM: Yeah.

SBG: I never showed it. Because it looked as though I had copied.

MM: Ah! Uh-huh.

SBG: And my niece has that.

MM: Modigliani [pronounced Mo-dig-liani]?

MR: Oh! Modigliani [pronounced Mo-dig-liani].

SBG: Oh! Mo-dilliani [pronounced Mo-dill-iani].

MM: Mo-dilliani [pronounced Mo-dill-iani]. Not – dig.

MR: Exactly!

SBG: ...dilliani.

MM: Yeah. I know the one you mean. I think there's a photo here.

SBG: Yes.

MM: So you really liked his work?

SBG: By the time I saw... I had already done this.

MM: Ah...! Okay.

SBG: And then later, I had heard, you know, got to know him.

MM: Yes. Yes. Very distinctive.

SBG: And I wouldn't show it for that reason.

MM: Well. What was it? Did you do it out of stone?

SBG: Don't you have a picture of it?

MM: I think I do. (Looking at photos) Let's see if I have it here. Well let's continue, and I'll try to find it.

This is The Dancer.

SBG: Yeah.

MM: (Looking at photos) Okay. You have this piece here, don't you?

MR: Those are just some things that I wanted you to ask about.

MM: The monkey? Is the monkey in here?

MR: No. She had a monkey.

MM: Oh, that's why she has a sculpture of a monkey.

MR: And also... She hasn't told you about the time she spent in Europe.

MM: Yes, she did. It's in that...

MR: Okay. Okay.

MM: Yeah. I love that part. You know, we have the same birthday, and we have the same attitude about time.

SBG: You?

MM: Yeah. We share a birthday.

SBG: (Laughs)

MM: And we have the same attitude about time. And the other thing I liked was when you talked about going to Europe.

SBG: (Laughs)

MM: Set you up. I loved that. I loved that. I could relate to that. Yeah. You did talk about your trip to Europe. And you went – you went with two young men.

SBG: Did I mention in there that when I reached twenty-one, I was given a check. Do you know what I did with it?

MM: You went to Europe.

SBG: I spent *every* penny. (Laughs)

MM: (Laughs) Great! That must have been fabulous. That must have been a fabulous trip.

SBG: It was a release.

MM: Oh, absolutely! And it – it frees you up. It makes you stronger, that you can do something like that. That's wonderful.

MR: Were you familiar with [??]?

SBG: What's that?

MR: Were you familiar with him?

SBG: Oh, is that him? Of course.

MM: Oh, yeah. That's a famous one.

SBG: Of course. Is he still...

MM: I don't think so. That's from our...

SBG: There were a group of Jewish *-----(?-080) painters...

MM: Yeah. And sculptors.

SBG: During the late... What was it? 1900's.

MM: Hm-hm.

SBG: Yeah. *Modigliani -----(?-082). And so and so, and so and so.

MM: *-----(?-083).

SBG: Oh, sure! Did you see this?

MM: No, I haven't seen it.

SBG: I'll show it to you a in a minute. There's one guy, I never did like.

(Looking at photos) Oh, my! Take a look. I'll look at this later. I don't want to take your time. (Looking at photos).

MR: Did the Yugoslavian artist... Did his name start with an 'M'? I can't remember either.

SBG: It's getting worse and worse, Mark.

MR: Yeah. I know. Maybe you ought to get a hearing aid.

SBG: (Laughs)

MM: (Laughs) Is this a sculptor that she's trying...

MR: Sculptor. Yeah. Yeah. His work was wonderful.

MM: Hm-hm. [Pause] That's okay. I know his work. All right. Now let's see if we can get back to this.

[Pause]

MM: Oh...! Okay. When did you leave Pittsburgh?

SBG: Mestrovich [Ivan Mestrovich (1883-1962), Yugoslavian Sculptor].
Exactly. The one who was here. He was a Yugoslavian.

MR: Right.

MM: And you wanted to study with him, but you *-----(?-117).

SBG: I would have *loved* it.

MM: Yeah. Was he in Pittsburgh?

SBG: He was a beautiful carver. Just beautiful. Of course, he did religious things. But never mind that. He... Yeah.

MM: (Phew!) Got it. Thank you, Yvonne.

SBG: I could have thought of that at three in the morning.

MR: (Laughs)

MM: When did you leave Pittsburgh?

SBG: 1950.

MM: And where did you go?

MR: State College. Oh, she means before that. When did you go to Europe?

SBG: Oh!

MM: She was twenty-one.

MR: Twenty-one. So that was in...

MM: 1926.

SBG: When did I leave Pittsburgh?

MR: Yeah. Well, it's two separate questions. When did you come back from Europe?

MM: You were twenty-one. How many months were you there?

SBG: I don't know. I stayed there. (Laughs) Until my money ran out.

MR: (Laughs)

MM: (Laughs)

SBG: What was it? A month or two, or whatever. I came back clean.

MR: And then when did you go to New York?

SBG: [Pause] Who knows. The time is all... I was in... After that, I was in and out of New York, I don't know how many times, back and forth and back and forth.

What I'd do was take the train. There was a special train from Pittsburgh to New York. Go to my uncle's. Drop my things there. Take to the city. Walk around. I never took a bus. And at six o'clock, I went back to the shop. No.

When I got there, I'd go to the shop. And they'd ask me to do some modeling of their furs.

MR: What kind of a shop was it?

SBG: It was a pelt expert.

MM: Furrier.

SBG: And they made fur coats. And I learned a lot about fur. He would inspect the pelts when they came. And I'd sit right next to him, and he'd show me. He'd pick one up. He'd shake it and blow it. And he'd say... Now this little animal had a tough time. This little animal didn't have enough to eat. And there were scars in the skin, and so on. And so he showed me that.

I came one year, and they were doing skunks. Well, you know, a skunk has a white strip down the middle.

MM: Yeah. Really.

SBG: Well what they do is, cut out the strip.

MM: Hm-hm.

SBG: And it was on the floor – piles of it, and use the other parts.

MM: Hm-hm.

SBG: When I saw this white stuff, I picked it up, and I had an idea. I thought that I'd love to make a little cape – white cape. So I picked up pieces and started to put them together.

And Johnny was the only one who was interested. He said – what are you doing. I waited. At noon, when the men left the machines to stitching, I thought I'd stitch one piece to another.

So Johnny came along. What are you doing? And I told him. He said – give it to me, tell me what to do. He stitched the whole thing. And then he said – go down to the fourth floor and have them put a...

MM: Lining?

SBG: ...backing.

MM: Uh-huh.

SBG: And I did. He put a silk thing in with my initials. And there was a cape. And I said, "Johnny, why don't you do this? This is a terrific item."

Well, no one there had a brain about design. So nothing happened. But he was honest enough to tell me the next year I was there, they could have made a fortune on it.

MM: They didn't know how to present it.

SBG: And I had the little cape. I don't know what happened to it.

MM: Did they actually make fur coats out of the black part of the skunk?

SBG: Oh, they... You know what... Well, it's a long, long story how they put... Do you know that they wet the pelts and stretch them. And the one who knows how to stretch earns more money...

MM: Yes.

SBG: ...than the others. They nail the wet pelts to a big board...

MM: Hm-hm.

SBG: ...after they stretch it. So that it dries bigger.

MM: Hm-hm.

MR: You should tell Maggie about this family. They were all furriers. There were... How many brothers? How many brothers in the Portnoy family? That was on her mother's side. How many brothers? Five brothers?

SBG: Yes. And they were furriers. Although two of them were... Well, no. One of them married. Max. There were four, really.

And Max is the one who married the daughter of the owner of the second largest tin can factory in the United States. And they had a son, and no one knows what happened to him. They're out of touch.

And the rest of them went to Florida. The only one who's there, Mark, is Dorothy. Betty's daughter. She's still there.

MR: But her uncle was a furrier.

SBG: My mother's brother.

MR: And his four sons. They had this... That's what they did.

SBG: And he's the one... You know, he sent me... Little daughter, "Tochterel." [Yiddish for "little daughter"]. He says, what is a... He could have been a very rich man, Mark.

But this is what he said to me. He said, "What does a man need? If he has a roof over his head. And he has food enough to eat. Why does he have to have all that money?"

And he was known for his generosity. Anyone there who needed money, knew to go to Shmuel.

And when the boys grew up, he no longer could sign his check. It had to be countersigned. So things changed.

But he was a wonderful man. You didn't know him.

MR: I barely knew him.

MM: Well, he had a philosophy, didn't he?

MR: Didn't they ask about the Y? And she never...

MM: She wants to know about the... YM/WHA. The Irene Kaufmann Settlement.

MR: No, no. That's in Pittsburgh. But we're talking about the New York one.

MM: Oh, yes! Oh, on Bellefield Avenue.

MR: No. No. The New York one.

SBG: Oh, the New York one? The one who directed the Y here in Pittsburgh, was transferred to the 92nd Street Y. And on his, something or other birthday, Belle and I went to see him.

MR: Passamaneck [Herman Passamaneck (1892-) administrator of the Young Men's Hebrew Association (YMHA) in Pittsburgh.

SBG: In New York?

MR: Was that Passamaneck?

SBG: No! Um... [Pause] Bill... Oh, shucks. In fact, he used to date your mother.

MR: Hm!

SBG: Bill Kolodney [William Kolodney, who served as the 92nd Street Y's education director from 1934 until 1969].

MM: He was the director of the Y?

MR: The 92nd Street Y.

SBG: And it's still a wonderful... You know it.

MM: Oh, yes.

SBG: Well, we had the same thing on Bellefield Avenue. It was a wonderful center.

MM: Uh-huh.

SBG: Artists.

MM: Writers would come.

SBG: Writers. Dancing. Music. Well you know, Mark.

In fact, his mother was head of the committee to choose artists for the season. They had *wonderful* concerts. In fact, Artur Rubinstein, who never played in the United States, played at the Y for the first time in this country.

MM: Really?

SBG: Yes.

MM: And who else... Who were some of the other people who -- who would speak there? Or writers who would speak there? Or other -- other musicians?

SBG: Oh! Oh, so many!

MR: Nathan Milstein. Joseph Segreti(sp?).

SBG: *----- Janus(?-227).

MM: Can you remember...

MR: Jaime Laredo. Segovia. Artists who had never been in recital in Pittsburgh. They may have played with the symphony. But they had never been in recital, came to the Y. And that was the committee of which my mother was the chair for years and years. Paul Draper. Larry Adler. Paul Robeson.

MM: The same crew that would come to New York.

SBG: Oh, yes! What about the pianist... The German pianist who turned out to be a Nazi?

MR: Oh, yes.

SBG: He was marvelous. Can you think of his name?

MR: Not Casadesus [Robert Casadesus (1899-1972), French composer and pianist]. No. Although he was there, also.

SBG: What about the cellist?

MM: Pablo Casals?

MR: Oh, yes. Casals. Yes. Everybody was there. Everybody.

SBG: Everybody. What about Adler?

MR: Yeah. Larry Adler. And Paul Draper.

SBG: The one who played the...

MM: Harmonica.

SBG: Harmonica. Classical music.

MM: Yes. Yes. I remember him. I remember him.

SBG: What about his mother who performed? What was her name? [Pause]
Hm... I thought of it the other day. You know.

MR: I'm anxious to know.

SBG: You would know if... Oh, they were marvelous performers.

What about theater? We used to get it right from Broadway. Because...

MM: Hm-hm.

SBG: Oh, what about chamber music? You know most people. A good many people don't go to chamber music. They had a marvelous audience in Pittsburgh for chamber music.

MM: All right. Let me see, now. Is that part of the Irene Kaufmann Settlement?

MR: It's a different place.

MM: That's a different place. What was the Irene Kaufmann Settlement? What was that?

SBG: Oh! That was set up by the Kaufmann family. Edgar Kaufmann... The Kaufmann's Department Store.

MM: Yes. I know the name. Yes.

SBG: Now there was this Uncle Henry that they talked about, who was in New York. And he's the one who supplied the money for the Pittsburgh Kaufmann – Irene Kaufmann Settlement.

By the way, do you know how it was named?

MM: No: Who was Irene Kaufmann?

SBG: It seems that a daughter, I don't know of what generation, whose name was Irene, fell in love with her Black chauffeur. And, of course, it was not acceptable.

MM: Hm-hm.

SBG: And she committed suicide.

MM: Ah...!

SBG: And the building was named after her – Irene Kaufmann Settlement.

MR: Tell Maggie about the Settlement – what it did. It was on Center Avenue in the Hill District of Pittsburgh, on the Hill. Which was the – primarily the Jewish – which then later became Black neighborhood.

SBG: Do you know, Mark, that that area in the 1800's, I think, was considered a very exclusive area at one time?

MM: Because of the steel mills.

SBG: That was before...

MM: Yeah. Before you were born.

SBG: Then it became Settlement *-----(?-272). By the way, the German-Jews, who emigrated early in the 1800's, were the ones who really set up the settlements.

MM: Did they also work in the steel mills? Did they come from the steel area of Germany?

SBG: The steel mills, so far as Pittsburgh, was usually Poles, Yugoslavians...

MR: Not Germans.

SBG: Italians.

MM: Italians worked in the steel mills, really?

SBG: Altoona, which was a center... Well, that was made up of Italians and...

MR: The Eastern Europeans.

SBG: Yeah.

MM: Hm-hm.

SBG: To this day... It's funny. The generations, I look at the names... Dr. So and so... You see Italian names. You see... This is third or fourth generation. And, by the way, it's a *Bible -----(?-283). *Very Catholic.*

MM: Really?

SBG: Oh! Saint Mary. Saint... I don't know how many institutions, high schools are named after priests, and so on and so on.

MM: And this is in Pittsburgh?

MR: Altoona, which is about a hundred and twenty miles from Pittsburgh.

SBG: By the way, Altoona is much different than it was many years ago.

MR: Right.

MM: Who started the redevelopment of Pittsburgh? I mean, there was a big change. What was it – in the '60's? Who started that? Where did the money come from? This was after the steel industry went kaput. After the steel industry left Pittsburgh, who revitalized the city?

SBG: I don't know.

MM: You don't know.

SBG: I don't think it... I think they have been losing population. In any case, one of the professors who left Penn State and took a job at the University of Pittsburgh loves it.

I hear that people like it because... Like Pittsburgh, it's not too big. It's friendly. It has cultural things. And he's very, very happy there.

MM: Yeah. I've been... I've been reading about it for about twenty years now.

SBG: I've been hearing about it..

MM: Tell me something. Were you a Girl Scout? I can't believe it.

SBG: Yeah.

MM: How did you get to be a Girl Scout?

MR: (Laughs)

SBG: I got to be a Girl Scout. Jessie and I became Girl Scouts.

MR: Jessie -----(?-308).

SBG: I was almost... What do they call it?

MM: An Eagle Scout?

SBG: Uh-huh.

MR: (Laughs) Grand Poobah. (Laughs)

SBG: Oh, sure!

MM: You went camping?

SBG: Absolutely! I learned how to rescue a swimmer. I learned the Morse Code. I learned how to make a fire if you're in a desert, or blah, blah, blah. You know.

MR: (Laughs)

MM: Well we share a birthday, but we don't share the outdoors. (Laughs)

MR: (Laughs)

MM: So tell me about your monkey. How come you had a monkey?

SBG: Huh! Well, my brothers were forever saying – come and visit. And I couldn't. You know. Financial, whatever.

I finally, because somebody related was driving, I got there. They occupied a little house. And... I'd gone into the living room. In the middle of the living room was a chair; attached to the chair was a rhesus monkey.

MM: Hm!

SBG: I loved it. I stayed for several months. And I gave it back to the zoo. They're susceptible to pneumonia. And I didn't want to take it back to Pittsburgh.

MM: Hm-Hm. But you did a sculpture piece of it.

SBG: Hm-hm.

MM: Okay.

MR: She ought to talk more about those folks, too.

MM: Oh, yeah. (Looking at photos) I don't see the name... Esther... Who is Esther?

MR: Esther Phillips.

SBG: Oh, Esther! You know, a book was written about her. Terrible book. Anyway...

MM: She was an artist?

SBG: Yeah. I don't know how I met her. Oh! At the Y. It was a Center. And she was alone. And I remember she – she hated her mother. She said all the kids got educated, but they didn't approve of her being an artist. And... She was eccentric, sure.

And one day, she knocked on my door, and she said, "Could I stay with you?" And I thought... Well, I had nothing. Okay. And so we shared what we had. I don't know how long it lasted. But it was very interesting.

For example... [Pause] She would... She did water colors. And she could make a watercolor in half an hour. She had that kind of temperament.

MM: Hm-hm.

SBG: She'd go to the Y, and somehow sell it for fifteen dollars, walk to town from Oakland, buy a hat for fifteen dollars, and walk back.

MM: She couldn't wait to spend that money. Huh? Did she go very far with her artwork? Was she... Was she well-known?

SBG: Oh, sure!

MM: Did she have many shows?

SBG: Oh, she showed with the Alliance [Associated Artists of Pittsburgh].

MM: Uh-huh.

SBG: And... I really... What else to tell you about her.

MM: Did you show at the Alliance [Associated Artists of Pittsburgh]?

SBG: Yeah.

MM: You did.

SBG: Hm-hm. She couldn't paint. I don't think. She couldn't sustain the painting.

MM: She had to do something quickly.

SBG: She had to do watercolor. As a matter of fact, I have four of them. Do I? In my apartment. One was of an interior, I recognize that. One she did when she was normal.

MM: Did she... Why? Did she have a breakdown or something? Did she break down?

SBG: She had the breakdown in New York. She left... And I... That was it. I hadn't been... through a mutual friend who was just as wacky.

SBG: Merle Hoyleman was her dear friend. And when Esther was in an institution, she would send her work to Merle. Merle would come to me to price things. And Merle would sell them – try to sell them.

So... I have... You said four. I could only think of one, two, three. Yeah. I have four of hers, showing different periods.

The one that's the most interesting of all, would be for a psychiatrist who would love to have a look at it. She did this when she was in an institution of what she saw there. I wish you could see it. I don't know what to do with that. It should be preserved.

MM: Well, you talk to Mark about that. He'll help you with those things.

SBG: Hm-hm. That's about Esther.

MM: Who was Sam Rosenberg? He's an artist. Is he an artist – Sam Rosenberg?

SBG: Oh, Sam was a good friend of ours.

MM: Hm-hm.

SBG: And... You know. He was in the International [Carnegie International, the exhibition series established by Andrew Carnegie at the Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh, in 1896]. You know that we had an International Show once a year. Carnegie left money.

MM: Oh! That's right. That's right.

SBG: And that International Show was something spectacular. They'd get critics from all over the world. Paintings from all over the world. And... Flags... Various flags flying – opening night. It was something to see.

MM: And did Sam show at those shows?

SBG: He was accepted. Yeah.

MM: Did you show at that one?

SBG: He and, I think, Bill Wolfson [William Wolfson, 1894-1966], who did an etching of me that was in the International.

MM: Was Sam Filner?

SBG: Oh, Filner was a friend of mine. Who won the – what – in Paris. Yeah. For a year. And... He corresponded. And when he came back, he told me all about it.

It was a June hot day. And I remember we sat on the floor, and he was telling me of his experiences. And while he was talking, I got a bunch of clay together. And I didn't have any tools at the time, so I used a little paring knife. And it turned out to be the best thing I ever did.

And... With that, we exchanged. He did a painting of me. And I gave him the head.

MM: Let's see. (Looking at photos) Is it in here?

SBG: And it's the best thing I ever did. As a matter of fact, one of the critics wrote to tell me to express his views. Very flattering. I think you have it. And it's a good one.

MM: I'm looking for the list. Where's the list? (Looking for list) It must be here. But you gave it to him? Right?

SBG: Either that, or Susan has it. Somebody has it. It has to be here.

MM: It has to be here. That's the original. Oh, I don't know what happened to that list. When Mark comes back, we'll ask him. It's not here. It's amazing! Well, we want to... We should finish up.

SBG: Don't you have it?

MM: I must have it. I'll wait till Mark comes. I'm sure I have it. Let's see. Mary Marohnic [Mary Shaw Marohnic].

SBG: Well... What about Marohnic?. I can't tell you much. She was an artist friend.

MM: Not much.

SBG: See, I can't tell about personalities. I was pretty much alone.

MM: Hm-hm. When you went to New York, did you go to galleries and to the museums?

SBG: Hah! This is where I spent my days.

MM: You did?

SBG: All day long, until six o'clock, when I went back to the shop. We all went home. And then at the table, they wanted to know where I was, or what did I do.

And there was only one of them – Jack – Johnny – again. He said, “Could I come with you?” And he did. And we did. He had been to places he never knew anything about. And he loved it. Yeah. I was in and out for years.

MM: It sparks you, doesn't it/

Well, I think -- I think we got most of...

SBG: Maggie, it's so good of you to do this.

MM: Well, I find it very interesting.

SBG: Did you?

MM: Yes, very interesting.

SBG: It's a lot of work.

MM: I'm not working. (Laughs)

SBG: So...

MM: If you can get your... I don't know how long you're going to be here. But, I'm sure you have to go back to Pittsburgh and get your things together. If you can find any of the newspaper articles, or reviews...

SBG: Yeah.

MM: ...or any of that material... I think...

SBG: Well, I had some. And I think he sent it to her.

MM: Oh! Oh, he may have done that.

SBG: I did have some letters, I think.

MM: Uh-huh.

SBG: He must have sent them.

MM: Okay.

SBG: Because, I don't have... He cleaned out everything.

MM: Oh! Okay. Okay. He probably did that.

SBG: And there's, of course, a lot that...

[Pause]

MM: Well, you certainly worked hard. I can see that. Did a lot of work.

SBG: They're terrible pictures.

MM: Don't be concerned about that. I'm sure... Oh, here's the list -- it's right on top.

SBG: I didn't want to do this at all. I didn't think it was necessary.

MM: I think we're finished. I think we got just what we can get.

MM: Okay. It's number thirty-eight. (Looking at photos)

SBG: There it is. Isn't that it?

MM: I don't know. Wait a minute.

SBG: Yeah. That's it.

MM: That's it. Let me see if there's a number on the back. Let's see.

SBG: This is another guy I turned down. He was interested in family, I guess, or whatever. I did see him in Philadelphia, shortly after he was married. Doing designs for the newspaper, or something.

MM: Doing layouts.

SBG: After he... And that's the last I saw him.

MM: Well he had to make a living.

SBG: Yeah, that's it. I did that with a *-----(?-540).

MM: *-----(?-541).

SBG: You can't see the cuttings.

MM: Hm-hm. Hm-hm.

SBG: You know photography; sculpture is very difficult to photograph. Very difficult. You need an expert.

MM: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. It's very tricky to do sculpture pieces.

Well... I hope I managed to get her to answer some of the questions.

MM: These two were not identified. But, this is a self-portrait. And this is Belle. I thought this was a self-portrait. And I tried to... I straightened out some of the numbers with the photographs.

?: Okay. Good. *Objects of Virtue(?-581). Where's that?

?: That's our next show. At the gallery in Bedford.

MR: Did she tell you anything about Sam Filner?

MM: Yes, she did.

SBG: What did Frankie have to say?

MR: He said hello to you. And he sent you his love. And his... He was looking for Barbara's information.

SBG: He calls you every once in a while?

MR: Yeah. We stay in touch.

SBG: How nice.

MM: Okay. Is there anything else? Let's see her notes. Is there anything else I haven't done? Probably. [Pause] (Looking at notes)

I think you'll fill out that one part where she has the right to...

MR: Yeah. Sure. I can do that.

MM: I think we covered it. Well, you know, she wants to know what influences does she see in her work. She didn't have important teachers. She did... She did go to New York quite a few times, from what she says she was gallery-going and museum-going. And so...

MR: And there has to have been influences there.

MM: Oh! Absolutely. You can see certain – certain things there. But, the only one she mentioned was Giacometti. But he didn't influence her. She had done the piece before.

MR: Modigliani [pronounced Mo-dig-liani].

MM: Oh, Modigliani. I'm sorry. Mo-dill-iani.

MR: ...dill-iani. Mo-dill-iani. Yeah. Forget the 'g'.

MM: Well, who did this? That's not her piece is it?

MR: No, no, no. That was done -- commissioned for Yvonne's mother.

MM: Uh-huh. Okay. This is...

MR: And what did she say about Mary Marohnic?

MM: Nothing. She said nothing.

MR: Aunt Sib, didn't you know Mary Marohnic?

SBG: Sure. But I... What can I say about her?

MR: I don't know. You can say more than I can. (Laughs) We have that one picture of Victor De Sabato that she did.

SBG: That's right. She... When he was visiting. She died recently.

MR: Really? Okay. Were there any other artists of moment in Pittsburgh that you can recall?

SBG: Well there was Phil Olsen(sp?), who did a etching of me. By the way it's on... You don't see it? You didn't see it?

MR: Oh! Oh, yes. I did see that.

SBG: That was in the International.

MR: Right. Yes. Yes. No, no, no. I did see that. I have a picture of it some place.

SBG: Phil Olsen(sp?). There was another one who did a charcoal of me. I have it.

MR: I thought that was Sam Filner who did that.

SBG: You didn't see it. No, this is a charcoal thing that I had in the folder.

MR: Did we send it to Pittsburgh?

SBG: That's right.

MR: Okay. So... Pittsburgh has it.

SBG: I can't remember his name.

MR: Okay.

?: Did I interrupt you in the middle of a sentence?

?: I remember that she...

MM: Oh, I may have interrupted.

MR: (Laughs)

MM: It's my style. (Laughs) But I think I got most of it. I think everything's here. She wants...

SBG: So she sent instructions.

MM: Well she's trying to help me. I'm not, you know... She doesn't know I'm a great interviewer.

MR: Well, yeah. But you don't know what things that she has in her schedule that she'd like you to cover.

MM: Yeah, I know. I know. Well, I know what she was looking for. But... I think this is a little more information on it.

MR: Yeah.

MM: But as for, you know, the specifics, it's difficult. Okay. So I'll leave all this with you.

MR: All right.

MM: You... According to Sib, that you went through her things. So do you have reviews of some of her work? Or...

MR: All of the written material as regards her work went to Pittsburgh.

MM: Oh, okay.

MR: Everything... We just... Everything put in a great big box and sent it to Pittsburgh.

MM: Oh, okay. Okay.

MR: The only thing that I did was I tried to enumerate the things about which she spoke.

MM: Yeah.

MR: So that we had some idea of the body of her – of her work.

MM: Right. Well this, you know, this is... You've got these numbered. It would be helpful... I don't know. Are you sending this back, too – the photos?

MR: I don't know. Whatever they want. I don't care.

MM: Okay. Well, I don't think I have to do anything more, really.

MR: Okay.

MM: I might send her a note. I might do that. But it might be helpful if each one of these was...

MR: Numbered.

MM: No. They're numbered. But in relationship to your list. You have a list. And some of them didn't jibe, and I changed the number.

MR: Okay.

MM: So, for the most part, it would be helpful if there was just a title. And then she told me about some of these things that they couldn't identify in here. And what they were made out of, you know. The self-portrait. Self-portrait. And that's your mother.

MR: Yeah. That's... That's plaster – the one on the right. Yeah. My sister has that. The one on the left, she still has in her apartment.

MM: Yeah. That's a nice piece. I thought it was her. I recognized it. And this one, she said...

MR: That's marble. Yeah.

MM: Yeah. It's marble. So you know that. And she said this is highly carved. But the photos are not good. You know. They're just copies of photos.

MR: It's on the wall.

MM: Yeah. Okay. So if I were you, I would simply go through and check the numbers with this list.

MR: Okay. Yeah. I can do that.

MM: And if they have all her other material... You know, if anybody gets down to doing this, they should have enough. I mean, the International Show, they'll have dates on that. That will be all part of the history. You know, because she's... She's not into time.

MR: She does pretty well.

MM: Well I understand that.

SBG: (singing) Time means nothing to me.

MM: Okay. Let's see. Please make a copy of the *-----(?-682).

MR: So, Aunt Sib, what have we not asked you about, that you think is important?

SBG: What is important?

MR: That we have not asked you about?

SBG: You know, I have things I don't have photographs of. What comes to mind is... Something in Denver. And... Something in Pittsburgh I did two pieces for. And... The Jewish Chronicle. What's it called? In Pittsburgh.

MR: Oh, yeah. The...

SBG: The one of the writers there has one of my pieces.

SBG: Did you have a photograph of Portnoy – Uncle [Shmuel] Portnoy?

MM: Yeah. It's in here.

SBG: Do you know who has that? *-----(?-711). One of the twins.

MR: Okay. One of them is called Seth, I think. One of the twins.

SBG: Whatever his name is.

MR: I've got it here someplace.

MM: This is the original.

MR: All right.

SBG: So...

MM: I'll just keep this.

MR: All right.

MM: This original. And this is what she sent me. So you...

SBG: Alice Jodot. I did the bust of her. And I did a drawing.

MR: That's on the list.

SBG: She was from Pittsburgh.

MM: He's got a pretty comprehensive list, don't you?

MR: I think so. Yeah.

MM: I think so. But I think they have to do their part too, you know...

MR: Right.

MM: ...with what material they took from her. So you can have this.

MR: All right. All right.

End of conversation on tape

Tape 1 of 1 – Side 2 of 2

Minor emendations to eliminate repetitions, hesitations, and unrelated material in the transcription and to add explanatory material in square brackets [], etc., were made by Martha L. Berg, February, 2006.

