

Oral History Center
The Bancroft Library

University of California
Berkeley, California

Paul A. Bissinger, Jr.

Paul A. Bissinger, Jr.:
Lifelong San Franciscan and Patron of the Arts

Interviews conducted by
Shanna Farrell
in 2017

Since 1954 the Oral History Center of the Bancroft Library, formerly the Regional Oral History Office, has been interviewing leading participants in or well-placed witnesses to major events in the development of Northern California, the West, and the nation. Oral History is a method of collecting historical information through tape-recorded interviews between a narrator with firsthand knowledge of historically significant events and a well-informed interviewer, with the goal of preserving substantive additions to the historical record. The tape recording is transcribed, lightly edited for continuity and clarity, and reviewed by the interviewee. The corrected manuscript is bound with photographs and illustrative materials and placed in The Bancroft Library at the University of California, Berkeley, and in other research collections for scholarly use. Because it is primary material, oral history is not intended to present the final, verified, or complete narrative of events. It is a spoken account, offered by the interviewee in response to questioning, and as such it is reflective, partisan, deeply involved, and irreplaceable.

All uses of this manuscript are covered by a legal agreement between The Regents of the University of California and Paul Bissinger dated June 9, 2017. The manuscript is thereby made available for research purposes. All literary rights in the manuscript, including the right to publish, are reserved to The Bancroft Library of the University of California, Berkeley. Excerpts up to 1000 words from this interview may be quoted for publication without seeking permission as long as the use is non-commercial and properly cited.

Requests for permission to quote for publication should be addressed to The Bancroft Library, Head of Public Services, Mail Code 6000, University of California, Berkeley, 94720-6000, and should follow instructions available online at <http://ucblib.link/OHC-rights>.

It is recommended that this oral history be cited as follows:

Paul Bissinger, "Paul Bissinger: A Lifelong San Franciscan and Patron of the Arts" conducted by Shanna Farrell in 2017, Oral History Center, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, 2018.



Paul A. Bissinger, Jr.

Paul A. Bissinger, Jr. was born in San Francisco, California in 1934 to Paul Bissinger and Marjorie Pearl Walter-Bissinger. He was raised on Divisadero Street and attended the Town School. He attended high school at the Phillips Exeter Academy, attended college at Stanford University, and earned a graduate degree from the American Institute for Foreign Trade. He served in the Navy in the 1950s, which took him to Japan, Hong Kong, and Manila. He's been a life-long patron of the arts, which began as a child. In this interview, Bissinger discusses his early life, education, time in the Navy, meeting his wife, Kathy, and starting a family, working for his family business, and commitment to the local arts community. He has served on multiple boards, including for the San Francisco Youth Orchestra and Asian Art Museum.

Table of Contents—Paul Bissinger

Interview 1: April 24, 2017

Hour 1

1

Birth in San Francisco in 1934 — House at 2500 Divisadero Street, childhood friends, cousins — Memories of mother, Marjorie Pearl Walter-Bissinger — Family life, mother's second husband Bobby Seller, sister Peggy — Grandmother Florence Walter, book binder — Aunts and mother encouraged in the arts — Elementary school at Town School — Music education: piano, guitar — Father Paul Bissinger, his theater work, the Temple Players — Childhood summers at Rampart on the Truckee River — Summer job as a firefighter for the U.S. Forest Service — Summer camps — More on summer activities at Rampart — Swimming at the Concordia Club — Jewish education and guidance from Cantor Ruben Renzor — Phillips Exeter Academy, 1948-1952 — Cross-country train travel

Hour 2

12

Social life at Exeter, music: "I was a great joiner. I liked to be part of things." — Athletics at Exeter: lettering in swimming, football — Education at Exeter, the Harkness system — Cultural climate in New Hampshire compared with California — 60th high school reunion: "We were all so thrilled to see each other." — Lasting impact of Exeter education — Return to San Francisco in 1952

Interview 2: April 28, 2017

Hour 1

20

Childhood home: "It was a very grand house." — Special memories of the hand-printing press, stage, ping pong table — Friends, athletics — Studying history at Stanford — Rigorous high school education served Bissinger well at Stanford — Cardinal's All-School Committee at Stanford — Involvement with the Packard Children's Hospital — Playing music with The Stardusters — Interest in comparative religion at Stanford — 1955 Navy ROTC midshipman cruise to Havana and Panama — Decision to join Navy ROTC — Stanford graduation in 1958 and Navy commission — Air craft carrier assignment, junior officer of gunnery — Port calls in Japan, Hong Kong, and Manila: "Japan, I just was in love with it." — Beginning interest in Asian Art

Hour 2

34

Meeting and doing business with Japanese artists — Navy discharge and enrollment at the American Institute for Foreign Trade — Travels in Arizona — Meeting future wife Kathy Bell in 1959 — Kathy's work at the United Nations, life in New York City — Whirlwind engagement — New York wedding and

Kathy's move to San Francisco — Caribbean honeymoon — First apartment, early married life — Birth of son Stephen in 1964 — Birth and loss of son David — Birth of son Matthew — Stephen's schooling, love of music, career in sound engineering, marriage and family — Matthew's work in non-profit development, later in retail

Interview 3: May 12, 2017

Hour 1

45

More on Navy service: a stop at the Shimoda Port — Family business contacts and travel in Japan — Job at investment banking firm J. Barth & Company — Going to work at Bissinger & Company— Details of the hide business — Refrigerated transport and changes to the hide trade in the 1950s and 1960s — Family wool and tallow businesses — More on refrigerated transport — Grandfather's death in 1964, father becomes company president — Father's 1969 death in London from a stroke — Becoming president of Bissinger & Company, and mother's estate executor — Selling off real estate holdings, rebuilding the company's financial worth — Brief work with Peter Maier — Going solo as a real estate investor — Building a client base, later stock market investment — Yearly newsletter — Cousin Bob Locke — Closing the business

Hour 2

58

Presidency of Economic Round Table — Education chairman of San Francisco Performances — Grandfather's immigration to San Francisco from Germany in 1877 — The importance of having a long-running family business in San Francisco

Interview 4: May 26, 2017

Hour 1

61

Developing a love of music as a child, music in the home, parents' love of music — Playing with The Stardusters at Stanford — Disc jockey at the Phoenix Symphony while at the American Institute for Foreign Trade — Board service in San Francisco's music scene — 1981 invitation from Agnes Albert, meeting to start a youth orchestra — Success of the youth orchestra, publicity — 1985 plans for an international tour, a gift from Barbara and Barney Osher — Coaching and mentoring for young musicians, famous conductors and performers — 1986 European tour — Concerns about security while traveling abroad — Lessons learned traveling with and supervising groups of teenagers — Visits to Berlin, Vienna, Budapest— Packed houses all over Europe — Visits to Vilnius and Amsterdam — Warm receptions and glowing reviews — Fundraising — Agnes Albert: "She just cared about the music and musicians." — Music directors Jahja Ling, David Milnes, Leif Bjaland — Alasdair Neale's 12 year directorship — Directors Edwin Outwater, Bernie Shwartz, and Donato Cabrera — Christian

Reif — Disastrous orchestra tour to Asia — San Francisco Symphony mentorship of young musicians — Logistical and budgetary challenges — Auditions

Hour 2

74

Expressions of gratitude from the orchestra musicians — Son Stephen’s love of guitar and work in sound design — Favorite composers, music venues — Selection to the board of the San Francisco Symphony — Hopes for the future of the youth orchestra: “To broaden the reach of music education to everybody’s benefit.”

Interview 5: June 9, 2017

Hour 1

79

Developing an interest in art as a child — Parents’ interest in Asian Art and their travels to Japan — Bissinger’s travels to Japan during Navy service — Collecting Japanese wood blocks starting in 1960 — Travel to Asia with Bissinger & Company — Marjorie Bissinger’s efforts to get Avery Brundage’s collection for San Francisco — Kathy’s work on behalf of the Brundage collection, board service for Asian Art Museum — Efforts to secure space in the de Young — Finally securing the old library building — Collecting contemporary Japanese ceramics — Advice from Dessa Goddard, and purchase of pieces from Joan Mirviss in New York — Deciding what to collect — Decision to leave the Bissinger ceramics collection to the Asian Art Museum — Asian Art Museum’s acquisition and curation process — Considerations in deciding the quality of a piece — The value of art in Bissinger’s life — Son Matthew’s interest in art and role at the Asian Art Museum — Kathy’s work before marriage, and later travel agent work in San Francisco — Granddaughter Anna — Thoughts on being a lifelong San Francisco resident — Hopes for the future of the youth orchestra — Efforts to make orchestra available to a wider range of kids — Hopes for the Asian Art Museum’s future — Changes in San Francisco over a lifetime

Images

95

Appendix A: Marjorie Bissinger Profile

Appendix B: Bissinger Ancestors

Appendix C: Bissinger’s Resume

Appendix D: “Stars and Stripes”

Appendix E: The Story of “To-Jin Okichi”

Appendix F: Newsletters

Appendix G: Oral History Supplement: Junior Chamber of Commerce

Appendix H: Stardusters Flyer

Appendix I: Email from Dick Mansfield

Appendix J: San Francisco Youth Orchestra [SF YO] Critical Acclaim

Appendix K: SF YO Conductors

Appendix L: SF YO Rules

Appendix M1: SF YO Bissinger Performance Dedication

Appendix M2: SF YO Bissinger 70th Birthday Tribute

Appendix M3: Tribute Binder

Interview 1: April 24, 2017

01-00:00:00

Farrell: Okay, this is Shanna Farrell with Paul Bissinger on Monday, April 24, 2017, and we're in San Francisco, California. Paul, can you start by telling me where and when you were born, and a little bit about your early life?

01-00:00:19

Bissinger: I was born in what was then the Stanford Hospital, in 1934, April 3. I don't remember much of that. We lived at 2500 Divisadero Street in an enormous house that my parents had built when my mother was like 18 or 19, and my father was seven years older. When she was last alive, she said she had no idea what got into her to permit a building project on this scale. It was a very large house. I had a very nice room with a southern view, and my best friend—as I can recollect—in those early, early years, was a fellow named Glen Burton, and he lived down the hill on Jackson and Divisadero, and Alec Gerbode, who lived at Pacific and Divisadero looking south.

01-00:02:00

Farrell: Do you remember what kinds of things were in the neighborhood? Was it mostly residential?

01-00:02:07

Bissinger: Yes, it was. It was strictly residential and the desirability of these houses came down sharply south of Pacific Avenue. The other fellow was Glen Burton, and he lived at the bottom of the hill and was considered to be from a poor family, one block from Pacific and Broadway—or, Pacific and Divisadero.

I saw him again, oh must have been 15 years later. He'd had a cocktail party for his mother, who lived in a mobile home up around Novato. I really didn't know any of the people there, but other people—if you'll excuse my hesitancy, but I have Parkinson's, and one of the aspects of that is you forget very quickly what you're trying to say.

01-00:03:22

Farrell: That's okay.

01-00:03:26

Bissinger: Steve Layton, he was a block or two away; Bob Bransten, and he lived up at Sea Cliff. I think there were probably other people that were part of my life, but I don't remember really.

01-00:03:50

Farrell: You also lived next door to your cousins, is that correct?

01-00:03:54

Bissinger:

Yes. After they came—this is my mother's older sister, Eleanor—or Nell Sinton—and they built this house. It looks so much like one house, but it isn't; it's two houses, and for a garage you drove down and then they had a turntable and you drove back out. And Carol [my mother's younger sister] came along five years later, and they lived, as I recollect, on Laurel and Pacific. This is one of two examples where two brothers married two sisters in the Walter family.

01-00:04:53

Farrell:

Can you tell me what your mother's name was and a little bit about her? Some of your early memories?

01-00:05:02

Bissinger:

Marjorie Pearl Walter-Bissinger.¹ Pearl was her middle name, or Pearl was her uncle's wife's name. I never met Pearl, but we did give that middle name to our granddaughter, Hannah. Apparently my wife, Kathy, has a Pearl that's in her background, too. So that name was obviously very acceptable. My middle name was more of a problem because my father's middle name was Adolf, and in 1934 that was not a popular name. But somebody figured out that if you had a junior—if you wanted a junior, you could get there by using just a middle initial. So, I'm legally Paul A. Bissinger Jr., and that has, from time to time, caused a little consternation from filling out forms that don't give you an option and you have to have a middle name. Now, my early years, I don't remember very much. I remember we had nurses or nannies all the time. One of them was "Beetle" Butler, and if you've done any other oral histories in our area, the name would pop up. And Beetle Butler was hysterical. She was always laughing and taking us off on improbable expeditions. My mother says they would come home from their trips and the house would be in chaos, but everybody was laughing and happy. Happy was not a characteristic of our house, to tell you the truth. I was in trouble for one reason or another virtually every day of my life, which of course was not the way it was; because there were lots of good times. But I do remember being in trouble a lot.

01-00:07:39

Farrell:

What were some of the things that you got in trouble for?

01-00:07:54

Bissinger:

I have no idea. Absolutely no idea. I guess it's my late early years, I used to buy these pieces of balsa wood, and with pictures from a book I had on ships, I would make schooners, and they were tiny and they had little pulleys and threads. That was a lot of fun.

When we got where we were allowed to cruise around on our own, our gang played touch football on Julius Kahn playground right out here, or—what's the other one? Well in any event, that'll come back to me. [I also collected stamps. I had inherited particularly beautiful ones from my grandmother, Florence Walter.] I don't know the dates exactly, but I think it was a change

[from Grant Public School] to Town School [which was private] right after the war, when my father came home and decided—or, with my mother decided—that I needed a more challenging school. Then I went to Exeter. I don't remember ever filling out an application form for any school. I just went. I don't know; somebody made it happen.

01-00:09:27

Farrell:

We'll get to Exeter in a second, but I want to talk a little bit more about your mom and your mother's side of the family. So, I had heard that your mom's family was formal, but they were also a little bit more lively and fun and musical. I'm wondering if you can tell me some of your memories around maybe a family event or a Sunday dinner that you had with your mom's side of the family.

01-00:09:50

Bissinger:

Well, as I mentioned, there was a lot of competition and expectation that each of us would be talented in some art form. So, my sister, Peggy, she had terrible grades. She went to Sarah Lawrence because they figured there were no grades there, but they had other ways of making you feel either good or bad about yourself, and I think she was more down on herself than up. My brother, Tom, was more of a free spirit and he never slept in a dorm at Stanford. He always rented a little—whatever. My mother was a tennis player, and the fellow that she married as her second husband, Bobby Seller, was a great tennis player. He was the California State Junior Champion and the California State Senior Champion. Then his shoulder or his wrist or—I think it was—ankle or something like that—his back went out and he quit playing tennis. Then he became a gambler—excuse me, not a gambler, a longshoreman on the—no, first it was gambling and I guess he made enough money gambling to pay his overhead. But after that, as I understand it, [he had back surgery, which revived] his tennis game and he became a legendary player as a senior.

He was quite a remarkable guy. He was not a genius but he had the biggest heart of anybody I've ever known. He cared desperately about the kids down in the valley who were exposed to all these terrible chemicals, and he wanted to do something for them. So he called the Disney organization and they agreed to give him, I think, one busload of kids for a weekend, free. He found somebody he knew to put all of them up. He slept on the sofa. He came back just floating. He just was delirious, it was such a wonderful experience, which I can relate to having been on youth orchestra tours. It was quite something.

I think the romance tailed off a little bit toward the end. I think my mother got impatient with Bob, but he was the right person—a good person for her at that time. So that would be Bob.

We kept up with a lot of what were Peggy's friends; Bob, Bill, Peter Cosovich, Al Baum, Fillmore Marks, Jim Ludwig. On and on and on. She had

all these boyfriends. As one of the cousins said, “Poor Peggy, she has such a tough time of it.” “Tough time, baloney. We may have gotten all the grades, but she got all the boys.” I don’t know what age she was when she moved back to New York, but it was a good move for her, so I think she’s been happily married.

01-00:14:27

Farrell:

You had mentioned that she was a little bit competitive; all of you were required to have some involvement with art or music. What was her medium? What did she play [an instrument]? What was her artistic outlet?

01-00:14:40

Bissinger:

Well, starting with [my grandmother] Florence Walter, who was widowed when she [around 50 years old],ⁱⁱ she married John I. Walter, a maternal family member. She became a very renowned book binder. [When she died, each cousin inherited a few of her books.] I got the idea to gather up all the books that we could from people who had copies. We donated this large collection to the Book Club of California, where she had an historical relationship because she was its first woman president. So there was a big to-do when we made the gift on her behalf.

Florence’s brother-in-law, Edgar, was also an artist, and if you go into the opera house, the two big gilded horses in the proscenium were made by him. I never met him or knew him either. My grandmother forbade her daughters from ever visiting this charming, handsome, brother-in-law, but they snuck out and did anyway. When he died, my grandmother didn’t want her girls to see his corpse, but they got in anyway somehow.

My grandmother was primarily focused on books and particularly bookbinding, but she was also knowledgeable in music, concerts. I don’t remember if she went to the opera. She’s the earliest one who I know that had a bent for both music and the arts. Her older daughter, Nell, she was an acclaimed painter, oil painter, I think. I believe she has pictures in the Oakland Museum and other places. She was very talented for her time.

The middle daughter was my mother, Marjorie, and she did beautiful floral decorations and kept the house looking gorgeous. Her art was taking care of my father’s needs, which was for a lot of entertaining, a lot of travel, and he was on endless boards and commissions and—I guess we’ll go into that later.

The younger sister, Carol, was a very gifted craft artist; baskets, weaving, and when she died, her children found, jammed all together, dozens of baskets and other fiber art things on her dresser, and she said—this is before she died—“I didn’t think anybody would be interested.” She was a favorite, and her name for her kids’ purposes was Gibby. Kathy, my wife, liked the name, and she has our granddaughter call her Gibby, and I’m Poppy. Gibby and Poppy.

Town School was a huge improvement [and I was successful there]. I'm going to give you an amazing story right now. My class at Town School was Bernato, Bissinger, Brigham, Busher, Chestnut, Cravens, Crum, Gerbode, Griffen, Hadden, Hills, Kent, Lapham, Mehia, Mills, Merrill, Nauheim, Stark and Wren.

01-00:20:00

Farrell:

And that was your elementary school class?

01-00:20:02

Bissinger:

Yeah. I mean, I don't have an exceptional memory, but for some reason our rollcall has kind of stuck to me.

01-00:20:11

Farrell:

Where in San Francisco was the Town School?

01-00:20:15

Bissinger:

Where was it? It was in an old Victorian house on the northwest corner of Jackson and Scott. [My son Stephen] was the last year to go to school there while it was a Victorian. Now it takes up quite a chunk of the area.

01-00:20:58

Farrell:

When you were in elementary school, were you taking any music classes?

01-00:21:04

Bissinger:

Yes. Dorothy Cameron was the music teacher, and my accomplishments were minimal, if that. The one great thing I did, I could play the first half a dozen bars of Moonlight Sonata. I went to Exeter, where the music teacher was Herr Goerte. Herr Goerte said, "Bissinger, let me see what you can do." I started playing my Moonlight Sonata and I could hear him grimacing, and he stopped me and he says, "I think we will start with scales." That was about the end of my piano music career. But I had started playing the guitar. I don't remember whether I had any real lessons, but in due course I became quite skilled at it, and my older son, Stephen, is professional and far more talented than I ever was. Our granddaughter, Hannah, has had piano lessons. She's eight years old; she'll be nine on September 13. She's really musical but she's stubborn about practicing, so instead in her spare time, her after-school time is gymnastics.

01-00:22:55

Farrell:

Can you also tell me your father's name, and then a little bit about your memories of him when you were a child?

01-00:23:04

Bissinger:

It's Paul Bissinger, with the middle name issue. He was a gregarious person. He loved people. He was very theatrical. At Stanford, he was, I believe, the head of the student theater program. When he graduated he went back to New York. I think I've got the sequence right, but I can't be sure. He was there with Fred Astaire and Libby Holman and that whole gang, which must have been around 1928. When his mother died, his father made him come back to

San Francisco—I think that was the reason—and he became very involved in putting on theatricals in San Francisco. He created something called the Temple Players at Temple Emanuel, and they did all kinds of theater, including a legendary performance of—I don't know what you'd call it—The Dybbuk, and he arranged to bring over from Russia a very important director. And it got a lot of press. I've got some scrapbooks that are full of his stuff. [My perception is that he was so busy in the family business and in his outside activities that he had little time for his children. He also played golf, but never taught me how to play the game.]

After that, he started doing plays at the Concordia Club. I was in one or two of them. It was very vaudeville; one, two, three, kick. There was one guy, Arthur Simon, who's deaf and blind, and he wanted to be in these plays. Rehearsal would come and they'd be starting to perform a dance act that he was going to be in, and somebody would tap him on the shoulder to give him the rhythm and everything. He had a wonderful time. Then he started doing plays, my father, at the Family Club. So theater was a very big deal in his life, and really it was a source of great pain and agony because my brother Tom took such a different direction. So that's my father, Tom, and theater.

Now, I started playing the guitar young enough that I was considered to be quite accomplished for whatever age it was. At Exeter, I had a little orchestra, me and an accordion player named Dick Mansfield. He's followed my path because he's a lawyer in Palo Alto and he has been as deeply engrossed in music education as I have been. At [Exeter] we also had a full band named The Royal Exonians, and we were very good. I don't recall that we had many real concerts, but we had a good time and I improved my playing.

01-00:27:58

Farrell:

You had also spent your summers growing up in Truckee. Can you tell me a little bit about your memories of that?

01-00:28:06

Bissinger:

Yes. First of all, the summers were not in Truckee. Truckee was the river from which the water flowed from Lake Tahoe, down the Truckee River, ending at Tahoe City. So that's a correction.

01-00:28:29

Farrell:

Okay.

01-00:28:31

Bissinger:

I don't know exactly when, but early in the last century, my grandfather, John Walter, built a lodge alongside the Truckee River, about two, two and a half miles outside of Tahoe City. It was called Rampart. There was a rather large and impressive bridge sitting across the river. They also built a regular train that came to and from the lake on tracks that went right by our property, and the train would stop at our property, and they'd offload or on-load groceries and laundry. Big hampers, big, big hampers of laundry, groceries, passengers,

what-have-you. Mail. We used to put pennies on the track, which was illegal to damage government property—so I confess. Guilty as charged. There was a section of the property where the Truckee River made for particularly attractive place to put a—smaller than a wharf—

01-00:30:21

Farrell:

A dock?

01-00:30:21

Bissinger:

A dock. And they'd put that out every summer, and we kind of considered that to be our part of the river, and it was very primitive. In the years I can remember, we had to burn wood to generate hot water. There was a second, a larger lodge that was built before I was born. The new lodge—or, the old lodge, we housed a couple named—I don't remember. I believe they had a daughter named Helen about the age of my sister and my cousins. They also built a tennis court, so we had tennis, swimming, fishing, right in our back yard, and that was kind of wonderful.

There was a mythical person named Rosebud who dwelt in the roots of a very large tree that grew right out in the middle of where cars would come in, and my youngest aunt, Carol, started the letter writing thing. She'd write a letter to Rosebud and these little kids would read it and write back, and the letters would go back and forth all summer. I think that really appealed to my younger cousins—Pat Sinton-Adler and Peter Sinton. It never was part of my life, really.

Matter of fact, I missed out on a lot of the whole scene at Rampart because I was off to one camp or another, or maybe late high school age. I had two summer jobs; one was working at Incline Village tending the speed boats that would come to gas-up, and the other one was a firefighter from the U.S. Forest Service. I was on the station in Weaverville, way up on top of the mountain, and the first thing we had to do each summer was to haul heavy loads of new cable up to the top because the winter storms would destroy what was there. We mostly maintained campgrounds, built out-houses. Not very glamorous, but we did have a few fires that we fought, including one big one where they brought in—they helicoptered in honored prisoners, which is a group of people I had no prior experience with, and it turned out they were just people like everybody else, and they were thrilled to get out of the prison and make a dollar a day or whatever. And they'd drop food and sleeping bags made out of corrugated cardboard, which actually were quite comfortable. So that was a great adventure.

01-00:34:43

Farrell:

What drew you to being a firefighter in high school?

01-00:34:48

Bissinger:

Maybe just the idea of it. The camp that I spent a lot of time with and loved, Camp Trinity—it later became known Bar 717 Ranch.

01-00:35:20

Farrell:

During your summers you also went to some sleep-away camps. Can you tell me a little bit about that?

01-00:35:25

Bissinger:

I have no idea. All I know is I loved being away, and never a day's worth of homesick ever. So that tells you something about my relationship with my parents. And also, there was all these girls. I had Florence Walter's three daughters, my sister, two girl cousins, and they all had friends out too, so it was a rather formidable gang of females. I probably had a friend who would be obviously a male, but we were in no contest for these girls.

I do remember they lived in I think a dormitory-like setup, and they were playing house. There were glass pane windows to get in or out and I went right through the thing with my right arm, and I slashed this big gash about three or four inches long and they couldn't find a doctor. But eventually they did, and in those days they put clamps on them instead of stitches. That was an adventure. I seem to have had a lot of adventures in damaging myself.

In my final year at Camp Trinity, [I was asked to be a junior counselor]. I got on the bus in San Francisco, which took me to Redding, and the camp was about 90 miles southwest of Redding. I got off the bus and I saw my people at the end of the Safeway parking lot. In those days, Redding was about the size of this room; it was nothing much. I was running across the parking lot, it's assumed that I tripped jumping over a cable of some kind where you hang flags from, because I had a big slash across my chin and I was out cold. My mother came up in an ambulance. I think I must have been out cold for four, five, six hours. I mean, I don't remember any of this. And all summer I was to be kept very quiet, which was a problem because I must have been at least the seventh or eighth grade, because I'd become very interested in girls, and at Rampart every summer, in addition to this handyman, my family would hire one or two college kids to come and do what college kids do. One of them was very pretty, but I was not allowed to communicate with her. They built a tent for me. Must have been not quite half, but maybe a third the size of this room. A sizeable tent so I could have my own quarters.

01-00:40:13

Farrell:

What were some of the activities that you would do when you were there?

01-00:40:18

Bissinger:

Well, a lot of swimming, and there was a back current that went up the river, and then you'd jump in and it's very deep part, and it would whoosh you down the river to where our little dock was. So we would do that. I did some fishing. There was a lot of dressing up, costumes, make-believe, amateur theater. All that kind of stuff, which didn't interest me very much. I believe a girl named Helen was the daughter of the handyman. They had the old lodge but kids under some age—probably nine or ten—were required to eat their meals with their nannies as needed, in the old lodge. I do remember that.

We used to go to Squaw Valley, which was then the most beautiful, pristine meadow, not a square foot of development. A guy named Bud Jones would herd his cattle up and have them feed on the wonderful grass in the meadow for the summer, and he used to give us a cowboy and some horses, I think, at some nominal cost like a dollar a day, and we would ride up into the mountains, which are now ski lifts. We would catch butterflies. My younger cousin, Peter Sinton, was very good at pinning them like you collect postage stamps.

As far as the adults were concerned, they sat around and did a lot of gossipy talking. It wasn't always very nice. It was usually some pretty stiff criticism of the guests that just left. But I wasn't part of that. I mean, I'm told that's the way it was. I accept that. I was at camps or working. Bob Bransten, I remember one night, we must have been old enough to drive because we went and picked up Nancy [Hellman] Bechtel and her cousin—not Cricky, but Florence Lazard—and we said we were going to—[phone rings]—and we said we'd take them bowling at the Tahoe Tavern. Of course we found a party, and instead of getting home at the proscribed hour of ten o'clock probably, we didn't get home until midnight. All the lights at the [Hellman] lodge were on, so we—without much claim on courage—we dropped the girls off about a quarter of a mile from the lodge. And Nancy [Hellman] Bechtel's father, Mick, he had every sheriff and every person out combing the lake looking for us. The next morning we crawled over there on our hands and knees to apologize, and so that was an adventure.

One summer it had gotten to be Labor Day and neither Bob or I had found a girl, so we decided we would drive to Sun Valley, which we did. We didn't find any girls there either. A terrible age. So we sang a song; [sings] "We're here because Sun Valley's dead, and so we thought we'd go and spend the Labor Day content at reliable Tahoe," or something like that. I had a fun youth, I think.

01-00:45:29

Farrell:

Back in San Francisco, you also were a swimmer at the Concordia Club, is that correct?

01-00:45:40

Bissinger:

Yeah, the Concordia Club had a program. I think the guy's name was Hoyt. I guess this was for guys who were like sixth, seventh, eighth age, thereabouts. I remember, first we'd go up to the gym. We'd play softball, we'd climb ropes, did calisthenics, all those kinds of things. Then we'd go down to the swimming pool and we'd swim competitively from the beginning. A number of us became good enough that we were on our high school varsity teams and maybe more, but Bob Bransten, Jim Fisher, and me. Who else? Feigenbaum. What was his name? Well that's the Gap family. All of us nice Jewish boys became pretty good, at least in swimming.

01-00:46:58

Farrell:

You mentioned being Jewish. Can you tell me a little bit about your bar mitzvah?

01-00:47:05

Bissinger:

Well, I was bar mitzvahed—about which I remember nothing—except that my guide in this process was our cantor, Ruben Rinder, who was actually a very good friend of my parents.

01-00:47:24

Farrell:

Oh yeah.

01-00:47:29

Bissinger:

Ruben Rinder was the most wonderful man. He was a great musician. He used to go to Israel and record on a tape recorder, the indigenous music of the Jews who were settled there, and I always would write to him when I was away at Stanford and the navy. I was away a lot. But I always corresponded with him and I always went to visit with him when I was in town. I consider him to be one of the prime important people in my life.

01-00:48:18

Farrell:

What about him was important to you?

01-00:48:21

Bissinger:

What was more important?

01-00:48:22

Farrell:

What about him was important to you, or your relationship with him, that was impactful?

01-00:48:28

Bissinger:

I don't know. Just somebody I—see, my relationship with my parents was a little sticky, and people need somebody to talk to. When I was at Exeter, Colin Irving, whose son is Irving the author?

01-00:48:52

Farrell:

John Irving?

01-00:48:55

Bissinger:

His father was one of my English teachers and dorm master, and I can remember walking down the hall and coming and spilling my heart out to this guy who's sitting there, he probably thought, "I was hired to do this?" I wrote some pretty crazy, emotional outburst papers. Not a wonderful time for me.

01-00:49:39

Farrell:

Can you tell me a little bit about what the role of religion played in your childhood, whether that be cultural or religious?

01-00:49:48

Bissinger:

I don't think there was much of an emphasis on Judaism in my life. I don't recall my parents went to anything other than the big—the major holidays.

When I went back to Exeter I was really stumped that there was no Jewish place—no Jewish club or anything like that. They had other, Christian—you had to go to chapel every morning, and you had to go to church every Saturday I guess, and it made me very uncomfortable because I wasn't part of that. It was a big part of schools in New England at that time. Nothing in the navy. It never really entered my life.

01-00:51:05

Farrell:

And then, moving on to Exeter actually, you were there from 1948 until 1952, and then when you first arrived you took a three day train ride across country. Can you tell me a little bit about that experience?

01-00:51:20

Bissinger:

Well not the first time, but yeah. I don't know if it was my sophomore year or my junior year, what year it was, but Alec Gerbode and I always traveled together to and from. On the major holidays there was no commercial flying yet at that time, so you took the train, and it was a three day trip. We transferred at Chicago and Boston. Actually, there was one winter where it was so stormy that the railroads could not get through in the Rocky Mountain states, and we were stuck in Green River, Wyoming, and the train ran out of fuel and food, and so we resorted to the local movie theater, and saw repeatedly the movie that was playing there at the time, which was Red River. That was kind of a kick.

01-00:52:51

Farrell:

What was train travel like? Spending that much time on a train?

01-00:52:56

Bissinger:

Well I loved just to sit there and read a book or look out the window. Once, either going or coming—I don't know which—there were a couple of daughters of Pat Brown, the governor. We talked to them some. It was just a very nice, relaxing way to get back into the intensity of life at Exeter.

01-00:53:31

Farrell:

Were there people from San Francisco or the Bay Area that you would—I know that there was Alec, but was there a group that you would find who were going across country?

01-00:53:44

Bissinger:

No. No, there was nobody else on the train with us, and I don't recollect anybody. There's one fellow whose name I can't remember who was wrestling at Exeter, and I think he became a teacher at University High School here in San Francisco, but I never kept up with him. My accordion friend, Dick Mansfield, he lives in Palo Alto, and I've been meaning to write him and get together with him because we apparently followed somewhat similar paths at Stanford. But music became such a big part of my life. Sandor Salgo, my music teacher at Stanford and head of the Bach Festival in Marin, was part of it. I just remember going to the operas or symphony orchestras. I just loved that. In those days the boxes were all set aside for college kids. We had box Z,

our fraternity. We used to take beer in the little curtained off area between the lobby and the seats. We had a little beer. But that was okay; it didn't harm anybody.

There's so many memories of Stanford. I have a hard time recollecting much in the academic sense of the word. I was so well-educated by the time I got to Stanford, that I really didn't need to go to classes, and I didn't, and that got to be kind of a habit. I had so much else going on in my life; I was on an all-school committee. they used to build an enormous bonfire for the night before the big game—Stanford-Cal—and I was in charge of that. Somehow, somebody got word to me to be careful that U.C. was bringing a—what do you call it? A device that would set the whole thing on fire. Every barrel, every piece of wood that came through, I inspected. Indeed, I found one that was too perfect and called the fire department, and indeed, it was an incendiary device. Dianne Feinstein was on the same committee, so we got to be pretty good friends.

01-00:57:12

Farrell:

Before we get too far into Stanford, I want to go back and talk a little bit more about Exeter. You had mentioned that music was a big part of your life. Was that something that was—was music encouraged at Exeter?

01-00:57:26

Bissinger:

Might have been. I don't recollect that they had—they subsequently built a gorgeous music facility. Exeter has so much money they're like Stanford; what do you want? We'll build it. I don't really recollect doing any of that. I was more into the activities. I was president of the Pacific Coast Club and we put on a wonderful dance with gorgeous decorations, and my date was a gal named Mary Lou—her father was coach of the Princeton football team, and she was a lot of fun.

But getting dates at Exeter—because they had these social exchanges with Abbot Academy and others. There was one guy who had a system and he ranked all the girls who were prepared to come down to the social event. They were ranked for dancing, athleticism, humor, etcetera, etcetera, etcetera. And so, being a good middle-of-the-road fellow, I picked the one with the highest average of skills, and somebody—I think named Muffy—and she leapt off the train with a lacrosse stick in one hand and a tennis racquet in another, and probably boxing gloves in the third. It was a dreadful weekend. We had nothing to talk about. She wasn't either pretty or a good dancer. But it was hard to get dates.

Another friend, Chuck Huck—that's a fine name—who lived in New Jersey, played the harmonica, so we also had a harmonica in our "orchestra," and he would invite me for short holidays, Thanksgiving and such. He had a cousin who was really very, very nice. It never became a romance, but she was terribly nice. Another friend that actually was Chris D'Manda, and I think his

father was a judge from New Jersey. We all used to go ice skating in the winter on the river, and luckily I didn't fall through. So you can see, I wasn't in the library as much as I should have been.

01-01:01:02

Farrell:

But you mentioned that you were president of the Pacific Coast Club. Can you tell me a little bit about what that is?

01-01:01:08

Bissinger:

I have no idea what it was.

01-01:01:10

Farrell:

Was it a social club?

01-01:01:12

Bissinger:

It was kind of like a debating society and they had clubs for everything. I've got the scrapbooks here. I was a great joiner. I liked to be part of things.

01-01:01:31

Farrell:

Including that, you had a varsity letter in swimming?

01-01:01:35

Bissinger:

Yes, the only varsity letter I've ever gotten. When I went to Stanford, the swimming coach sought me out because I guess Exeter told Stanford to see if I could make the cut. After all these years of a boys school, finally I was in a school where there was sunshine and beer and girls. No, I don't recollect if my parents ever gave me any sense of purpose in this life, to have goals. I presume they looked at my report cards, which were excellent at Town School, and I was just shy of honors graduating from Exeter. I did fine until the sunshine and girls cropped up.

01-01:02:47

Farrell:

You also played football at Exeter?

01-01:02:50

Bissinger:

Yeah. I was fast and I could jump high and catch the ball, and I didn't mind being tackled. They had the varsity, the junior varsity, and then they a group of club teams that were just together. They were at the bottom, entry-level. And I, as I say, I could run, jump and hang on to the ball. I made all-team, all-club two years, and then I—then they invited me to come back to early—getting ready for football season. The first play on the first day of practice, I found myself trying to block a big guy, bigger than me, and I guess I dislocated my shoulder, and I've never been able to throw a ball properly ever since.

01-01:04:03

Farrell:

That ended your football career?

01-01:04:06

Bissinger:

Not only that, but my baseball career. You had to have a sport, and so I was a baseball player, except they made me the catcher. And, figure the diamond out, the catcher has to be able to throw the ball to second base. I couldn't do that. It hurt. So they made me the scorekeeper. So, I kept—every play there's symbols for who did what to whom.

01-01:04:41

Farrell:

You had also mentioned that you had a good education at Exeter. Can you tell me a little bit about that? About I guess maybe the style of learning or how the structure, academically, helped you later?

01-01:05:01

Bissinger:

They have a system called the Harkness system, and the Harkness system involves oval tables maybe a quarter of the size of this room, and everybody sits around the table, including the professor. Everybody is expected to participate. It's a discussion back and forth, type of thing, and if you weren't prepared it was noticed. Mostly we all worked pretty hard. There was an enormous amount of reading and writing. You had to read huge amounts every week and write comments, and suggest interpretations, analyses and character relationships. We were thrown into this environment and it was a lot of work. Math, I was—that was one of the things I was good at. So when I got to Stanford, I passed all the math requirements, and I never again took a course in math, which I really regret because I was good at it.

By the time I got to Stanford, I'd had so much Spanish I could read and write it quite well, but I'd never heard the language spoken. Got to Stanford, passed all my language requirements, signed up for an upper division course in something like contemporary Spanish literature. When I walked into the classroom. The teacher started talking, and everybody else was talking, in Spanish. I was totally lost so I had to drop out of that.

01-01:07:01

Farrell:

At Exeter, were they just having you read and write in Spanish? It wasn't conversational?

01-01:07:12

Bissinger:

I think it was both. I don't know.

01-01:07:22

Farrell:

Did you like the Harkness system?

01-01:07:26

Bissinger:

Oh yeah. It was very stimulating, and I always liked challenges, but some I liked better than others. Nobody would ever accuse me of being a Greek scholar.

01-01:07:48

Farrell:

There's a story about Henry—

01-01:07:52
Bissinger:

Oh, Mr. Krajewski.

01-01:07:54
Farrell:

Yes. Can you tell me about that?

01-01:07:55
Bissinger:

Yeah. Henry Krajewski was a pig farmer from New Jersey who was running for President of the United States as a Communist, and somebody in our little group had the idea that we should invite him to Exeter to give a speech. We did that. At our sixtieth reunion they had a film—a rotating film, what do you call it? Continuous thing? They had a segment of maybe 50 yards of us marching along with Henry Krajewski—and he gave a speech. I don't know what he said, but apparently it was picked up by the Boston Globe, and the title was "Exeter endorses Krajewski." Luckily we didn't get in trouble. I don't know that anybody ever went to the school and asked permission.

01-01:09:07
Farrell:

Because he was a communist party candidate, correct?

01-01:09:09
Bissinger:

Oh yeah.

01-01:09:09
Farrell:

Do you feel like if you had invited him as part of Exeter, you would have gotten in trouble for that?

01-01:09:20
Bissinger:

Yeah, maybe somebody—maybe nothing happened on the campus properly. Certainly something I would prefer not to be in my legacy.

01-01:09:40
Farrell:

So, New England and California are quite different places. Can you tell me a little bit about your impressions of New England compared to California?

01-01:09:54
Bissinger:

Oh yeah. California, after school we'd put on our sporting shoes and go out and play catch with the football. At Exeter, we went to the library and did reading. The weather is so different; in the winter you have the snow and the ice and the slush, and you're constantly taking off clothes and putting on clothes, it was a very serious kind of a place. Chapel every morning. High expectations. Either you got caught up in it or you didn't. Trying to think of examples. Well, the whole idea of being—the motto over the door was something—this is probably wrong—"huc venite peuri verri" cites, "Come here young man to become men." There was a great deal of that. If there were homosexuals in our classes, I was unaware of that. Seriousness. Heavy overlay of Judaism.

01-01:11:36
Farrell:

You had written that you found—

- 01-01:11:40
Bissinger: Not Judaism; religion.
- 01-01:11:42
Farrell: Religion. Yeah, you had written that you considered New England to be the height of sophistication which you had—
- 01-01:11:54
Bissinger: Oh yeah, and the guys who come from the New York private school system were really haughty and looked down on us. Those were clubs that I was not invited to—join into.
- 01-01:12:18
Farrell: How about diversity? Did you find that it was more or less diverse than California?
- 01-01:12:25
Bissinger: Well I don't think Town School is a very good example. There was no diversity there, I can promise you that based on experience. I remember at Exeter—in Town School, there were no minorities, which, as I say, I have some experience with. At Exeter, I remember Mont Dowling was a—track and field, I think. There was a big guy—what was his name? He ended up being a lawyer and on the board of director or governors of many companies. Who was the other one? There were some kids. There was an American Indian who was a good friend. There were some, but there's also a big student body.
- 01-01:13:47
Farrell: And then, for—
- 01-01:13:49
Bissinger: But at least Exeter was making the effort.
- 01-01:13:56
Farrell: You attended your sixtieth anniversary, and of that you wrote, "Exeter truly remains the peak experience of my life, and I was thrilled to be able to hobble to our sixtieth anniversary." Can you tell me about what going back 60 years later, after you graduated, was like?
- 01-01:14:14
Bissinger: Well the biggest impression on me was that we were all so thrilled to see each other. Now, in our fifth and tenth reunions, if you went to them, how are you, meant, how successful are you? How many books have you published? How many speeches have you made? That kind of success. Our sixtieth when we said, how are you, we really meant, how are you? Do you still have your first wife? Your kids not in jail? You know, comments that kind of dug a little bit inside.
- 01-01:15:06
Farrell: I know.

- 01-01:15:10
Bissinger: I think that would be the major thing. Of course, we were all encouraged to go and sit in classes, listen. We did all that. Besides hearing some terribly bright kids express themselves, it was just fun to see people that I barely knew at Exeter, and by the time the reunion was over, they'd become good friends. You get the idea. It was a happy thing.
- 01-01:16:03
Farrell: Your sixtieth anniversary was probably more meaningful than our ten year.
- 01-01:16:08
Bissinger: Oh yeah, absolutely, because by then, for many of us, it was a challenge to get there. I remember I was in a wheel chair and my dear friend, Charlie Montgomery, whose sister I also dated, he pushed me around the campus. It just was a very emotional, it was just, how are you? [To this day, Charlie and I remain close friends.]
- 01-01:16:56
Farrell: Had the campus changed much in 60 years? The way it looked?
- 01-01:17:00
Bissinger: Oh yeah. They had more buildings, they had a science building that was paid for by a guy named Stan Phelps, who made a lot of money in the bond business, and was a big football player at Exeter. He bought them a new stadium, and then he heard that Andover needed a new stadium, so he built one for them, too. His thinking was that now the Exeter/Andover football game, the winner can never be an Andover team because he had paid for both stadiums.
- 01-01:17:53
Farrell: Did either your sister, Peggy, or your brother, Tom, go to school—to boarding school?
- 01-01:18:01
Bissinger: My sister, Peggy, I think went two years at Sarah Lawrence. She was not an academic. I think I already mentioned.
- 01-01:18:11
Farrell: Oh, so she went there for high school?
- 01-01:18:15
Bissinger: She went to Burkes School on Jackson Street. Everybody in the family that was female went to Brooks School, and nobody was ever kicked out. My brother went to Town School and Andover, and my younger cousin, Peter Sinton, went to both. My only cousin on my father's side didn't go to Exeter, but he did go to Stanford. There was something of a family legacy argument. Everybody's so different, you couldn't say they were pure legacies.
- 01-01:19:27
Farrell: How do you think that going to Exeter shaped you or informed your life?

01-01:19:38

Bissinger:

Well, I think it taught you that if you work hard and stick with what you're trying to accomplish, you have a good chance at being successful in whatever you want to do. I look at the ways in which different people—everything from agricultural land preservation, to high-speed lawyer. I think they were very accepting of non-traditional measures of success, although they did prefer a Harvard law degree over a University of Kansas degree. We were a feeder school for Harvard, and I think Andover was more or less that for Yale.

01-01:21:00

Farrell:

When you were living in New England, did you have any desire to stay there for college, or were you eager to get back to California?

01-01:21:09

Bissinger:

I just did what I was told. I don't remember filling out application forms, I just remember one day I'm at Exeter. I don't remember getting there or settling in, I just know that all of a sudden I was no longer in San Francisco. And, Stanford, same thing. I maybe filled out some forms there. Maybe my father got involved. I don't know about that. He certainly never said anything like that. What was the question?

01-01:21:53

Farrell:

If you had any desire to stay in New England.

01-01:21:55

Bissinger:

No, absolutely none. I always knew that—I wanted to get in the navy, I wanted to go to business school—and I believe I was accepted at both Harvard and Stanford business schools. My father said, "You don't need to go into business school. Everything you need to know you'll get when you go in the family business," which was an incorrect statement. But that's how he felt.

01-01:22:28

Farrell:

We'll start to talk a little bit more about your college education next time, but when you eventually returned to California after graduating from Exeter, did you find that San Francisco had changed much while you were gone?

01-01:22:49

Bissinger:

Again, I made my goal to be away from home as much as possible, so when I graduated from Exeter—that would be in 19—?

01-01:23:02

Farrell:

1952?

01-01:23:03

Bissinger:

1952. The war was over. I don't recall that I spent that time just hanging around. I don't remember what I did. It certainly wasn't getting ready for Stanford. I knew I was prepared. That's a good question. I'll see if I can dig up some answers.

01-01:23:46

Farrell:

I think that may be a good place to leave it for today, but was there anything else that you wanted to add for this part of the interview?

01-01:24:07

Bissinger:

Maybe there's a few places where you could add some more depth, but I don't immediately have anything that comes to my mind.

01-01:24:17

Farrell:

Okay.

01-01:24:21

Bissinger:

There's a period between Exeter and going to Stanford. Now that's interesting. My brother says that my parents had me escort him back to Andover, and Tom says that was one of the big things in his life, and I do not remember a bit of it. I don't remember getting on an airplane or a train or anything. Which, that really weighs on me because that must have been an important time for me, too, when I was back east dropping him off at Andover. Maybe I went down to New York and visited friends.

01-01:25:18

Farrell:

Well we can always fill that in to the transcripts later, yeah. Okay, we're going to stop for today, but thank you, very much.

01-01:25:28

Bissinger:

You're very welcome. This is very interesting and pleasurable.

01-01:25:33

Farrell:

Good.

Interview 2: April 28, 2017

02-00:00:00

Farrell:

This is Shanna Farrell with Paul Bissinger on Friday, April 28, 2017, and this is our second session. We're in San Francisco, California. Paul, last time we talked a little bit about your childhood in San Francisco, but one thing that we didn't talk a lot about was the house that you grew up in. I'm wondering if you could tell me a little bit more about that house.

02-00:00:39

Bissinger:

Well I can do that, and I'm going to refer to notes because my memory is not as good as it should be. It was a very grand house. I believe it was completed at about 1930, at which time my father would have been twenty-five years old, and my mother was seven years younger, so she would have been eighteen. In later years, she complained to us that—how did she put it—well, she's aghast that she would have allowed her husband, Paul, Sr., to be part of such a grandiose house, with all of its costs and so forth. But it was done, and it was definitely a house for entertaining on a grand scale. The first floor, there was a very large entryway, and feeding off of the central court or whatever you're going to call it, was—going from right to left—immediately to the right there was a room, maybe it was 200 square feet, and there was a bar. There was shelves above for liquor; it had everything, including a few seats, I think. Then you go from there into a very large living room [that had two grand pianos], and from there, there was a walkway into the dining room, and I think it was pretty wide, maybe about ten feet, and it looked out over our garden—which was not a great garden, but still was a garden. Then you go from there into the dining room, and after the dining room there were spiral stairs that went up to the bedrooms. Everything was very beautifully done. It was wood finish everywhere, beautifully carved and decorated. That was very dramatic.

On the second floor, it was my mother and my father's bedroom, which was pretty large for a bedroom. My mother had a dressing room, which I recall had just a whole lot of shelves and hanging space, and of course my sister, Peggy, loved going over and playing play-house or whatever the proper name is. My father had kind of a recessed area where he had his clothes and whatever else.

Let's see. Then there were separate bedrooms for Peggy, Tom and me. Peggy had her own bathroom; Tom and I shared a bathroom, which was fine. By most standards, it would be considered luxurious. Then there were all these specialized rooms; there was a room to store the linens, there was one to—she had a model of herself where you could hang clothes that were being made for yourself or whatever. She had one of those. She spent a lot of time there. She had beautiful clothes and she always looked wonderful. Flower arranging. She was always picking an art form. She used to [arrange] beautiful flowers.

Then on the third floor there was this hand printing press. I remember it stood so high, and you had to, with your hands, make all of the text that you wanted, and sometimes there were pictures, and they began—my mother and father both enjoyed doing that. That was a nice activity. Of course, San Francisco in those days, hand printing was a very popular thing, and a number of my parents' friends also had presses.

The third floor was one or two maids' rooms, as I recall, and one of those was taken for the printing operation. Now, on the third floor, also, there was a large area that was a playroom, and it was—I can't transfer my images today versus my recollections of yesterday. It was a big space, and it actually had a raised—whatever you call it at the front of the stage.

02-00:07:29

Farrell:

Oh, like a riser?

02-00:07:31

Bissinger:

Well, I just thought the front. The walls were all painted, and there was somebody who was an artist who specialized in children's things—Lo-Lo or something like that, Lu-Lu—and I don't remember if there were curtains or not, but clearly my father had in mind that we would be making clever little plays and people would come over and clap. But that didn't happen. One reason is that the stage space was not utilized as much as you think, because my mother was always taking her nap in the afternoon, and that's when noisy little people run around and make a lot of noise. When she was napping, we were forbidden to be there.

There also was a big ping pong table, which was for my electric train set. I got a lot of pleasure out of that. I like building things, like the ships we talked about last time. We had the tracks and we had houses and signals and all kinds of things. Actually, up the street, one of my close friends for these years—Alec Gerbode—his father had a miniature train set. They were much smaller. Maybe like one and a half inches, two inches. They were very small. The ones we had were maybe twice that size, but they were metal in those days. When our kids were little I tried to buy them train sets, but they were all plastic. They wouldn't work and they were very disappointing.

Also, the ping-pong table and the—there was some kind of a volcano that you could buy as a set, a kit, and I—it actually shot stuff into the air. That was another diversion that interfered with the nap. That was pretty much the—no, also, I remember that the oranges would come in crates. There was no squeezed oranges; you had to squeeze them yourself. But I used to take the crates and break them apart and make things out of that. Once we made kind of like a scooter, and we built what we thought was a fort on top of the scooter, and tried to ride it down Divisadero street, which is a pretty steep hill. [laughs] I believe we crashed, but that was with my friend Glen Burton.

02-00:11:11

Farrell:

You said that you were not permitted to be around when your mother was sleeping. What kinds of things would you do when your mother was napping in the afternoon?

02-00:11:21

Bissinger:

Well I was an avid reader, and my friend, we would go out and play catch, go to the—seems to me that we didn't have much in the way of constraints on what we did. We knew where we shouldn't be, but going to Alta Plaza Park or Julius Kahn, and we'd go in groups, have enough to play touch football or whatever. Yeah, I was building these things and mostly making a nuisance of myself because I had this image that I was in trouble every day of my life. I can't bring him back to life now, but my uncle, Henry Sinton, always said I had the worst [childhood] of anybody he knew. But I was in trouble a great deal at the time.

My brother, being six years younger, he was a good observer of life and he figured out how to avoid the problems that my sister and I faced.

02-00:12:42

Farrell:

Your parents also employed Lillian and Lorenzo. Can you tell me a little bit about them?

02-00:12:48

Bissinger:

Only a little bit. I do recollect that they were very—a lot of pride and dignity. They were very—good people. They were fine people, and I think they took their job very seriously and they were very responsible. That's really about it. But I do recall that, when we were little, we didn't eat at the big table with the grown-ups; we ate at a—oh, like a counter in a restaurant. Our nannies—we had nannies—that's where they would sit. Among our nannies, the most important one was Miss Jeeves, Elsie Jeeves. British, of course. She had actually—if my mind is clear—been the nanny for my mother and her sisters. She was no spring chicken. The spring chicken we had in the form of Beetle Butler, and Beetle Butler was like Mary Poppins; we would go out on the expeditions. She was always in hysterical laughter and everything was fun, and my parents would come home, the house would be a disaster, but the kids would be happy. There was also another German nanny who my mother had to dismiss for reasons I don't know, but she wrote me letters after leaving us. It obviously broke her up a lot. That's the life. I think it was clearly a wise thing to send me away to Exeter, where God and the faculty could keep me under wraps.

02-00:15:11

Farrell:

Is that house that you grew up in at 2500 Divisadero, is that still standing?

02-00:15:17

Bissinger:

It's not only still standing, it's been through several hands, including the Canadian Consulate for a while. Its bones are so good, it's so well-built that a remarkably small amount of it had to be modified to make it a modern house.

I can't think of very much. I do remember now that the kitchen and the pantry were merged, made into one room. The third floor was made into an entertainment center. Aside from that, it was pretty much the way it was, compliments of the architect.

02-00:16:15

Farrell:

We had talked about your time at Exeter, and we left off last time with your education at Stanford. You started there in 1952 and I'm wondering if you could tell me a little bit about your first impressions of the school when you arrived as a freshman.

02-00:16:35

Bissinger:

Well, first impressions? I think I was a little bit scared. I'd never been away at school before, and there was a contingent of kids, the New York crowd, that had gone to those fancy Manhattan boys' schools, and they were much more—because they knew each other. See, I didn't know anybody there except Alec Gerbode. We went together. But I got over that. Academically, I had to learn my way around physically, and what the game really was. The first year, it helped a lot I think that I was a pretty good athlete. For example, in football, they had the varsity, junior varsity, and then a group of what they called club teams. I was all-club two years running. There were so many activities. No shortage of things to do. I can't remember who my first year roommate was, but I do remember my senior year and maybe both the third and fourth years; my roommate was Charlie Montgomery, who has been one of my dear, dear friends ever since. That was a very close bond that came to pass at Exeter.

02-00:18:29

Farrell:

At Exeter or at Stanford?

02-00:18:32

Bissinger:

At Exeter.

02-00:18:32

Farrell:

At Exeter, okay. Oh, I see. Can you tell me about what you were majoring in when you were at Stanford?

02-00:18:42

Bissinger:

History.

02-00:18:44

Farrell:

History. Okay, what made you choose history?

02-00:18:47

Bissinger:

Because it was very broad in terms of the courses you could take. I mean, chemistry you could construe to be a history course in some ways, and so, that's why. I had no particular goal in mind. I didn't work as hard as I should have, but it was a great place to have a wonderful time.

02-00:19:25

Farrell:

You had mentioned that you were pretty academically prepared because of your time at Exeter.

02-00:19:30

Bissinger:

Oh yeah. My schooling had been very focused and strict, after World War II when I was moved from the public school, Grant, to Town School, which was two blocks away. Three blocks. So in that respect, it eased the entry. Maybe that's something kids should consider when they go to school like Exeter; that the competition is ratcheted up a significant amount.

02-00:20:19

Farrell:

Did you feel more prepared or better equipped for Stanford academically than your peers?

02-00:20:27

Bissinger:

Oh, yes. I mean, I could write very well. My grammar, my spelling, were just impeccable. I remember one of our—the main English teacher there was a guy named Darcy Cuilden, and he was about six-foot-ten. A big man. He would start off each year by saying something like, now listen up, you bird. I give Cs to people that can write better than me, and that's impossible—or something like that. But he was really a nice man.

02-00:21:19

Farrell:

Do you remember some of your—the courses that you took related to history?

02-00:21:24

Bissinger:

No.

02-00:21:26

Farrell:

You were involved in a lot of extracurricular activities when you were there, including the Cardinal's All-School Committee with Dianne Feinstein. Can you tell me a little bit about what that committee was and what some of your work was for them?

02-00:21:44

Bissinger:

What that committee was intended for, I don't know. I'm going to look through the year books and see if I can find anything. But basically, it was in charge of any all-school event. The big one I remember was the bonfire that used to be done the night before a big game. The year I was in charge of it, it was very exciting because we got word that some UC—University of California—kids were bringing over some wood that had been doctored to be—create a fire. Indeed, I inspected every wheelbarrow of wood that came onto the site, and one piece of wood just looked too perfect, and I had the fire department come over. It was a fire starting device of some kind. I got a lot of pictures in the newspaper and so forth. So that was exciting.

I don't know if this was an all-school event or not. I kind of invented it. But I went every Saturday morning to the Packard Children's Hospital, and I

brought along cheerleaders or a comedian, or something to entertain the kids, guitar and singer, or whatever I could dig up. Everybody appreciated that, but most of all I got such a big kick out of it.

02-00:23:50

Farrell:

How did you get involved with the Packard Children's Hospital?

02-00:23:54

Bissinger:

I guess I must have telephoned or gone over and said, I've got an idea; does this interest you? I mean, it wasn't an established activity. I invented it. Mrs. Packard was very nice. In any event, when I was raising money for the youth orchestra, I of course went to the Packard Foundation, which was then run by my friend Colburn Wilber, and Mrs. Packard, I had lunch with her once year, and I'd bring her up to date and she'd sign a check. That was very nice.

02-00:24:57

Farrell:

What originally made you interested in working with the children's hospital?

02-00:25:01

Bissinger:

Well, it was just something I thought was a great thing to do, and I liked organizing people. You know, sometimes you don't need to have it set forth in writing; it's just something that comes out of you. I thought it would be fun, I thought the kids would like it. It doesn't cost anything and the hospital people liked it. Everybody liked it. What's not to like?

02-00:25:40

Farrell:

How long were you involved with them for?

02-00:25:43

Bissinger:

Oh, I think maybe one or two years. Whether it's carried on, I don't know.

02-00:25:49

Farrell:

You were also a part of the Stardusters. Can you tell me a little bit about them?

02-00:25:55

Bissinger:

Yeah. I've got pictures. We had everything from a seventeen piece orchestra for a big party, with a vocalist, or just down to me and the leader of the gang at a cocktail party. His name was Spike Lynch; Percival P. Lynch, if you want to know the truth, but he didn't like that. So he was Spike Lynch and he was a very gifted musician. We had a wonderful group. We had a lot of fun, and we were blackballed by the union because we had taken so many of the proms up and down the peninsula, and parties. Sometimes Spike and I would just go and play at a cocktail party. We didn't make much money, but we made enough to make it worthwhile.

02-00:27:03

Farrell:

Were you playing the guitar for them?

02-00:27:05
Bissinger:

Yeah.

02-00:27:05
Farrell:

Can you tell me a little bit more about the union blackballing you? Why that was an issue for them?

02-00:27:12
Bissinger:

The issue was that they were losing business to us. I think it's as simple as that.

02-00:27:19
Farrell:

Was there ever a time where you thought about joining the union, or it wasn't something you considered?

02-00:27:24
Bissinger:

Oh, no. No.

02-00:27:24
Farrell:

Okay. What kind of music were you playing?

02-00:27:31
Bissinger:

Oh, all the old time favorites; "Blue Moon", and you know, it was just the music of the forties and fifties, and we were very—Dave Walter was our bass player, but he taught over in Livermore, I think, or a place like that. Taught the cello. I remember we had a reunion a few years ago, and most everybody showed up. We had a wonderful time.

02-00:28:24
Farrell:

How long did you play with them for?

02-00:28:27
Bissinger:

Four years. A year or two afterward, I do remember Kathy and I, we were either engaged or married, and they had a gig and they needed my guitar playing, and so, we went over—and Kathy came to sit and be obedient, or whatever—and a freshman came up and asked her to dance. Freshman, sophomore, whatever. She thought that was pretty funny.

02-00:29:05
Farrell:

Can you tell me a little bit about your memories of Palo Alto in the fifties when you were at Stanford?

02-00:29:13
Bissinger:

Oh, no, not really. I was not engaged in anything to do with the community.

02-00:29:23
Farrell:

I guess because there's been so much development there over the past couple of decades, I'm just wondering if you remembered it being more residential, or if it was more, you just really spent time on campus mostly.

02-00:29:34
Bissinger:

On campus.

02-00:29:39
Farrell:

When you were going to Stanford, what were some of your early career aspirations at that point?

02-00:29:45
Bissinger:

I didn't have any. Bless his soul, I cannot remember my father or my mother ever telling me that I should aspire to something, that I should have long-term goals and I should focus on doing that. I mean, I did stupid things. I took a course once in library sciences. Now what in the world did I need to do that for? I didn't approach it with any career ambitions. Interesting because most of our—my good friends there were in engineering school, and almost all those went to business school. It's just that I was so busy doing other things.

02-00:30:42
Farrell:

What were your plans for after Stanford, when you were getting to be a junior and a senior?

02-00:30:47
Bissinger:

I guess I vaguely figured that I'd go into the family business. It seemed to be a good thing for me to be doing. You know, we certainly lived well. But I was—to my disappointment and regret now—I had no academic ambitions. I loved comparative religion, and there were some courses I enjoyed listening to, but nothing that really got me wound up and desperate to spend my hours in the library.

02-00:31:42
Farrell:

You said that you loved contemporary religion?

02-00:31:45
Bissinger:

Not contemporary; comparative. Comparative religion.

02-00:31:51
Farrell:

Okay. What about that were you interested in?

02-00:31:55
Bissinger:

Well, the eastern religions, primarily, and this guy Spiegleburg who taught comparative religion, I became a friend of theirs, did some gardening for his wife. I always just wanted to make a little money of my own. When I was very young, I can remember going around the neighborhood and knocking on doors and asking if I could do anything. Even when I was five years old.

02-00:32:34
Farrell:

You always had that entrepreneurial spirit?

02-00:32:37
Bissinger:

Yeah. I wanted a little money that really was my own.

02-00:32:44

Farrell:

Indeed you did work while you were at [Exeter and] Stanford, so you had a summer job in Tahoe gassing up the boats on King Beach. That's also when you were a firefighter at Weaverville.

02-00:32:51

Bissinger:

Yeah. I forget in which order. Kathy and I have been talking about it, and when I think it through, it probably was my earlier years—even maybe high school. I think from the Forest Service's point of view, if you're eighteen years or older, you know, they can use you, so long as you're physically fit.

02-00:33:26

Farrell:

It also says that in 1955 you were on a midshipman cruise to Havana and Panama?

02-00:33:33

Bissinger:

Yes. [After our family returned from a trip to Europe honoring my father's fiftieth birthday, I went on the midship cruise.] It was something that all midshipman did, in 1955 at least, and we were on a destroyer, which was, I think, vintage World War I. I'm sure our bunks were right next to the boiler. It was so hot and humid, there was no way you could get dry. You take a shower and you could towel yourself for over an hour and you'd be just as wet. One thing I did like was the—I had to do some navigating by star, you know, measuring. Whatever they call that nowadays. But I was good at that.

02-00:34:33

Farrell:

That was as part of the Navy?

02-00:34:37

Bissinger:

The Navy ROTC Reserve Officer Training Corps [at Stanford].

02-00:34:44

Farrell:

Okay. So I guess that's a good transition into your time with the Navy, unless there's anything else you want to talk about with Stanford?

02-00:34:56

Bissinger:

Well let me think. Stanford. Well, I had a few girlfriends over the time. One or two was pretty serious. And what else? I was not gentle with my cars. My grandfather seemed content to buy me replacement vehicles for the ones I banged up. Luckily I didn't hurt myself or anybody else, but my bad—my reckless driving was not without comment from my friends.

02-00:35:53

Farrell:

Do you remember what kind of cars you drove at that point?

02-00:35:56

Bissinger:

Well my first car was a yellow Studebaker, which was my mother's car, and they had it cleaned up and painted. It looked new. I wasn't terribly—it wasn't fancy enough for me, but that came later. At one point I had a Chevrolet

Convertible that was very jazzy. It would be embarrassing for me if I knew how many cars I've owned in my life.

02-00:36:38

Farrell: Did you ever learn how to fix cars at all? Was that something—?

02-00:36:40

Bissinger: No.

02-00:36:43

Farrell: No. Okay. Well if you're—I guess if you're ready to talk a little bit about ROTC and the Navy. What initially was the impetus for you joining ROTC?

02-00:37:02

Bissinger: The impetus was that you wouldn't be in the trenches in Korea, or wherever kids were sent in those days. That was to avoid the draft. I don't think hardly any of us would have voluntarily signed up. I never had different assignments. You didn't know what you were going to get. One of my closest friends, who is now dead—Ogden Beeman from Portland, Oregon—he ended up in the Coast Guard and he was an engineering student, and he had a ball; he had two years mapping the coast of Alaska. He had a beard. He did very well for himself. He became—had his own port development consulting business, which became very large and important. And tragically, he died must be four or five years ago. Still stay in touch a little bit with his wife [Charlotte, who got me a job as a DJ on a local radio station while I was at the American Institute for Foreign Trade in Glendale, Arizona]. But he was a really close friend.

02-00:38:28

Farrell: Did you meet him in ROTC training?

02-00:38:32

Bissinger: Oh no. I don't remember what we did. I guess we had to sit at a desk and take some notes on things, and we had marching around a little bit, but it was not—we were not going for serious positions. I was very lucky to get an aircraft carrier. It's a whole city.

02-00:39:04

Farrell: What year did you join ROTC? Do you remember?

02-00:39:10

Bissinger: It must have been at least—either the sophomore or junior year. I don't recollect it as freshman year or as a senior year, but it might have been. There was very little that I paid attention to in those days.

02-00:39:32

Farrell: When you were training and you had your weekends, do you remember what that entailed?

02-00:39:42
Bissinger:

We didn't do that. Once we were finished with ROTC and went to the Navy, in my case, then you were free. I had the choice of staying in the Navy, you know, as a career. If I did that, I'd have to stay and continue to do either shore duty or amphibious—ocean duty. I decided I didn't want to commit my weekends or however often you had to turn up.

02-00:40:43
Farrell:

When you graduated from Stanford and you joined the Navy in 1956, was that a choice that you made or was that something that you had to do?

02-00:40:52
Bissinger:

Well, if you wanted to get the credit, I guess, to be in Naval Reserve Officer Training Corps, so I was training to be a Reserve officer, and as such, I don't really believe—now, when we graduated and you were getting commissioned, then, among other things, they did a medical exam, and I had to go to Oak Knoll in Oakland, and I flunked the colorblind test. They were kind and they said come back; sometimes one test tells more than another. I think I went back two more times and I flunked each time. I went to the book store and I bought the standard colorblind book and I memorized it. So I passed.

02-00:41:59
Farrell:

I guess I'm just trying to figure out, when you graduated, so you went into the Navy full-time, or was it still you were in the reserves?

02-00:42:12
Bissinger:

Well, when they put you on an aircraft carrier in the middle of the Pacific, there's no way you can be anything but fully active. Now, preceding that, 1955 was my father's fiftieth birthday, and so, we all went to Europe, and that was when I came home and went directly to Norfolk, Virginia, where I joined up with my fleet mates, or whatever you call them. It was so interesting; I find in there a letter from a guy named Dan Kennedy, who I don't remember at all, but he wrote me a letter and remembered me.

[Section removed by narrator.]

02-00:44:07
Farrell:

Okay. Can you tell me a little bit about being on your ship?

02-00:44:14
Bissinger:

Oh. Well, we were in a bunkroom, I think three or four other guys, and being an officer had a lot—had its privileges. There was a, one of the—not a mess boy. I don't know what you would call him, but he was in charge of I guess maintaining the officer's quarters and taking care of—making sure their clothes get washed and ironed, I guess. What I remember about Muse was that we would buy cases and cases of liquor and they'd be stamped a Japanese name, "tea set, twenty-four pieces." We had tons of liquor going home from Japan. We ordered Muse to bring us some great grapefruit juice or orange juice. Of course, he knew what was going on.

Another interesting side, specialty group, was our Marine contingent, and they were there because they needed to—what? What would you need a Marine Corps for on a ship?

02-00:45:53

Farrell: Well, defense. I mean.

02-00:45:56

Bissinger: How about protecting the security of our nuclear devices?

02-00:46:04

Farrell: Okay.

02-00:46:09

Bissinger: Also, some time in that whole sweep of years and months and days, they took us on a submarine, and I don't think they submerged very much, but it was interesting just how you reacted to the claustrophobia. It wouldn't be my choice of duty.

02-00:46:39

Farrell: When you were submerged, did you have a feeling of claustrophobia? And if you did, how did you handle that?

02-00:46:47

Bissinger: I probably handled it—obviously it wasn't severe enough it made a lasting impression on me. I knew they weren't going to bury us in the bay mud, and it happened with no lasting damage.

02-00:47:16

Farrell: What was your role? What were you actually doing?

02-00:47:18

Bissinger: In the Navy?

02-00:47:19

Farrell: Mm-hm.

02-00:47:22

Bissinger: Well, when I reported on board, I reported to the executive officer, and he said, "What have you in mind, Bissinger?" I said, "Sir, I was hoping to get into communications or operations, supply, something like that." He said, "Well we've got you down for the gunnery department." I said, "Oh. I don't think that's a good idea. I don't like guns, never have." He says, "You're going to be outstanding. As of this instant, you are the assistant—or, the junior officer of the third division." The third division consisted of twenty or thirty men, who I don't think hardly any of them had gone to college or finished high school. This is the bottom of the barrel. I'd never had any experience with people like that, and I had no leadership skills in that kind of an environment.

My job was to sit in this turret, and on either side of me I had five inch guns; five inch being that's the size of the barrel. I never really understood all the different variations of, either fully in control, partially—I was never clear on that. Before we knew it, we were out in Hawaii going through operational readiness inspection. I believe you read about all this. Then they asked me to track a plane that was theoretically going to wipe us out. I was to shoot it down. What I did instead was to bump the barrel of one of my guns into the wing of a jet that was parked on the deck. Actually, it shouldn't have been there because there was an area painted out where they're not supposed to be. Maybe that's what kept me from being court marshaled. But I never had any repercussion from it, except the disdain from all of the air people onboard, which was more than half of the crew.

So that was not a happy business for me. I think I might have been helped by a fellow named Bill Ziering was the legal officer onboard, and I got to know him better when he settled in San Francisco. We played some tennis for a while. He was a nice guy. But then I was—for the second cruise—transferred from the shooting departments and given all these oddball assignments.ⁱⁱⁱ

02-00:50:57

Farrell:

How did you feel about that, getting reassigned?

02-00:51:00

Bissinger:

I was delighted. I was delighted. It was a wonderful position; you didn't have to account for your time, nobody knew where you were or what you were doing, you had all these titles, and it was great.

02-00:51:22

Farrell:

And, when you were on the ship I guess, were there any memorable ports that you stopped in or places that you saw?

02-00:51:32

Bissinger:

Well, in Japan and in Hong Kong. That was about all. We stopped in Manila a couple of times. That's a terrible place; hot and muggy and acres of prostitutes, you know, selling their services. I didn't like it. But Japan, I just was in love with it. I read every book I could get on Japanese art and culture, and I traveled around by bus or train when I could get off the ship long enough to—you know, you get four hours. You can't go very far, but I would trade with other people so I could have a full day or maybe half a day.

Somebody had to be there, in the Japanese Alps. I can't imagine why they permitted that; it's too unusual. You know, somebody could get hurt, break a leg, get killed, bus could go off the road. But that was a wonderful experience. Everywhere I went, there were these school kids who would come up and want to practice their English on me, and so they would take me around to see the sights and I would take them to lunch. And I learned a little Japanese there.

Hong Kong was more exotic. In both places, I guess my parents were already involved in the Asian art world, so I picked up off of that. It just instinctively became of interest to me, and I bought some art. A few wood block prints are left, not in here, but elsewhere in the house. But nothing I bought ended up being of great consequence, but it was fun doing that. I met some of the artists and got to know how to get around Kyoto on my own.

Once I was in Tokyo and I'd run out of money, and I was in the old Frank Lloyd Wright Hotel, and I heard a man paged who I knew was the president of a shipping line that our family business used. I went up to him, introduced myself, and I said, "I feel a little embarrassed, but could you lend me \$100?" He laughed, and he did of course, and of course he got paid back. But I was not shy about going up to people.

There was also a time when I was in a folk art museum. Mingei is folk art. I was wandering around. I saw a man who I knew for some reason was a Rockefeller. Maybe he was a father of a Rockefeller that I knew at Exeter [with his family]. I went up and introduced myself, we talked a little bit, and he said, "Would you like to join us for the rest of the afternoon? We're going to some more museums." So that was exciting.

I knew a couple of girls who were teachers in Japan. We went down to Gifu, where they have the cormorant fishing, and you go at night and they have lanterns and cormorant who capture the fish, which hang in their throats. I had so many experiences.

We also stopped where the atom bomb was dropped.

02-00:56:52

Farrell:

Nagasaki or Hiroshima?

02-00:56:56

Bissinger:

Hiroshima. Hiroshima. [It was horrifying.]

02-00:56:57

Farrell:

Hiroshima.

02-00:57:00

Bissinger:

So many experiences. It was a wonderful time. I think all kids should have to do some kind of public service, including women.

02-00:57:19

Farrell:

Is that how your interest in Asian art started?

02-00:57:26

Bissinger:

Well I think so. I'd never bought a piece of art of any kind. Maybe a postcard from Florence. I kept my diary, and that was—I have to go through that and purge it. There's things in there that are not necessary reading. I guess so.

02-00:57:59

Farrell:

What was it about Asian art that you enjoyed or that you found interesting?

02-00:58:04

Bissinger:

Well first of all, Japan is a beautiful country, and the people were so nice, particularly considering what we did to them, what they did to us. And, maybe in there somewhere was wanting to please my parents. I was pleasing my mother by being interested in Asian art, and my father by being in the Navy, because he was in the Navy in World War II.

02-00:58:50

Farrell:

You had also mentioned that you were interested in Eastern religion in college, so was there sort of a tie-in with that?

02-00:59:03

Bissinger:

Oh yeah. I mean, as I said, Asian art and culture was kind of the broad area of which Japanese woodblock prints would be a piece, and other things the same. I bought a couple of these scrolls, like behind you. These were already my mother's. Of course Kathy has been involved in terms of any serious collecting, but everything here, there's a story to it; where it was bought, from whom, what we know about the artist, how they've changed. We just got a new piece. Yesterday it arrived. Day before yesterday. It's downstairs. A big dish, bigger than that one, with gorgeous coloring. I'll show it to you.

02-01:00:06

Farrell:

You mentioned that you started to meet some of the artists. What was that like meeting them?

02-01:00:13

Bissinger:

Well typically they'd be in their shop, and you go up and say, you know, I love this piece, or I love this print, I would like to buy it. I mean, it's a very limited conversation. They could speak a little bit of English; when there's money being moved around, conversation is always—now, [Bissinger & Co.] were selling hides to the tanners who made leather. In Japan there was this huge manufacturer of bags of all kinds, leather bags, and also all the baseball gloves were made in Japan. Once when I was there on business, the people I dealt with—what were they—trading companies, they arranged for a little meeting of some of the tanners who, by the way, in Japan are the same as the Indian untouchables. They don't like to talk about it in Japan, but it's there. At least it was in my day. I agreed to get up and address this group. Somehow I stumbled through it, but they were so appreciative that I even made the effort to say hello to them in Japanese. People don't realize how important some things are.

02-01:02:17

Farrell:

Did you start learning Japanese at this point?

02-01:02:19

Bissinger:

I got a little bit; enough to say where is the train station, or how much does this cost.

02-01:02:32

Farrell:

We'll circle back to Asian art and the Asian art museum in a little bit, but, so you were done with the Navy in 1958, and then I read that you resumed your education. Is that correct?

02-01:02:50

Bissinger:

Well, no. I resumed my education that I did not get at Stanford, but in the Navy I had all this time. Even for an aircraft carrier, it takes a while to get from San Diego to Yokosuka. I had time to read. So I would go to the book store in San Diego, take with a small suitcase, fill it with books on history, philosophy, economics, what have you. I read all the things I should have been reading at Stanford. I kind of got myself self-educated. I wrote this diary I kept. I've got to find that and make sure it doesn't fall into false—into the wrong hands. [laughs]

02-01:03:45

Farrell:

When you were done with the Navy, you went to work for the American Institute for Foreign Trade, starting in 1959. Could you tell me a little bit about your decision to work with them?

02-01:03:56

Bissinger:

Well, it's a school. It's a graduate school of business.

02-01:04:00

Farrell:

Oh, okay.

02-01:04:01

Bissinger:

I wanted to go to Harvard or Stanford Business School, and I was accepted at both. My father said, "It's not necessary for you to go to business school. Everything you need to know, you'll learn when you come into the family business." I always just did what I was told. I went there for a year and learned a lot. It was a highly regarded school for that specific purpose. I had a wonderful time there for one year, but I mean, it was kind of—in my gut I knew that I needed another year before going into the family business where I would sit in a room with two or three other men who were buying and selling on the firm's behalf, and they'd smoke cigars all day, or pipes, and they just sat there and didn't do anything. Nobody went out to visit the meat packers or visit one of our other places, or went to Milwaukee to see them making shoes. I knew I wasn't ready for that, and this is kind of a—my way of objecting to being funneled into that scene so soon.

02-01:05:59

Farrell:

Where was that graduate school?

02-01:06:02

Bissinger:

In Glendale, Arizona.

[Section removed by narrator.]

02-01:06:23

Farrell:

What was it like living in Arizona? I mean, this had to be a big change.

02-01:06:32

Bissinger:

By this time, I felt I was so sophisticated, that, you know, I wrote the book on sophistication. But I had a good time. I had our friend in Portland, whose wife, Charlotte, came from Phoenix. Her parents were terribly nice to me [while I was in school there]. Her mother was president of the symphony, I think, and somehow I found myself with being a disk jockey, and I would preview the concerts presented by their symphony. That was fun.

I forget who came with us, but we went down to the Hopi villages, which were up on these bluffs, and it was almost a little scary because the roads were very poor, very narrow, and the Indians didn't look terribly pleased to see us. I mean, it's kind of religious ground to them. We also hiked down into the Havasu Canyon, where the Havasupai Indians live, claim that they're the only Indians in the country that never fought white people. But there were 100, 200 of these people living in terrible poverty. We camped at the base of this huge waterfall that was pure aquamarine color. I mean, it was just gorgeous. That was interesting.

I went skiing in Flagstaff a few times. One time, I was the first one up the lift in the morning, which is where I always liked to be to get the fresh snow. When we were close to the top, I saw there was a guy that worked for the place who had fallen and landed on his back on a concrete slab. He looked pretty unhappy, so I—they had some sleds at the top of the hill. I took one and got him in it and took him down the hill. That was very hard because those sleds, you have to hold them up or there are prongs that dig into the snow. My arms were sore. I'm not a big, husky guy, so it was a lot of work getting him down the hill.

02-01:09:54

Farrell:

Did you get him down the hill safely? Was he okay?

02-01:09:56

Bissinger:

Mm-hm.

02-01:09:58

Farrell:

After you were done with graduate school, were you at that point ready to join the family business? Did you feel, at this point, like you could step into that role?

02-01:10:12

Bissinger:

Well, it seems to me that it all happened kind of like real quick. I've got to get the years tied down of all these places. [I went to Exeter from '48—'52, and went to Stanford from '53 —'56. I graduate from graduate school] sometime in the spring of '59.

- 02-01:10:55
Farrell: For graduate school?
- 02-01:10:57
Bissinger: That I was out of the Navy, and out of graduate school.
- 02-01:11:01
Farrell: Yeah, '59 I have graduate school.
- 02-01:11:04
Bissinger: That ties in because Exeter would have been '48 to '52.
- 02-01:11:13
Farrell: Yes.
- 02-01:11:13
Bissinger: Fall of '48 to spring of '52.
- 02-01:11:16
Farrell: Yes.
- 02-01:11:17
Bissinger: Stanford would be the fall of '53.
- 02-01:11:20
Farrell: '52, same year.
- 02-01:11:23
Bissinger: Fall of '52 to the spring of '56.
- 02-01:11:29
Farrell: '56, yes.
- 02-01:11:31
Bissinger: Oh, so that's more time to account for. Kathy was the summer of '59.
- 02-01:11:39
Farrell: Okay, all right. That was a question I had for you.
- 02-01:11:49
Bissinger: How did we—we got off the ship in the—
- 02-01:11:55
Farrell: Was it the spring of 1958? Does that sound familiar? Those were the dates that you had written down for it. It's okay. We can also add this in later. It's all right.
- 02-01:12:09
Bissinger: I want to account for more of my time. Stanford we know, we got done in '56 in June. May or June. So we've got that in there. In the spring of '59—
- 02-01:12:35
Farrell: Well, we have—

02-01:12:39
Bissinger:

We have the graduate school thing.

02-01:12:40
Farrell:

Right. So the papers that you gave me, graduated Stanford in 1956 in the springtime, and then you were in the Navy from 1956 to 1958, and then graduate school in 1959.

02-01:12:56
Bissinger:

Fifty-eight to '59.

02-01:12:57
Farrell:

Yeah.

02-01:12:58
Bissinger:

Yeah, so that accounts for it. I was robbed of my bachelor time because I was caught up with Mrs. Bissinger, here.

02-01:13:11
Farrell:

Can you tell me about how you met?

02-01:13:14
Bissinger:

Okay. My best friend at the time, Bob Bransten, we were east in Cobleskill, New York for a wedding for our mutual friend, Donald Pfeifer, from Little Rock; P-F-E-I-F-E-R. The night of the wedding, one of the bridesmaids and I became very interested in each other. She worked in Manhattan, so she would be there the next night before going back to work, so I said we'd get together. She took me out to her family's farm where they bred bulls for reproductive purposes. That was a very impressive sight to behold, if you've ever been on a farm.

Anyway, we came down to Manhattan, and Bob's sister-in-law was Rena Bransten. She had been married to Bob's older brother, John Bransten, who prematurely died. [Rena] Bransten had a friend in New York. His wife, Rena, who lives just up the street here, she arranged with her friend Andy Namm, N-A-M-M, for dates for us; Bob and me, and she came as one of the dates and brought along Kathy Bissinger—Kathy Bell, at that time. We had our date with these girls and they made it clear that they did not think there was much to be gained in spending a lot of time with these hicks from California, so they had to be back at their apartments by 10:00 or 10:30, which wasn't the way it happened. In any event, Kathy, her friend, and her sister were already booked to come out to California just on a vacation. When they got to San Francisco we got together, and from there things went very fast, and we were engaged ten days later, and married in November. That's how it happened.

02-01:16:35
Farrell:

Okay.

02-01:16:38
Bissinger:

It was pretty gutsy of Kathy. I mean, on that short notice to pick up your life and move everything, your doctor, your dentist, your friends, I mean, all these—she had a wonderful job, too.

02-01:16:58
Farrell:

What was she doing?

02-01:16:59
Bissinger:

She was at some department of the United Nations. She was in the business of—their business was arranging conferences and meetings and things, and she loved it. She had a wonderful boss and it was an exciting place to be for someone that age, you met a lot of important people. She had to give that up. I guess she really wanted to get away from her parents. I don't know why, but I've always felt it was more—things are coming out now, with her having to take care of me a lot, that some of her—some of these characteristics are coming to the fore. She's a very strong person, and she could be pretty tough, which was never an issue for us. So, that's how that got started.

02-01:18:08
Farrell:

What was it about her that made you want to get engaged in ten days? I mean, there was obviously a strong pull there.

02-01:18:16
Bissinger:

Well, I said, "So let's get married." I said, "Why don't you come out to San Francisco? You get a job and we'll see how things go?" She said, "No, I don't want to do that." I said, "I've had long-distance romances and they never work out. I don't like that. So we either get married or, bye-bye." I wasn't as abrupt as that; I'm exaggerating to paint a different picture. She thought about it for a while and decided she would come out to San Francisco as a bride, not as a job-seeker. My mother and father fell in love with her. She's a very attractive lady, she's as pretty as can be. And smart; we share a lot of interest. Although hers were more of the academic kind. She's a real student, particularly of art history. She's kept her old papers. She was very serious. Skiing or backpacking, that wasn't so much for her. She [played tennis all of her life], and we became very active tennis players. But I've always felt it's extraordinary that she would agree to that; to getting married on such short notice.

02-01:20:15
Farrell:

Do you have a sense of what it was like for her to make the transition from New York to San Francisco?

02-01:20:24
Bissinger:

Difficult, because I have a huge family here. There's always descendants of different kinds. A lot of people. My parents put on a big party to introduce her to this new world she would inhabit. And my mother said, "And you remember Anne and Susan?" I didn't know. I went away from home when I was thirteen years old, at Exeter, and I always had jobs in the summer one

way or another. I really was home very little, which—this is another topic, which is, how Tom and I worked out our respective lives with each other. But it's a huge community of people. We'd been here for so long in San Francisco, it's a lot of people to get to know, but she handled it very well. She's poised, and she's a remarkable lady.

02-01:21:53

Farrell:

Can you tell me a little bit about your wedding?

02-01:21:58

Bissinger:

Well, it was in New York at The Plaza Hotel, and Kathy's father made some poor business mistakes, and lost a lot of money. It was a real stretch for him to put on a rather large event. The thing I read the other—the last session, and part of that little thing was who was who and how many they are, coming from afar.

02-01:22:41

Farrell:

You didn't actually read that on camera. Can you tell me a little bit about that? We weren't recording when you read that.

02-01:22:47

Bissinger:

Oh. Well I think my father wrote it. I don't remember exactly. Maybe on our bachelor party evening.

02-01:22:58

Farrell:

It was a poem about getting married.

02-01:23:02

Bissinger:

Oh yeah. It was really a dig at me for being a butt-insky. You know, what do I care about ordering fish knives from Shreve's?

02-01:23:23

Farrell:

Because you're so steeped in San Francisco and your family has such a strong presence here, were they okay with you getting married in New York, or they didn't have a say?

02-01:23:34

Bissinger:

Oh, sure. I mean, people come from all over, even in those days, and this wasn't exactly a group of poverty striven people. The family overall is pretty well-off. We've always written funny things about people for major occasions. There's always been a little bit of dig somewhere.

02-01:24:12

Farrell:

Did you and Kathy go on a honeymoon?

02-01:24:15

Bissinger:

Yeah. Her father was in the hotel business, so he was able to get us good rates, and we went [to Jamaica]. I can't remember where we were, but after a few days we felt we wanted to move on and try something else, so we went to another island and that wasn't right, so we got in the car and drove around.

Finally we stopped at one place and I was not very good at this sort of thing, but we had to leave this new place because there were bedbugs all over the place, and Kathy was absolutely in hysterics. Not funny hysterics; terrified of all these bugs. I went to the desk and told them we'd left our medicines at the other hotel and my wife has a serious condition. We have to go back there. We ended up having a good time, but I guess it wasn't quite as what honeymoons are supposed to be. We should have stayed at [Caneel Bay in St. John, part of the U.S. Virgin Islands].

02-01:25:45

Farrell:

What was it like coming back to San Francisco and getting settled there?

02-01:25:51

Bissinger:

[Sentence removed by narrator.] We rented a small apartment on Webster and [Vallejo], something like that, and it was a tiny place, but you know, we should have been—we should have gotten so much more if we had rented in one of the less popular parts of the city, but I was too conventional in those days to see that as an option. We stuck looking to a relatively small area, and I forget how long we stayed there. Then we bought our first house at 140 Jordan Avenue.

02-01:27:07

Farrell:

What neighborhood is that in?

02-01:27:08

Bissinger:

What's that?

02-01:27:09

Farrell:

What neighborhood is that in?

02-01:27:12

Bissinger:

Jordan Park. It's right behind Laurel Village.

02-01:27:23

Farrell:

Okay.

02-01:27:27

Bissinger:

And that—I mean, remember steaming, scraping all the old, what do you call it, wallpaper. We didn't have any money in those days.

02-01:27:47

Farrell:

What year was it when your first son, Stephen was born?

02-01:27:57

Bissinger:

Kathy had several miscarriages, and Stephen was born on April 9, 1964.

02-01:28:39

Farrell:

What was it like for you to start a family?

- 02-01:28:42
Bissinger: Well, it was very exciting, and you know, we—but of course we had Stephen, and then Kathy had more miscarriages, which held up the process. And then came along David, and he died at age thirteen months. I've got some pictures. Oh, here are these. There's a couple of them I want you to read now.
- 02-01:29:26
Farrell: Okay. I need to just pause because I have to disconnect. Or, do you want to do it after, or do you want to do it now?
- 02-01:29:35
Bissinger: It's on my mind, so.
- 02-01:29:36
Farrell: Okay. Let me—[audio interruption]
- 02-01:29:38
Farrell: Okay, we are back on.
- 02-01:29:41
Bissinger: Where are we?
- 02-01:29:42
Farrell: We were talking about your first apartment and starting a family.
- 02-01:29:46
Bissinger: Ah. Well, miscarriages, Stephen came, miscarriages, David came. When you miscarry, [Kathy's doctor] said, "It's your mother. She makes you too nervous and aggravated. She can't be here." Kathy had a tough time. She had to tell her mother to stay away. But I think that is—what really—it was just two people that clashed. But then we lost David but then we had Matthew [on March 23, 1970], and we feel very fortunate that we have two, wonderful, healthy kids. They're not kids anymore. And you know, we can't dictate what happens to us throughout our life, so it's just the way things were.
- 02-01:31:02
Farrell: Were you happy to be able to raise children in San Francisco where you grew up?
- 02-01:31:08
Bissinger: Oh yeah.
- 02-01:31:12
Farrell: Can you tell me a little bit about both of your sons, and I guess, some things about them that stand out to you? Even when they were little, now, just in general?
- 02-01:31:22
Bissinger: [He went to Town School from kindergarten through eighth grade and did four years of University High School.] He just loved music, his guitar, and he would just play his guitar for hours and hours and hours. On his own he found

a way to learn some music theory. [He went to] Colorado College, which is wonderful. [The system worked for him there.]

02-01:33:03

Farrell:

Which system?

02-01:33:08

Bissinger:

The system where you take one course at a time. If you're taking history of United States, for two and a half weeks, that's all you study. [Colorado College was perfect for him.] His sophomore year at Colorado College, he declared as a music major, instantly became cum laude, Dean's List, summa—everything. He got a merit scholarship to Mills College for graduate school, and it's a marvelous outcome. [He does sound design for a living,] which is producing the sound effects for movies and television, and he's done very well, he's very highly regarded. He works almost exclusively up at Skywalker.

02-01:35:04

Farrell:

Wow.

02-01:35:07

Bissinger:

Well, there's more and more I could tell you about him. He married the perfect girl, Taara. She can deal with his idiosyncrasies. They have between them [two children and our grandchild, Hannah]. She has a sixteen-year-old daughter by a previous marriage, who next year will be going to college. We have that routine. Taara has just recently retired from a job that's called GirlVentures, or something like that. It's a program that works with young girls, like twelve to seventeen or sixteen, which I guess is a difficult time for many girls. It's kind of an outward bound—they do hikes and rock climbing and adventurous things. It's all designed to give them self-confidence, leadership ability, poise. She's now got a job. I don't know what it is, but it's a consulting job and she's making more—she's working less hard and making more money than before, so she's very happy about that. She comes from the East Coast and a nice thing she's bringing to the family is, she's much more religious than we are. She's Jewish.

Matthew then is six years younger.. He finally went to Sarah Lawrence, which is one good thing. [He was very quiet as a child.] He keeps things to himself. He was, for many years, the development officer for non-profits. He worked for the opera, Smuin Ballet, a number of Jewish community centers. He had all that proof that he knows everybody in San Francisco. [When we would meet for the first time, they would say, "You must be Matthew Bissinger's father." When I was growing up, people would say to me, "You must be Paul Bissinger's son."] Matthew, he always loved the retail business, so he had a store on Sacramento Street, uptown there, for a while, but that was—there's no foot traffic there. He signed a lease down in Hayes Valley, right behind the Symphony. You know where the Hayes Street Grill is?

- 02-01:38:55
Farrell: Yeah.
- 02-01:38:56
Bissinger: It's about five store doors from that.
- 02-01:39:00
Farrell: What's the name of it?
- 02-01:39:07
Bissinger: Maker & Moss. It's an interesting name. I have great respect for him. [Both of my sons are smart.] Matthew's also gay, which interestingly was no big deal for us when we confirmed what we'd known for some few years. Everybody in San Francisco knows him and loves him. He's got a very thoughtful manner and has been an enormous support for Kathy in all the remodeling we've been doing. He knows all the—where to go to buy this, to buy that. He's here, he's there. He's traveled a lot. He's a great kid. Both are.
- 02-01:41:05
Farrell: I'm running a little bit short on time, and I'm wondering if maybe this is a good place to stop for today, and next time we'll pick up on your career, and we'll talk more about the Asian Art Museum. Do you want to add anything else about what we've talked about today?
- 02-01:41:32
Bissinger: No. I think what we've tried to cover, we did cover pretty well.
- 02-01:41:36
Farrell: Okay.
- 02-01:41:37
Bissinger: I'm sure there'll be some things that come to mind.
- 02-01:41:40
Farrell: Absolutely.
- 02-01:41:40
Bissinger: I'm a little tired because we've been out every night this week.
- 02-01:41:45
Farrell: Okay. That's totally understandable. So then, we'll stop here today, and then we'll pick up with you joining the family business, next time.
- 02-01:41:51
Bissinger: Okay.
- 02-01:41:51
Farrell: All right. Thank you.

Interview 3: May 12, 2017

03-00:00:00

Farrell:

This is Shanna Farrell with Paul Bissinger on Friday, March 12, 2017. We're in San Francisco, California and this is our third session. Paul, when we were talking last time, we were discussing a little bit about your time in the Navy. I understand that [your ship visited] the Shimoda Port, and there's a story about that. Can you share that with me?

03-00:00:27

Bissinger:

Yes, I can. It was one of the more illustrious adventure I had in Japan during the time I was able to be off the ship. Every couple of years, Shimoda is used to celebrate the arrival in Japan of Commodore Perry, and I was designated to Townsend's [ship]—to take three or four hundred gallons of ice cream to [Ambassador MacArthur], I guess. That was a very important assignment.

Then a storm came up, and the ship's officers instructed me to remain on shore. I booked into a Japanese inn, hopped into the men's bath, much to the men's consternation, and had a nice dinner. The next morning I woke to find that I was refereeing a Judo demonstration. That was very glamorous. But I learned a lot about Shimoda. Commodore Perry selected a gentleman named—can you help me?

03-00:02:06

Farrell:

Yes. Townsend Harris?^{iv}

03-00:02:08

Bissinger:

Townsend Harris was appointed the first trade commissioner, or whatever the title was, for the United States in Japan. He took up with a young [Japanese] lady who was engaged to a carpenter, but Townsend nonetheless had her brought up the hill, we're told, weeping copiously, and she was in a cage. Well of course he got her pregnant, and then he had to go back to the United States. She was left destitute and tried working as a geisha.

[Section removed by narrator.]

03-00:03:33

Bissinger:

Sagami tried everything and eventually she committed suicide by jumping into the bay, which hereafter was named the Bay of Shimoda. And if that ain't a starter for Madame Butterfly, you tell me.^v

03-00:03:56

Farrell:

When you were in Japan at that point, was there a sense of that history there, or is this something that you found out later?

03-00:04:05

Bissinger:

Victory?

03-00:04:07

Farrell:

When you were in Japan, did you have a sense [the Shimoda-Townsend history], because this happened in the 1860s?

03-00:04:13

Bissinger:

Yeah.

03-00:04:13

Farrell:

Did you have a sense of that history when you were there, or is that something that you found out when you returned to the United States?

03-00:04:21

Bissinger:

[Both—I read many books and travel guides.] I met nothing but friendliness on the part of the Japanese. Wherever I went, school kids would want to take me around, show me the sights, maybe I'd buy them lunch. And the hostility? No, not like in Vietnam, which is a different environment.

Because family had some business interests in Japan, some of the trade companies took me out to lunch. There's a family named Nozaki, who we had known for a long, long time. [Tom Nozaki] was a year or two older than me and he was enrolled at UC [Berkeley]. We got together a few times [at his family's home, which had a beautiful garden]. A very nice guy. I have a picture somewhere, if I could find it, of his mother and father all dressed up in their finest outfits, preparing to go to be presented to the Emperor. [Another important trip was cruising] down the inland sea to Hiroshima, and that was in 1957 or '58. Not a pretty sight. A very sobering experience. So, if I sat here another hour maybe I could think of other adventures, but that is the best one I've retained in my memory.

03-00:06:19

Farrell:

Well we'll certainly talk a little bit more about your travels to Japan when we get to Asian Art, but I'm going to pause for one second and fix your microphone— [audio interruption]

03-00:06:29

Farrell:

Okay, now we're back.

03-00:06:31

Bissinger:

Before leaving Japan, I must show you a very faded article from the Stars and Stripes, dated May 21, 1958. You can't see it very well, but this is me greeting Japanese visitors onboard our ship, the U.S.S. Hornet, aircraft carrier. Not too many people have their picture in Stars and Stripes. So that was illustrious. All in all Japan was just a magical place for me.

03-00:07:11

Farrell:

I want to talk a little bit about your professional life. Can you tell me what your first job was after you were out of the navy? I know you went back to school, but then I guess after that, what was your first job?

03-00:07:27
Bissinger:

My first job was with [the family business and then I went to] an investment banking firm named J. Barth & Company; B-A-R-T-H. The principle partners were Mick Hellman, who is a descendent of the Hellmann family, and Bobby Sinton, whose two brothers married my mother's two sisters. This was kind of a cozy arrangement, and that probably factored into why I elected to go there; it was a more comfortable arrangement. I don't remember the sequence exactly, how many days or months or weeks or years, but I didn't stay there very long, and I went into the family business. That very quickly evaporated as being interesting. Of course I had my grandfather, my father, my cousin Bob Bloch—my first cousin—and there was really nothing for me to do. I added up numbers that had already been added up. I left and I don't know—I can't remember if J. Barth was still alive, because it did eventually sell out to Dean Witter. I was there for quite a spell.

J. Barth—or, Dean Witter, I can't remember which—I think it was maybe J. Barth—sent me back to New York for three or four months to be trained. My interest was not in being a broker and just selling whatever the house had to offer that day; I liked to know more about these companies. I would dig into the figure myself and where possible, visit the company and meet the management. I was kind of a half broker, half analyst and not too spectacular at either.

But those were interesting days. Claude Rosenberg, Rosenberg Capital Management, that's where he got his start. John Leland was a classmate of mine at Stanford, and I think as far as I know, it was a very good firm. At some point, maybe it was when my grandfather died at age eighty-nine I guess, in 1969.

When my grandfather died, I figured arrogantly that I was the boy genius who was going to restore the family business out of its slump, which was, as far as I could tell, irreversible. It was the confluence of many factors. Do you want me to go into that?

03-00:11:00
Farrell:

Sure. Yeah.

03-00:10:59
Bissinger:

Well, okay. In our hide business—hides and calfskins and so forth—the traditional practice was that the meatpacker would take the hide fresh off the kill floor and toss it in the basement, in the cellar with the flesh off, and cover it with rock salt. Then, a month later, the hides would be cured. In other words, there'd be no further decay. They'd be stable. When we had a railroad car full, or whatever quantity somebody wanted, we'd sell them. We did a big business with the main meatpackers; Swift, Armor, Cudahy, so forth, and the big tanners who made leather. Depending on what kind of leather they were making, they needed a particular type of hide. So, your dressy, upper-leather was probably made from a heifer hide. In other words, an animal who never

had an offspring. Your sole leather would be from a bull hide. There were, you know, many different tanners and many different uses.

So, what was happening in the '50s and '60s was that refrigerated transport became feasible, and so, it was cheaper to ship a fully dressed side of the animal in a refrigerated truck or railroad car, it was cheaper to ship it that way than to ship a whole animal alive, and they get banged around and bruised and lose weight. So that was happening.

Also, this led to the creation of feed lots, where the animals were absolutely cookie cutter identical and that means that Mitsubishi could go directly to Tanner-X and say, "I'll buy your hides for the month of August at X price," and so they never had to warehouse the hides like we did. We had so much more cost in our operation than these big meatpackers.

Then the local meatpackers found that they could take the hides directly from the meatpacker every day. There was a tanner, [AK Salz], in Santa Cruz, there was [Legallet in Hunter's Point,] one in South San Francisco, Manasse-Block in Berkeley, and so forth. They would get these cement trucks and they'd put a very dense, brine solution in them, and drive down the highway with the hides being cured overnight, or that same day. We were becoming less and less competitive. We had high occupancy costs, labor costs, and all of this.

The trend was not our friend. I kind of sensed that but I didn't know what to do with it. One thing I thought of but never carried out was to make a business out of the shipping containers that were—because the hides were so obnoxious, they had to have their own shipping containers. I poked around a little bit and found it wasn't really feasible for me, and there was no support in the office, so I dropped that. That's where things were at when I got involved.

03-00:15:53

Farrell:

I have a couple of questions about that. You were talking about how there are different types of hides? What is the difference in hides? Like, a heifer that hasn't had any calves, and one that has?

03-00:16:12

Bissinger:

Well, the more useable leather, the greater the price. A heifer hide has never been branded, so that makes it a little more valuable. Also, the thickness of the hide would be uniform because it hadn't had a baby. Those are the main differences.

03-00:16:33

Farrell:

Okay. Was there also a difference in size as well? Because you were talking about bull hides.

03-00:16:39
Bissinger:

Well, yeah. How shall I put this? A typical carload to International Shoe Company would be a carload of heifer hides, with no more than one brand, weighing between forty-five and sixty pounds, with a fifty pound average. In Japan, they loved not just the dairy cows, which they liked a lot, but they liked particularly the black and white ones. So, we'd make up a shipment to Japan of dairy cow hides, no more than—or at least eighty percent black and white.

[We also collected and sold to tanners,] anything that walked down the street; a deer skin or a bear skin. Whatever. That was the hide business. The wool business was also a very old fashioned business. Thousands of sheep used to die over the winter months because they froze to death or they can't get to any food, and the farmers would skin the pelt, toss it over the fence, and then in the spring we'd collect them all. Thousands of them. We brought them into the warehouse. We had two warehouses for wool; one in Vancouver, British Columbia, and one in Troutdale, outside of Portland. We had men actually with a wooden horse, pulling the wool out by hand. It got graded into more different grades, they'd toss it into a barrel according to the kinkiness, the stains from tar, [poop,] and so forth. That was my grandfather's favorite business because, once wool is pulled and dry and bundled, they would keep forever. It was my grandfather's great speculation to wait for months and maybe even a few years, for the market to have a little spike, and then he'd sell his wool. He figured he made a profit, but he wasn't accounting that we had to take into our cost structure, the cost of buying and warehousing the hides in Salt Lake City and Spokane and everywhere there were large sheep populations.

Lastly, we had a tallow business which was called my father's [delusion]. In any event, tallow is really a smelly business, because that's cooking up everything that once walked or crawled. Visiting them was not great. But we had—in Seattle, Vancouver, British Columbia—warehouses originally were out of town because of the obnoxiousness. When we sold the business, it came to be my responsibility to get rid of all the real estate. The rendering plant in Troutdale, I got a pretty good price on that because it had one great asset; namely, the right to operate in that location. They had a permit.

And horsetails—to show everything got used. There was a guy in South San Francisco who was buying them, and I went down to see what he was doing with them. He was cleaning them up and then he had some people braiding them and putting them in these big steamers. What came out the other end was curly, kinky material, and they'd stamp that with a form, and it became packaging material for the hi-tech business, which in those days was mostly vacuum tubes. That was our hi-tech department.

03-00:21:56
Farrell:

Who were some of your accounts? Who did you sell to?

03-00:22:01

Bissinger:

Oh, I can't remember. There was a tanner, Legallet, which is south in Hunter's Point. Actually, we owned a piece of that business, that tannery, at one time. Poetsch & Peterson [for bull hides], who was down in South San Francisco; A. K. Salz in Santa Cruz; Manasse-Block in Berkeley. [We sold sheep pelts to Pendleton Woolen Mills.] That was pretty much the local group. But we'd sell to International Shoe and all the big tanners in Milwaukee. We were considered to be a very reputable, honorable firm, and we stood by our contracts. It was a lot of pride in doing the right thing and keeping our tanners happy. [It really was a Jewish family business. We worked with dealers who sold to Japan, primarily, but also to Mexico, Russia, India, and Amsterdam.]

03-00:23:16

Farrell:

You also mentioned that refrigerator transport started, and you mentioned a little bit about how it changed things. How did it change the tanning business?

03-00:23:31

Bissinger:

Well, it would change the [cost. You put a live animal] in a railroad car, from Milwaukee to wherever—Kansas—to San Francisco, or Sacramento or someplace, and the animal would be banged up, bruised, and the meat from a bruised area wouldn't sell for as much. On the other hand, to kill the animal, to cut up the 400 odd pounds of pure [beef] would sell for—you can see the economics. A thousand pound animal live is worth less per pound than four or five hundred pounds of pure beef.

03-00:25:01

Farrell:

Did the centers of the tanning business change after refrigerated transport started?

03-00:25:07

Bissinger:

You know, I was in the business so short, I can't tell you much information about some of these areas. More and more cattle were in feed lots [in the Midwest because the land was cheaper than California], and they're a uniform standard, and few of them live just roaming wild.

03-00:25:44

Farrell:

Can you tell me a little bit about when the family business sold to Beggs & Cobb?

03-00:25:51

Bissinger:

Well, in 1966 my grandfather died, so that made my father president of the business, and he had never liked the business. He really didn't. He got his rewards and they were lavish awards; he was police commission, navy league, junior chamber of commerce, senior chamber of commerce, board of United Airlines, board of Wells-Fargo. He had a huge following around town. People loved him. He had a big smile and he just loved people. He didn't love the business.

Shortly after my grandfather died, he developed a cancer, which was in the early days of radiation, and that was successful. But, the radiation was very hard on him. His cheery outlook didn't hold up that well. So, in 1969, three years after my grandfather died, he died, my father. At the time, he was at the annual leather show in Paris, France. Then they went to England and he had a stroke in the middle of the night at Claridge's. I can tell you that, if you have to have a stroke, Claridge's is the place to do it. The most elegant hotel in London.

My sister and I flew over to be with my mother, and he lived for a few weeks. There was one nurse who seemed to get more response from him than anybody else. We came in one day and she said, "That ring you're wearing. Your father bought it in Italy, is that right?" He blinked or did whatever. Somehow she'd gotten that information out of him. She'd drag him out of bed and put him in a chair. We arranged for her to come home with us and be his nurse, but he died and so, that didn't happen.

But even his royal status held up from there; the day we flew back, [United Airlines] came to get us [because my father was on their board]. We left our suitcases, got in a van, they took us to the airport, put us in a private room. When it's getting time to load, they put us in first class. When we got to San Francisco, you know when you exit the plane there's some stairs that goes down to the tarmac? We went down the stairs, they put us in the limousine, police escort. We came home. Eventually the suitcases turned up. We never signed anything or whatever you're supposed to do to get on an international flight. [At his funeral at] Temple Emanuel it was standing room only because all the policemen were there. Everybody was there. He obviously got his psychic rewards from his public life, rather than his business life.

03-00:30:22

Farrell:

Can you tell me about how things changed at Bissinger & Co. after that?

03-00:30:27

Bissinger:

Well, my cousin, Bob Bloch, didn't want to work for anybody else, so he left and developed an excellent investment business on his own. He was legendary, kind of a Warren Buffet kind of person. Made a lot of money for a lot of people. [The buyers, Beggs & Cobb,] made me the president, and that was the first sign that they had no idea what they were doing. That went on for about a year, and the relationship was impossible, because we were a commodity trading business and we were reporting to a manufacturing business who made leather. They were in turn owned by a finance company. Nobody understood the other person's business, and it was a disaster. That was terminated. But it turned out the only thing they really wanted was our two warehouses in Los Angeles, and everything else was ours. [During that year, I was required to terminate employees who had worked for my grandfather and my father for their entire business careers, some in the 1970s

and even 1980s. This was devastating to me. It caused me a great deal of pain and distress.]

It took me a couple years to sell these warehouses and an office building. It was a bad time in real estate. Real estate values were bad, but I did what I was required to do by his will, which was to see that my mother continued to live in the style to which she was accustomed. [And she did,] thanks to yours truly.

Through all of this, when my grandfather died he had never made any estate planning measures, and so, nothing really was left to my father other than stock in Bissinger—the remnant of Bissinger & Company. When my father died, pretty much the same, and by then the company had decreased in value so that we really didn't get much out of the sale. I take a lot of pride and pleasure in that [I enabled my mother to live in the manner to which she was accustomed], because keeping her spending under control was not always easy. She was so involved with the Asian art world, and everything that came along she wanted to buy. [I had to tell her,] “No, you can't buy that.” [She always took my advice.]

03-00:33:29

Farrell:

What was that like for you, trying to help her out with being the executor of the estate?

03-00:33:34

Bissinger:

It was okay. She was terrific. Everything I recommended, she did. Everything. She never said no. Of course, I had lawyers and accountants and people helping me, so I think my strategies were pretty much correct. [Nonetheless, I was astonished one afternoon when she told me, with great emotion, that she loved me. It was highly unusual in our family to express our emotions. I was very moved.]

03-00:33:58

Farrell:

Do you remember what your strategies were?

03-00:34:03

Bissinger:

To find somebody to buy these places [in order to generate cash flow]. There was one place in the Rocky Mountain state— maybe it was Spokane. I don't remember—which I sold for a dollar. It turned out that it was on land leased from the railroad and we had to pay rent and insurance every year, and it hadn't been used for twenty years. The [land sloped and the] lease specified that if it burned down or we neglected it, we had to clean up the site. So it was more of a liability than an asset. We sold it for a dollar.

03-00:34:54

Farrell:

What else was your role as president like?

03-00:35:02

Bissinger:

Well they pretty much left me alone, because they didn't know anything. Then of course. Most of these tanners and meatpackers had deep, deep loyalties to

my grandfather. I mean, some of these people who I had to fire over the course of a year were in their seventies and eighties, and worked for us forever. My grandfather would always say [to these employees], "Young man, you can work as long as you want, or you can work for all of your life," you know, promises like that. We had some lawsuits to settle those painful situations.

03-00:35:53

Farrell:

Did that affect the way that you felt about working at the family business because you were left with that responsibility?

03-00:36:07

Bissinger:

[To say that it was a painful process was an understatement about having to do this. In terms of selling the real estate,] I'm kind of a numbers person, myself, and I did enjoy working things out. Everybody got pretty much what they wanted. I learned a lot about real estate. Of course, the laws regarding real estate transactions in Vancouver, British Columbia were different than in San Francisco.

Now, the one thing we did do of note in the mid-'60s, was our warehouse and office in San Francisco, which had been a Swift warehouse in the produce district, was redeveloped [on Davis and Pacific]. We had to go somewhere. We built a new warehouse up in Woodland, California. It was the first facility built [in the United States since the Depression days,] specifically for the processing of cattle hides. It was a Rube Goldberg operation, just like these cement trucks. We had these enormous tanks, maybe 100 feet by 200 feet, and the hides would be fed into this metal tube that had holes in it, and wooden pegs, and that would be tossed into the soup. I would go around all night and the next day we had hides ready to sell. People came from all over the country to see this new way of doing things. Whether it paid off, I don't know.

03-00:38:14

Farrell:

How long were you president of the company for?

03-00:38:16

Bissinger:

Oh, it was around about a year.

03-00:38:18

Farrell:

A year. Okay.

03-00:38:20

Bissinger:

We sized each other up perfectly well.

03-00:38:24

Farrell:

What was it like for you to walk away from the business?

03-00:38:32

Bissinger:

Well it wasn't any one particular time, because these different transactions were not all at one time; they were here and there. But by then I thought I was

the smartest real estate guy in the world, if not the universe, and I thought my future lay in doing mega deals and making mega money, and I found that—like Mr. Trump has found—it's more complicated than you think.

I joined up with a guy named Peter Maier, M-A-I-E-R, who was an old time friend and brilliant guy, who was a tax attorney and investment smart guy. He wanted to be all things to do with money and investments. He did quite well. He had a terrific following. Very complicated deals. So, I joined him, but I didn't know about how to buy a 200 unit apartment building. We brought into the firm a couple of guys; Gene Whitmeyer and Donald, who were very experienced at buying and managing large apartment buildings, or whatever. What we were offering—at that time, the big thing was five years prepaid interest, which was legal. That created enormous tax deductions in the year you buy the thing, but it's painful in the end because you have to pay those taxes that you've been deferring. We prided ourselves that our deals didn't have that negative tax aspect.

They were very good real estate guys, and my role became more and more, just raising money. Again, just like J. Barth & Company, where I wanted to know more about these deals. I wanted to have my hands in the mix. Eventually I left Peter Maier and I decided I would be an all things to all people investment person. Kind of like, your home office; so I would take over paying your bills, talking to your tax attorney, talking to your accountant. Not being one, but being the conduit for recommendations to the client and managing [these relationships]. Pretty much whatever people wanted. But my problem was that my connections were with people like the Haases and the Hellmans, who already had their own home offices, and they didn't need Paul Bissinger. That wasn't working very well, but then I did do a few deals [on my own].

I bought a warehouse in Sacramento that another person desperately wanted. I sold it to them with a double escrow, and that was profitable. I bought two gas station sites in the San Jose area, and within a year or two both of these—Union Oil and Standard or Mobile or some other—decided they wanted to buy these properties back, the land. It was very profitable. When I bought them, these two parcels, I put them in the names of our kids and my sister and brother's kids, so that all got divided up and it was quite a good chunk of money for them. I did other deals, including buying a piece of a shopping center in Sparks, Nevada, and that one I syndicated. It turned out to be a very good investment. I sold it a couple of years ago. It wasn't bad. [It was a small deal as these things go, but I enjoyed the process.]

03-00:44:04

Farrell:

How did you know what properties to buy or where to invest?

03-00:44:10

Bissinger:

Well, as I say, I'm kind of a numbers person, and if you're paying attention you can kind of pick up where the market is, and something eventually either looks good enough to buy or not good enough to buy, or good enough to buy if you can get it a lot cheaper.

03-00:44:36

Farrell:

I've never heard of Sparks, Nevada, so I'm wondering how that was on your radar.

03-00:44:47

Bissinger:

Well, it actually came to me through a tennis friend, who was a lawyer at Heller, Ehrman, White, & McAuliffe. There was one developer and every year in December they sold one of their pieces that were still in the process of developing, not ready to sign up tenants and such. They were willing to sell it at a discount because they wanted to get rid of it so they could get their bonuses for the year. I guess I was in the bonus enhancing business, and we did two or three deals with them through their lawyer. It got to be fun because, it was so easy because everybody was so compliant and nobody was trying to pull any stunts. There [were several more] deals over the next few years.

I guess at that point is when I decided that my real love was the stock market. That gets into the next phase. I set up shop and I didn't have a name, so I just called it Paul Bissinger, and I started getting a few clients, and we grew. It got to a point where most of the clients had pretty good results, and so it was going along quite well.

03-00:46:40

Farrell:

How did you grow your client base in those early days?

03-00:46:43

Bissinger:

Word of mouth. I don't think there's any other better way. The quality of the clients you get, I mean, they're predisposed to trust you, and I was so meticulously careful. Anything I bought for my clients, I'd buy for myself, but myself would come last after everybody else was taken care of. I reported everything. That was rewarding. I really enjoyed that.

03-00:47:25

Farrell:

Can you tell me a little bit more about why you found that rewarding?

03-00:47:29

Bissinger:

Why I found that rewarding? Well first of all, it was something I knew. The kind of information you need to make a decision was available, and you could make a few phone calls and find out a lot of things. For example, Fireman's Fund, I thought were a bunch of crooks. It was a very complicated situation. Early in the century they had bought a lot of stocks at high prices, which then went through bankruptcy [in the Depression]. Now they might have on their books X amount of [a] stock [selling] at twenty-five cents a share, or whatever the valuation was in bankruptcy. Let me see if I can get this [story straight].

One way or another, their tax loss offset the gain they were making in selling it, at a price that had recovered so much of its value. It was my position that, other than their life insurance business, it was really a pile of junk. They had an airline, they had this, they had that, a property insurance business which wasn't really very good. I thought it was a crummy business, and the president of Fireman's Fund called me over to his office several times to chew me out, which was not very comfortable, but it was part of what you do.

03-00:49:48

Farrell: Probably made you feel like you were doing something right if you're going to ruffle some feathers.

03-00:49:52

Bissinger: Yeah.

03-00:49:53

Farrell: Were they based in San Francisco?

03-00:49:54

Bissinger: Yeah.

[Section removed by narrator.]

03-00:51:15

Farrell: You also wrote a newsletter at the end of every year that went out to about several hundred people. Can you tell me a little bit about the genesis of those newsletters?

03-00:51:23

Bissinger: Well, I'm a great one for accumulating information, which I never can find when I need it, but when I do I always pick two or three topics that might be of interest from an investment point of view. Then at the end of the year, I would look over what my ideas were and pick one or two to write about. I would write these newsletters discussing, not so much the prospects for these stocks, but just what's going on in the world. I was kind of a contrarian, probably wrong as much as right. But I liked to write and it was fun, and each one had attached to it a cartoon or several cartoons, illustrating what I was talking about. That was fun. I don't think I ever got a client out of it, but I enjoyed doing that and people did say, "I enjoyed reading your newsletter."^{vi}

03-00:52:46

Farrell: Where would you get the cartoons from?

03-00:52:49

Bissinger: Anywhere. Magazines, newspapers, bulletins.

03-00:52:59

Farrell: Did you have that business until you retired, or what was the trajectory with the business?

03-00:53:08
Bissinger:

Well, as you may recall, the stock market was climbing to dizzying heights all through the latter part of the 1960s—80s. I just was paralyzed in making decisions, because everything was out of sight. I didn't understand paying 100 times earnings for a stock, or 100 times sales and no sales. I'll never forget, I was fishing up in Northern California, and there were a couple of kids—a boy and girl—and they each had a techie business; one was anything you wanted to know about oceans. I said to them, "Well that sounds really interesting. How are the sales? Are you bringing in any revenue?" They looked at me blank; sales? Revenues? They didn't know the word. That was going on, so December 30, at the end of the year, I just closed up shop, and helped clients the best I could to find a new home, and I don't have a bit of regrets, looking back.

03-00:54:52
Farrell:

How did you go about finding good homes or good matches for some of your clients?

03-00:54:58
Bissinger:

Well, they'd pretty much be people I already knew. I would say exclusively people I already knew.

03-00:55:05
Farrell:

Okay. Were there other people in San Francisco doing the same thing?

03-00:55:10
Bissinger:

Oh yeah. My cousin, Bob Bloch, was the smartest of them all. He had a novel way of billing people. Most of us were taking a percentage of the asset value, so it might be half a percent or—depending whether it was bonds or stocks, or whatever was fair. But Bob would study a portfolio. He'd review the portfolio and he would write out in handwriting a lengthy recital of what he thought the client might consider doing. He never bought a stock for a client; he just did that. He couldn't—I mean, obviously he didn't need the money, which he didn't. [Section removed by narrator.] He was very shrewd. He was very smart. I just admire the guy. He died not long ago, and everybody feels we lost one of the bright stars in the Warren Buffet type environment.

03-00:57:28
Farrell:

Aside from him, did you have a professional network of people that you were kind of consulting about things, or talking to about trends or client relations?

03-00:57:42
Bissinger:

Oh yeah, but not on a formal way. I didn't have a monthly meeting with somebody or whatever. Not a structured way. I probably should have spent more time having lunch with people who were smarter than me, and I could have benefitted by that.^{vii}

03-00:58:17
Farrell:

You were your mother's estate executor. Were you helping other people as estate executors later?

03-00:58:30
Bissinger:

No. Nobody ever came and asked me to do that.

03-00:58:34
Farrell:

Okay. For some reason I thought—I misremembered.

03-00:58:38
Bissinger:

Well I was in an awkward position on this, my mother's estate, because my brother and sister were back East, so I was the only one on the spot. I was her personal advisor and financial manager. I was the trustee, I was the custodian. I had all these hats that I was wearing, and it made me hyper careful that everybody got exactly what they were entitled to. If they wanted a little bit more—"I really wanted that lamp"—take it.

03-00:59:25
Farrell:

Around the time I guess in the '80s and '90s, there's a lot happening in San Francisco in terms of the tech bubble. How did you see that affect business?

03-00:59:38
Bissinger:

Well, it affected business in that my results for my clients were getting worse and worse and worse because everybody was making so much money riding this wave, and I wasn't even at the water's edge. I just couldn't—companies had businesses I totally didn't understand. One of my cardinal rules; I don't buy things that I don't understand.

03-01:00:10
Farrell:

That's a good rule.

03-01:00:12
Bissinger:

For me it was.

03-01:00:13
Farrell:

Did you retire after you closed shop, or did you go into another avenue?

03-01:00:20
Bissinger:

No, that was it. That was it.

03-01:00:26
Farrell:

What were some of the highlights or the accomplishments you were most proud of during that period, in your professional life?

03-01:00:35
Bissinger:

I'm a little bit like my father in that, the rewards, just the psychic rewards from my business didn't measure up to the real deep, deep pleasure I got out of the community things that I was involved in. The principle ones were Big Brothers, which I was chairman of that board for a number of years, and under my regime I think we expanded Big Brother services into two of the adjoining counties, probably Marin and the peninsula. There was a breakfast club called the Economic Round Table of San Francisco. I was president of that for a little while. Music was always in the forefront. I just loved going to operas and symphonies, and chamber music. I loved being involved, and the people, I

liked the people. I mean, real musicians who were players in the San Francisco symphony who coached our kids. I loved getting to know them and what the musician's life is like. Everything about music, and so they put me on the board of the Symphony and gave me this awesome job of starting up a youth orchestra program.

03-01:02:31

Farrell:

Before you get too far in that, we're going to spend the whole next session talking about that, because we are starting to run a little bit short on time. But I'm wondering if you could tell me a little bit more about your time as president of the Economic Round Table.

03-01:02:49

Bissinger:

Well, originally all the members had to each year, or at some interval, give a talk of their own. It wasn't just outside people. The job of the president is to make sure every week there's somebody who's got something interesting to talk about. It was very informal. Never a big deal around town. There were nice people, interesting people, and we had some very accomplished people from time to time.

[Section removed by narrator.]

03-01:05:25

Bissinger:

I was [on the board of directors and] the education chairman at San Francisco Performances, which I loved doing. Melanie Smith took over as president from Ruth Felt [when Ruth retired]. She was the chairman of the education part [of the organization], so I know her real well. At one time or another I was helping fundraising for the Conservatory and San Francisco Classical Voice, and you know, all kinds of musical organizations where I could lend my name and invite somebody to a performance or do something to help the organization.

03-01:06:23

Farrell:

Yeah, and I want to spend our time talking about all of this next week, because I don't want to short-change any of that conversation. But I guess my last question for you today before we wrap up is, I guess, what did your time working and having a business in San Francisco mean to you, since you've come from a long line of San Franciscans?

03-01:06:55

Bissinger:

Well, we do. I guess the Bissingers—there's the Alaska Commercial Company, and that was run by Sloss and Gerstly. Well there was a couple of cousins—I guess they were cousins, at least that's what they were represented to be when they came over to San Francisco, which was in the 1880s, I guess. My grandfather came over in 1877, all on his own, from Ichenhausen, a little village [in Germany], to wherever the port left, and got to New York. The person who was supposed to meet him didn't. He slept in a bar the first night. Got on the train to San Francisco and the person who was supposed to meet

him there, one of the cousins, didn't show up either. He was on his own, found out where the cousin lived and got himself there. He was a very resourceful man. I've always thought it would be interesting to write something about him, a little thing, but there's no letters to home from him. I don't have enough sources that I think are reliable. But indeed, we're not the Haas's or the Hellmanns or the big names, but we have been of consequence in San Francisco. I feel that that's something that we, to the best of each person's ability, sustained. Our younger son, Matthew, is the leader of the pack in that department, and that pleases me.

03-01:09:19

Farrell:

Is there anything else that you want to add about your career or your professional life before we wrap up today?

03-01:09:30

Bissinger:

I don't think so. As I said, I didn't have any focus. I didn't have any obsession with being the biggest guy on the block in business. Music was different. The Asian art thing, bloomed and bloomed and bloomed. I wouldn't say I'll never be held in dearest memory because of my business acumen, which is as it is. Everybody's got to do what they do. But it didn't go unnoticed. Kathy has frequently discussed this with me. I was not given any strong messages that you've got to have a career, you've got to have accomplishments, you have to get advanced degrees or whatever. My father discouraged me from going to business school, which might have made a difference. Who knows? That's a long time ago. I think that kind of sums it up.

03-01:11:12

Farrell:

Well thank you. I think that's a good place to leave it for today.

Interview 4: May 26, 2017

04-00:00:00

Farrell:

Okay. This is Shanna Farrell back with Paul Bissinger on Friday, May 26, 2017. This is our fourth session and we are in San Francisco, California. Paul, today I figured we would talk about your musical life. Can you start out by telling me a little bit about how you developed your love for music?

04-00:00:25

Bissinger:

Yes. Well, it starts at the beginning because there was always music in our house. My father loved theater in all forms, but particularly the Broadway shows and comedy in general. There was always a lot of music.

I'm going to keep jumping around a little, but in 1955, on the occasion of my father's fiftieth birthday, we all went to Europe. I do remember in Italy we went to one of these open-air theaters—and it was an opera—I think a Verdi opera—and I was just entranced. My mother and father were tired so we had to leave early and I was crestfallen. So we got started there.

During Stanford times, I had this program at the Packard Children's Hospital where I went every Saturday morning with a comedian or a juggler or pom-pom girls, or whatever I could dig up to entertain them for an hour or two. That was a lot of fun.

A big part of my musical time at Stanford was with our dance band, "The Stardusters," which was organized by a wonderful musician, Spike Lynch.^{viii} We were a wonderful big band, with seventeen musicians in it, sometimes a vocalist, down to just me and Spike at cocktails parties. He was a great pianist and I was a mediocre guitar player. But we had a lot of fun.

Actually, we were blackballed by the union, the big band, because we had the first pick of many of the proms up and down the peninsula when we were less expensive than the union was. I feel badly about that in hindsight. I don't know that I would do it differently now, but knowing from all these years of involvement in music, what a struggle it is for musicians to make a living. I might feel a little differently now about underpricing our shows.

I had visions of being a music minor. I knew I couldn't be a music major because I couldn't read music. I'd had piano lessons but they never took. At Exeter, a fellow named Dick Mansfield, who was subsequently the Paul Bissinger on the peninsula and deeply involved in all manner of music education, had an accordion and I had my guitar, and we played away. But nobody ever hired us.^{ix}

Then there was another fellow named Chuck Huck, who was from New Jersey. He played the harmonica. I had an orchestra consisting of harmonica and guitar, and we also didn't get hired.

At Stanford we did get hired and I did try to be a music minor. There was a wonderful professor named Sandor Salgo, who was a well-known musician in the Bay area for many, many years. He was head of the [Carmel] Bach Festival and he was music director of the Marin Symphony, and I think he had other positions. [At the beginning of one course that I took from him, he said, "Few, if any, of you in this room will go on to have a career as a musician or in management. However, you will be a more appreciative audience and more valuable as board members of much programs in your community." That certainly has proven to be true for me.] Wonderful man and his wife, Priscilla. I got to know them. I think I did a little gardening for them, pushing dirt around, and I wrote him a letter when he retired, which, he told somebody that he was rather moved by that I had taken the time to write.

The seeds were planted. When I was at the American Institute for Foreign Trade, the parents of a friend of mine, she was on the board of the museum I think, but in terms of music, somehow I found myself a disc jockey introducing each week the upcoming program for the Phoenix Symphony. Basically that was reading the backside of the envelope. But it was fun to do that, in any event.

So, now we're into the real world. The Navy is over, Stanford is over, and I'm now an object of interest, a person of interest, to the myriad boards that make up the music world of San Francisco and many other cities. I was on several boards, primarily the Symphony; San Francisco Performances, where I was the education committee chairman; the Merola Opera Training Program, the Community Music Center; the Morrison Chamber Music Program at San Francisco State, which was anchored by the Alexander String Quartet, and San Francisco Classical Voice; an innovative program funded primarily by Gordon Getty, which was of course very nice.

In July of '81, I was invited to come to the home of Agnes Albert, who was the great lady of music in San Francisco. I had no idea what I was being invited for. I'd been on the board of the Symphony for a few years and I'd never been on a committee. I guess they didn't know what to do with me because I wasn't a prominent financier or anything like that.

I got there and my goodness, Agnes Albert had rounded up Nancy H. Bechtle and Peter Pastreich and all the luminaries—three or four people. They told me that they wanted to start a youth orchestra. Would I like to chair a committee to be in charge of this baby and nurture it, and form a committee and raise money? It was like falling in love all over again. It was the most exciting thing and heartwarming thing I've ever done. Our first music director was Jahja Ling. He was a Chinese born in Indonesia and didn't speak either language clearly enough that you could understand him, but he was a wonderful musician. [His enthusiasm was explosive and infectious.] He was followed by many others—not many, but six or eight other wonderful musicians, and off we went.^x

The initial orchestra was I think about eighty-seven members. We were short in certain sections. For example, I think we only had one or two basses, and so, we recruited Steve Tramontozzi, who was a bass player in the Symphony, to add some heft to the bass section. We pretty nearly put polka dots on his cheeks and sat him down in the section.

Some years later, when Yo-Yo Ma was in town, he did a guest performance for us, [coaching several of our students]. [He came back to play] the Saint-Saëns cello concerto [after intermission]. Each section several youth orchestra students would stand up and play, and he would critique them. Then, after intermission, as the kids were filing back in, I noticed Yo-Yo Ma was sitting in the back row [of the cello section]. He just was playing along. He just loved to play music with anybody. The kids of course, in the few rows around him, they knew exactly who he was and they played their hearts out. That was a wonderful experience.

We had fantastic publicity. Here we had a small announcement, July 25, 1981, [unfolds paper], and we had all this publicity. It was just incredible. Full page, pieces like this. These are old and stuck together. Not very good. Here's another. We had tons of publicity.

04-00:12:03

Farrell:

What did it mean to you to get all that publicity?

04-00:12:09

Bissinger:

Well, it meant a lot to the kids, and to the institution, the San Francisco Symphony, because just like politics today; follow the money. The more money we had, the more we could do with our program. Most all of it was drummed up by the development department and the publicity people.

Then we were invited to be the orchestra to greet the King and Queen of England, and that was a big coup. Later on, we were invited to play at the fortieth anniversary of the signing of the World War II peace treaties. Here's the invitation for Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip.

04-00:13:27

Farrell:

How did that evolve? How did that come to fruition?

04-00:13:32

Bissinger:

Oh, I don't know. I'm sure the mayor must have had his fingers in it. This was way over my head.

04-00:13:46

Farrell:

Did you go to England with the youth orchestra?

04-00:13:50

Bissinger:

Oh, no. The King and Queen were in San Francisco [and the Youth Orchestra played for them].

04-00:13:59

Farrell:

Okay, because I know you had gone on a couple of tours with the youth orchestra.

04-00:14:02

Bissinger:

Yeah. Then, in 1985 we announced we were going to go on our first international tour, and there I did make a substantial hit; I invited Barbro and Barney Osher to our May concert that year. At intermission [they asked] how things were going, and I told them all about the tour and everything was in place, except we still needed a cooperate sponsor for \$65 thousand. We went and sat down and a minute or two later, Barney passed me his program in which Barbro had written, "You've got the sixty-five thousand." The check came the next week, and it's the best pledge card I've ever had.

One thing built on another. All this publicity certainly helped. We had Robert Commanday, all the other reviewers, raving about us. We were riding high regularly.

Now, the regular program for the youth orchestra was a matter of selecting the kids. Everything was by audition, from the concert master down to the last stand of violins, or the tuba. Everything was by audition. That helped attract the most talented kids from the greater Bay Area. But let me tell you about some of the things we added on as time went by.

First of all was the coaching team, and we had, for each section of the orchestra, a member of the San Francisco Symphony coaching the kids every Saturday after their morning rehearsal. [Then, the kids would assemble] on stage, the whole orchestra, at two o'clock. I can't say enough about these wonderful coaches. They got paid a token for doing this, but they adored these kids, became mentors to them, helped them figure out who to study with, where to go to college, what to do about personal problems that, as teenagers, they predictably had. We also had great support from Michael Tilson Thomas, which was invaluable.

Every season now we've had an assortment of famous conductors and performers come and guest-rehearse the orchestra, or just talk to them about their careers. I've just noted a few of them; John Adams, of course a prominent local composer, who, after we did one of his pieces, said, "This is the best rendition of that piece we've had ever." Vladimir Ashkenazy, Emanuel AX, Joshua Bell, Herbert Blomstedt, Charles Dutoit, Edo de Waart, Valery Gergiev, members of The Grateful Dead, Yo-Yo Ma, Kurt Masur, Sir Yehudi Menuhin, Misslav Rastapovich, Leonard Slatkin, Michael Tilson Thomas, and Robin Williams.

That was a tremendous thing to provide for the kids, to be counseled and trained by these terrific people.

We also started doing Peter and the Wolf every December, and we had wonderful narrators. The first one was Herb Caen. I was backstage with him and he was so nervous he could hardly stand up straight. Sid Caesar, Jeff Hoyle, Bobby McFerrin, Linda Ronstadt, Robin Williams, and on and on. Rita Moreno, Linda Ronstadt again. We had those wonderful people, and they always did funny things. Michael Tilson Thomas, I remember was on his hands and knees chewing on the conductor's pants cuffs. That was a lot of fun.

We also had an instrument purchase plan. I mentioned the basses. We bought a number of basses, and we now have a full bass section. We have for a number of years. That's largely due also to a member of the youth orchestra, Lisa Takemoto, who went into orchestra management. While she was here, she went out to Lowell High School and drummed up some kids interested in being bass players. We took some of the older and bigger violin players, converted them to violas, and we went and bought violas.

The most exciting one for me was a fine violin for the concert master, where we felt that he or she should have a really fine instrument. One day I had another invitation from Agnes Albert, and I went to her house and the whole gang was there. They presented an Antoniazzi violin, dating from probably about 1900, and that was the concert master's violin. They named it in my name. It's the Bissinger Antoniazzi. You know, I had many occasions these years to be in tears, which I was, and I'm almost there remembering that now.

What else did we do? Every year we restrung all the string instruments for free. We had an instrument training program for kids who were on the edge but not quite ready to come into the youth orchestra. We have an annual concerto competition, and anybody from the timpani to the tuba can try out and compete, and we've had wonderful, wonderful young musicians win and go on to good careers. We have premiered several new commissions, which have been quite successful. Several years ago we started having youth orchestra festivals. We would invite five or six local youth orchestras to come to Davies Symphony Hall. Each orchestra would play something short, [following which] a festival orchestra would be formed, selecting the best musicians from all over. They'd play [a piece in full]. That was wonderful, too.

We started in 1986 to go on tour in Europe, mostly—and one in Asia—every three years. [Our first European tour was] no small undertaking because we took with us ten or twelve chaperones, the youth orchestra staff, the symphony stage crew, a doctor, PR person, and not obviously important to most people, but we stayed only in very good hotels. Not five-star, but good ones, clean and had good food. They had enough food—these kids eat a lot—and good communications, because we had to be able to round up everybody on short notice if something undesirable happens, and just generally to be able to stay in touch. That was a year when there was a lot of [terrorism in Europe].

[Section removed by narrator.]

04-00:24:45
Bissinger:

We consulted everybody; the parents, the kids, the staff, the symphony attorneys, about whether to go or whether or not to go. The board was scared to death of the risks, and the preliminary decision was not to go. However, we went largely because the parents and the kids said they wanted to go. [We brought a professional security guard with us, but] nothing happened. It was good we were worried, but it's all better even that the worry came to nothing.

Now, [aside from a small fee for the tours,] everything to do with the youth orchestra program is for free. The kids have to pay nothing because we wanted this to be an arrangement between us and the kids. We didn't want the parents involved, or, for the most part, their private teachers. We raised scholarship money to make sure that kids who couldn't afford it [were given scholarship money]. It got covered for anyone from 100 percent to 10 or 20 percent.

Another important thing that we learned since we've been on ten tours now, is a lot about management of teenagers. What we've learned is that they've got to be kept busy; they have to be either eating, or sleeping, or performing, or on guided tours, or doing something else, where we could keep track of them.

[Section removed by narrator.]

It's important to have a very disciplined, organized, group of chaperones, not to be overlooked.

Here we had the kids going to Europe, playing in the world's most prestigious concert halls—we're talking about the Concertgebouw, Berlin Symphony, awesome places to play. All the great musicians in the world had performed in these places, and it was very moving for all of us. I mean, you're talking about tears, I was leading the pack. Oh my goodness, was that exciting.

In the first tour, our main stop was Vienna, where there was an orchestra competition. I guess it was a competition, because it was a hodgepodge of musical organizations. We won the prize for the best orchestra, and for the best music organization of any kind. We all felt pretty good about ourselves.

I also remember going to Budapest. Everything had been arranged. It was still under communist rule, and everything had been arranged so that we could whiz right through and not be hassled. But, of course, they did stop us, took all the passports. We had to sit around forever. We had to open instrument cases. They thought we'd be smuggling people in or I don't know what. The same thing leaving. That was unpleasant, but the concert itself was so moving. The orchestra—here was these wonderful, multiracial mix of kids playing gloriously. We sold out there.

We've always pretty-near sold out. In Europe we have a big reputation. After ten tours in Europe, they know us very well. But [there was a concert in Budapest and] the place was packed. The big piece was Bartók's Concerto For Orchestra, in Budapest, where Bartók was the head of the conservatory. Afterwards there was a silence for about a second, and then the place erupted. [Voice breaks with emotion] You can't believe the way people were hugging each other and crying. We've had that experience elsewhere. They just are so moved by us.

We also had what I felt was a particularly moving experience, in Vilnius, which is in Lithuania. We played on the outskirts of Vilnius in an ancient church that had been mostly destroyed by either the Nazis or the Russians, I forget which, and was being painfully restored brick by brick by brick, and it was still pretty much a shambles. During rehearsal, the townspeople would drift by and stick their nose in. They'd go away. They come back with a friend or a relative. We had the place sold out once for free and once for a little bit of money. But there again, these people were so moved.

I brought with me a selection of reviews. The first one I have is Amsterdam. "The San Francisco Symphony's youth orchestra revealed itself, at the Amsterdam Concertgebouw, as an important part of the future of classical music in the United States. What sets this youth orchestra apart was not a typical energetic camaraderie, but rather, its precision and a focus on great maturity. The nuance and clarity were stunning. Their crisp, tight sound, worthy of a mature orchestra. It takes quite some courage to perform Mahler successfully at the Concertgebouw, so this mature orchestra pulled off an impressive feat." Actually, I had some business friends in Rotterdam, and he arrogantly said, "Mahler? I know my Mahler. This is not for kids." He was overwhelmed.

Here's from Berlin. "Once again, these young Americans live up to their reputation as one of the world's best youth orchestras with a mixture of perfection and expressiveness."

Here's another one from Berlin; "So precise and so professional, the San Francisco Symphony Youth Orchestra at the Berlin Philharmonie. It's striking how much the precision for which adult American orchestras are known is already a part of this youth orchestra. The resulting sound and clarity of their ensemble playing is impressive."

Here's Bayerische Staatszeitung, Bavaria: "Outbursts of cheering at the opening concert of the Audi Festival, twenty-fifth anniversary season. A hundred or so musicians of the San Francisco Symphony Youth Orchestra created a musical marvel across a spectrum of moods that had the concert hall shaking with excitement." I've got three or four pages of these reviews, and they're all the same. One of them I know says something to the effect, "This

orchestra has redefined what a youth orchestra can accomplish." So, we're the standard bearer. Ain't that great?

04-00:36:05

Farrell:

I have a few questions for you about all of what you just mentioned, what you covered. When you first started talking about this, you said you were a person of interest to many boards, and I'm wondering why you were a person of interest or how people knew that you had this this love of music.

04-00:36:28

Bissinger:

Well, let's rephrase that and say there were many who had the mistaken idea that I had a lot of money. Which I didn't. So, you know, come the capital drives and all those things, and I was a very minor player. I was willing to work, and I enjoyed raising money because I loved the program so much. I think that's a big missing piece of a lot of fund raising; some important guy is sent a list, please make these five phone calls, and in a desultory way, he'll makes the five calls, but he won't have any heart in it, whereas, I could tell stories about these kids, and it brought it alive.

04-00:37:21

Farrell:

Can you tell me a little bit more about your role in fundraising? What you actually did?

04-00:37:27

Bissinger:

I did exactly that; I went and called on people. I wrote letters, I invited them to concerts, and I had a gang of elder ladies—Agnes Albert, Phyllis Wattis, Betty Hume, Genie di San Faustino, these people. Interestingly, they were largely women who had been servants to their husbands, and once their husbands had died, typically—they all of a sudden burst forth, extremely capable, talented, motivated, and wonderful people. I loved taking them to the youth orchestra concerts, and they liked that, too.

04-00:38:20

Farrell:

Can you tell me a little bit more about Agnes Albert?

04-00:38:24

Bissinger:

Well, Agnes, who comes from an old San Francisco family, she was a pianist and she studied in Berlin where she met her future husband—who has a story of his own—and her pinnacle achievement, I guess, was performing with the San Francisco Symphony under Pierre Monteaux. She was a very smart woman. She spoke her mind. She cared desperately about the music and the musicians, and she could care less about all the, you know, shall we redefine the statement of purpose? She didn't care about that stuff. She just cared about the music and the musicians. When Agnes had something to say, everybody listened. She was the only member of the board who, to my knowledge, had any impact on the programming. I mean, she knew her music. She was a delightful person. A delightful person.

She had a very unhappy life in many ways. Her husband turned out to be a Nazi. They're Catholic; they were never divorced. He put some time in prison, and they have, I think, one son, Paul Junior, and two daughters, one of whom kind of flew the coop. A troubled situation. But she rose above all that and she was just delightful. Interested in other people. She read Proust. She was just a unique, one-of-a-kind person.

04-00:40:29

Farrell:

There were a few different music directors. I have some of their names here. Ling, Milnes, Bjaland, Outwater, Shwartz, and then Reif. I'm wondering if you could tell me a little bit about what their directorships, how that influenced the youth orchestra, how their leadership was different?

04-00:41:03

Bissinger:

Well, of course, every music director of any kind of an organization is going to be different from his predecessor or predecessors, or subsequent. Jahja, as I say, our first music director, was an exuberant fellow. He made up in his excitement for his lack of being able to [be understood]. He was very difficult to understand, but he was a wonderful guy. He went on to be the assistant conductor of the Cleveland Symphony Orchestra and then he was a music director in San Diego. He was very religious, and I think he then went on to do things related to his religion. He was with us for three years.

Then David Milnes, who was young, only lasted two years. He was a marvel with the kids. He was the music director when we went on our first tour to Europe and had such a success, but he was not a success with adults. He was awkward, but he was a fine musician. And he works in the Bay Area, I think over in Berkeley.

The Leif Bjaland, a Scandinavian gentleman. He was more of a cool character, but he was a wonderful musician. [He did a lot of contemporary music.]

Basically, the way it's supposed to work, is that each music director will be for three years, the third year being a tour year. That's generally what worked.

Then we come to Alasdair Neale, who was our music director's term for twelve years. He's the only one that we've ever had that lasted such a long time.^{xi}

04-00:43:08

Farrell:

Why did he last so long?

04-00:43:09

Bissinger:

Because everybody was crazy about him. He was a wonderful musician, the kids adored him, he was very good with adults. He's become a very good friend of ours. He's now the music director in Marin. He's the music director

of the Sun Valley Summer Festival, and he may have one or two other positions.

04-00:43:42

Farrell:

What made him such a good music director?

04-00:43:45

Bissinger:

I don't know. I never have understood why one conductor can get miracles out of his musicians and others can't. I don't know. In all these years, I feel as ignorant as when we started.

04-00:44:03

Farrell:

But he was able to get the kids to perform really well? Is that why people liked him so much?

04-00:44:10

Bissinger:

The kids always played well because they play well. He's not extravagant in his [his use of the baton and] he knows his music. You know, these people have to know their scores inside and out. He was a hard worker. That's the best I can do for you.

04-00:44:45

Farrell:

Oh, no. That's okay.

04-00:44:47

Bissinger:

Then we had Edwin Outwater, and he just got appointed to some position. I don't know what it was. He was another sort of a cool guy, is my recollection. The symphony has been wonderful with consulting with MTT; Michael Tilson Thomas. He has a lot to do with it. MTT sees a lot of young musicians because of the New World Symphony down in Florida. He sees what's coming through the conductor mill, and I think we've had a lot to be thankful for in terms of continuous flow of really wonderful musicians.

Bennie Shwartz, I remember him but not much, but he was a good guy. Then came Donato Cabrera. Donato. He was six years, I think. He was another especially successful guy. I think he had a terrific manner with adults, and the kids adored him. If you're teaching the kids well and they can see themselves going up the ladder of musical skills, they tend to like the guy who's taking them up the ladder. Donato, again, is a guy we were friendly with, but he's moved on now.

We've just taken on our [latest music director], Christian Reif, who's a German. He's a huge success right out of the starting blocks. Everybody's crazy about him; he's attractive, he's smart, he's very experienced. This is almost a little bit above where you'd expect him to be, but our youth orchestra is a great stepping stone. We can now attract young artists who are maybe making a lateral move rather than an upward move, but the payoff comes three years later.

So, Christian, he's made a lot of changes in the seating, a European seating style now. Where you used to see the string basses on your right, they're now in the back in the middle-left. What's wonderful is, how he's got them coming in to their seats, before they warm up, and instead of just randomly milling around and waiting for people to get out of the way, it's so German. They're all lined up off stage and one by one they come in lined up, and so, everybody goes without hindrance to precisely [his or her] seat, it's like an army marching. The audience gets a kick out of this, and I do, too. It's so unusual and so logical. And so German. I hope he'll be with us for at least his three years. Actually, we've got a tour announced for two years from now.

04-00:49:15

Farrell:

Where's the tour going?

04-00:49:17

Bissinger:

I don't know yet. It will most certainly be to Europe because we're so well-known there. We know all the tricks and the rules, and when our trucks get there with all the instruments and stuff, they know where to park and they know where the restaurants are, and they know how to set things up. They're largely halls that they've already played in before. [These are the same halls that major symphonies, including the San Francisco Symphony, play in for the most part.] So, what was your question?

04-00:49:52

Farrell:

That was it. Where you were going, but you don't know yet.

04-00:49:55

Bissinger:

We only have had one tour in Asia and that was a near disaster, because the key place was going to be, not Beijing, but Shanghai.

04-00:50:18

Farrell:

Beijing, Hong Kong, Shanghai?

04-00:50:23

Bissinger:

Shanghai. I think it was Shanghai. Yeah, because we had an exchange arrangement worked out between the kids at the San Francisco Symphony and the Shanghai Conservatory.

[Section removed by narrator.]

04-00:51:02

Bissinger:

The Shanghai Conservatory of Music was our goal as our number one place to go, and that was the year of [Tianamen Square]. Because of that, we felt we could not go to on reasons of principle, as well as pragmatic concern over safety. There we were stuck, and I remember I personally went down to the Chinese Consulate here and talked to the cultural attaché and told him we had to cancel the tour and that we were heartbroken and we hoped that at some future date we could resurrect it. Instead, they patched together two concerts

in or near Hong Kong, then we went down to Singapore and had two concerts there. Then we went to Malaysia to—what's their main city? Kuala Lumpur.

[Section removed by narrator.]

04-00:52:23

Bissinger:

We had two, four, five concerts, so that worked out fine. We had some trouble, kids with the wrong kind of passports not being able to get out of Malaysia. We had to leave a staff person and two or three kids that took them another day or two. But it was a tour and, you know, the kids played well, and it was a success of sorts.

04-00:52:59

Farrell:

You had mentioned that members of the San Francisco Symphony were mentoring some of the members of the youth orchestra. Aside from that, was there any more involvement with the symphony, with the youth orchestra?

04-00:53:15

Bissinger:

I was able to get my report on the agenda for most board meetings. I was very careful to stay within a three minute discipline. I used to go over to Agnes Albert's house and I'd practice my speech, and she would always say, "Brevity, Paul. Brevity." That was my second name; Brevity Bissinger. But, that was appreciated. I always made my reports lively and fun, gave an anecdote and a positive thing to report on.

04-00:54:08

Farrell:

How about the musicians? The symphony musicians, were they any more involved with the youth orchestra musicians, or just through the mentorship?

04-00:54:20

Bissinger:

Mainly through [coaching, which they did] as part of their job, but [with dedication and passion]. I mean, we have to this day, Doug Rieth, the harpist, he's been with us since the beginning. Steven Tramontozzi, bass player from the very beginning, and there may be one or two others that don't come to my mind immediately. But they're just wonderful, wonderful people. They love the kids. We have kids where music is not appreciated in their homes, and they want their kids to be doctors and lawyers, and the kids find a second home at the symphony. They hang around.

04-00:55:10

Farrell:

Speaking of the kids that are in the youth orchestra, you mentioned that they were the best of the best, and they're from the Greater Bay Area, but I'm wondering if there was ever a time or a program that allowed for more sort of at-risk youth to be involved? Or not really?

04-00:55:30

Bissinger:

I wish that we could say we were. I've had this discussion with Ron Gallman [the head of education programming at the Symphony] on several occasions, and the truth is, we're in business to do one particular thing, which is to have a

superb youth orchestra program. I don't think there's another youth orchestra program—I read you a list of these add-ons like restringing the strings? I don't think any other youth orchestra in the country, or the world maybe, has as rich a program as we have. It pays off because the kids do move on and get good positions. We have a young girl who's the concert master of the Rochester Symphony, which is the top of the middle group of orchestras, and so, we're making our mark. [We have another graduate who is the music director of the St. Louis Symphony.]

I don't think we, any longer, have as much of a hold on the best kids, because the transportation issue is difficult. San Francisco is so hard to drive in, and not all these kids are old enough to have cars. I think the other youth orchestras have come up because of us, because we have now these festivals. These kids that otherwise never could play in a hall like Davies Symphony Hall, now have that experience. It increases their motivation and they get better, music directors and everything else, all the ships float higher. That pleases us a lot because we've always been concerned, for example, that Lowell, which has an orchestra, that we don't want to diminish their high school music experience with the youth orchestra.^{xii}

04-00:57:55

Farrell:

There has to be auditions for the kids. Do you have a sense of what the auditions are like?

04-00:58:04

Bissinger:

Well, like the big symphony, they're behind curtains. I think. I can't remember if that still is the case. But the auditions are not the severe, scary kind of things that you would expect when you hear the word "audition," because the coaches and other musicians, maybe from the same section, will be there and they'll sit next to the kid and kind of work it with them. A lot of these kids have a lot of talent but they're scared, they're nervous, but the coaches can see through that.

04-00:58:50

Farrell:

You've shared with me a binder that some of the kids put together for you. Can you tell me a little bit about that?

04-00:58:57

Bissinger:

Well, this is after the first tour [and the end of my term as committee chair], and one of many surprises I was given a thick scrapbook and every kid had written a poem or a song or recited something, drew pictures, photographs of them as children, they did something, every one. They're so moving. That was another occasion for me to have a good cry.

04-00:59:38

Farrell:

That's a special thing that they put together. It's almost like a tribute to you.

- 04-00:59:42
Bissinger: Well it is. It's wonderful. I brought it, if you want to look at it. [Shows camera]
- 04-00:59:47
Farrell: Another thing, [they] dedicated [a concert] to you for your seventieth birthday. Can you tell me a little bit about that?
- 04-01:00:04
Bissinger: I cried.
- 04-01:00:07
Farrell: Did you know that they were going to dedicate it to you?
- 04-01:00:09
Bissinger: No. I walked in and sat down in my seat, and looked at the program and boom, there went the tears. It was very moving to be recognized. We all have needs to bolster our self-worth, so it was nice to have something concrete. It says nice things about you, whether it's exaggerated or not, I couldn't say. [I am overwhelmed that they dedicated three concerts in my name, one of which included a beautiful article on my involvement in music education.]^{xiii}
- 04-01:00:50
Farrell: I'm going to stop asking you questions about things that were very moving. I actually want to ask a little bit about music at home and sort of in your personal life. Were your children musicians or musical at all?
- 04-01:01:09
Bissinger: Only our older son, Stephen. He took piano lessons, but that didn't take with him, but somewhere he got a guitar and it just became his life. You'd think that as a punishment for doing something wrong you'd send him to his room, but that was a treat for him because he'd just sit there and play his guitar. He found a music theory teacher. He just had his own motivation. He's a wonderful musician. He plays a lot of jazz clubs around the Bay Area, but his profession where he makes a living is creating sound effects for movie and television. If anybody who sees this watched [the series House of Cards].
- 04-01:02:21
Farrell: Cards?
- 04-01:02:23
Bissinger: Yeah, House of Cards. The TV show, House of Cards. Well, he did almost all of the sound design for that, as an example. But he went to Los Angeles, initially, because that's where more sound work occurs. He was there nine years and hated it, hated living in Los Angeles, but he did find there was a lot of work doing TV commercials. He came back to San Francisco, set himself up as a TV commercial sound person, and he struggled away with that, then the Recession hit and things kind of fell apart. He got out of his lease and just

continued to do what he was doing. He would take whatever business he could get, and eventually, he does most of his work now up at.

04-01:03:42

Farrell: Skywalker?

04-01:03:42

Bissinger: Skywalker. They keep him very busy.

04-01:03:46

Farrell: I bet, yeah.

04-01:03:47

Bissinger: Unfortunately, it's a union scale business, and so he doesn't get paid more because he's better than somebody else. It's not for people who want to make a lot of money. He doesn't have the percentage of the revenues from House of Cards, unfortunately.

04-01:04:11

Farrell: What kind of music do you listen to at home?

04-01:04:20

Bissinger: Well we listen to operas, and we listen to chamber music, piano music. I would say that those are the top three.

04-01:04:28

Farrell: What are some of your favorite operas or symphonies?

04-01:04:34

Bissinger: Oh, you ask me these questions.

04-01:04:35

Farrell: Or, even composers. Do you have a favorite composer?

04-01:04:40

Bissinger: Eugene Onegin. Love that. Verdi and Puccini. How can you not love those? Strauss. Wagner. We're very excited about the Ring Cycle coming here. We're great Wagnerians. That's a few. There's nothing too obscure, somebody you never heard of.

04-01:05:07

Farrell: Do you have a favorite venue to see symphonies or concerts?

04-01:05:14

Bissinger: Well, Davies Symphony Hall is wonderful for full orchestras, less good for soloists, particularly voice and some instruments. Where is it that San Francisco Performance performs? The Herbst Auditorium. That's excellent for chamber music, in particular, piano soloists. Those are the two locally that I would pick out, for me.

04-01:05:58

Farrell: What about internationally?

04-01:06:01

Bissinger: I think the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam is the finest facility in the world, both acoustically and historically.

04-01:06:18

Farrell: I'm also wondering, because you were [supportive of other programs], the Morrison Chamber Music, with the Alexander String Quartet, with San Francisco Classical Voice, how you balanced your time between the symphony, the youth orchestra, and then these other programs?

04-01:06:38

Bissinger: By not working hard at being in business and trying to make some money. I've never been very good at making a lot of money.

04-01:06:53

Farrell: Did your [involvement with these programs] overlap at all, or were they in different orders?

04-01:06:58

Bissinger: Oh, yeah. They're different. The youth orchestra is totally different from Morrison Chamber Music.

04-01:07:07

Farrell: Oh, sorry. I meant chronologically.

04-01:07:09

Bissinger: Chronologically. I think I was put on the board of the symphony in the—

04-01:07:19

Farrell: In the '70s?

04-01:07:19

Bissinger: Mid-'70s. I don't remember.

04-01:07:25

Farrell: I think it was 1975.

04-01:07:27

Bissinger: 1975.

[Section removed by narrator.]

04-01:07:38

Bissinger: I don't think I was on any other boards at that moment, which maybe is one of the reasons that I was selected. One of the things I've enjoyed is bringing along other, now younger, people to be on these boards. I think one of the most important things you can do as head of a board is to assure that

continuity through good management and good fundraisers, and energized people.

04-01:08:15

Farrell:

What are your hopes for the future of the youth orchestra?

04-01:08:21

Bissinger:

[Section removed by narrator.] [I was on the board of the] American Symphony Orchestra League, Youth Orchestra Division. During those years, I got familiar with some of the other orchestras around the country and what they were doing, and it cemented my feeling that we were at the top of the heap. I think that was kind of generally the attitude, although nobody liked to admit it, that San Francisco could be better than—actually, there's very few—this is important.

There's very few youth orchestra programs that are part of a larger institution; i.e., a symphony orchestra. Most of the others are free-standing operations. There's huge advantages to being a subsidiary, so to speak, of the symphony, because we could never, on our own, afford the staffing and the costs for marketing, for fundraising, for publicity, development, all these things that the symphony can do superbly and on our own we couldn't begin to match that. That helps to build the enthusiasm on the staff for what we're doing. That's a very important feature, I think.

If we did any one thing, I would like to see—and you brought this up—we get into more of the training of young musicians. One that, as a model, last night—our granddaughter goes to a school called The San Francisco School, which is, I say, halfway between the Cow Palace and Hunters Point. You get off at Silver Avenue and it's out there. It's a marvelous school. It's small, it's dedicated, been in business over forty years. People don't know about it. It's about half minority, which we think is terrific.

Last night they had their music festival or whatever, and each grade had its own little piece of it. It was nice. Every kid has got someone in the next grade up who's kind of their personal counselor, and they have a fabulous music program which is enormous for a school its size. I think the guy who's behind it was the guy who invented the Orf program. These kids were just wonderful. First, second, third, fourth grade, and they did the most wonderful things. I don't know if any will be good enough ever to go in the youth orchestra, or want to, but I mean, there are ways to broaden the reach of music education to everybody's benefit, and those that get turned on and want to rise in the world will do that, one way or—just like our son, Stephen; nothing was going to stop him from playing his guitar.

04-01:13:10

Farrell:

What has it meant to you to be involved with the youth orchestra and the other committees?

- 04-01:13:16
Bissinger: Oh, I love it. As long as they don't get into tedious areas, like "reinventing," [such as] how can we polish the sense of purpose.
- 04-01:13:35
Farrell: Oh, the mission?
- 04-01:13:36
Bissinger: What?
- 04-01:13:37
Farrell: The mission?
- 04-01:13:37
Bissinger: Yeah, the mission statement. If I never see another mission statement, I'll be happy. Or, I hate galas, but they make money.
- 04-01:13:52
Farrell: Yeah, that's true.
- 04-01:13:53
Bissinger: But all together, it's wonderful. You just can't help to be moved emotionally when you see young people doing things that you wouldn't expect they could do.
- 04-01:14:09
Farrell: Was there anything else that you want to add?
- 04-01:14:12
Bissinger: About music? See, I think we've talked a lot about music.
- 04-01:14:17
Farrell: Okay. All right. Well, thank you so much.
- 04-01:14:20
Bissinger: You're very welcome.

Interview 5: June 9, 2017

05-00:00:00

Farrell:

This is Shanna Farrell with Paul Bissinger on Friday, June 9, 2017. We're in San Francisco, California, and this is our fifth session. Paul, today I wanted to talk to you about your interest in art and I was wondering if you could tell me about how your interest in art developed?

05-00:00:37

Bissinger:

Well, it started very early. First of all, art was a big deal in our bigger family, and so, many of the people that surrounded me were artists of one kind or another. My grandmother, Florence Walter, was a world renowned bookbinder. We donated most of her bindings and manuscripts and other materials to the Book Club of California, where she was the first woman president many years ago. Her oldest daughter, Nell, was a well-regarded painter. My mother's younger sister, Carol, was a wonderful craftsperson; weaving and baskets were very wonderful and imaginative. Several of the offspring of those people all have gone into the arts in one way or another. My grandmother's brother-in-law, Florence Walter's brother, Edgar Walter, was an artist, too. He was a sculpture. In our opera house, there are two big horses over the proscenium which he sculpted.

Now, my parents always seemed to have some Asian art around, and they traveled a lot. After World War II, they started going to Japan to resurrect a small business that we had there before the war. That blossomed and further developed my interest in that particular art form.

Then, when I was in the navy for two years, I traded watches so that I could have a whole day or more, in some instances, to see Japan a little bit. I would get on a bus or a train and I would just go places. There were always school kids that wanted to show me around and practice their English. I had a wonderful time. I saw a lot of wonderful things: the gardens, all the different art forms. The one thing I kind of got fixated on was contemporary Japanese wood block prints. They had the great merit of being in my budget, which was very small, and they were not expensive at all. Names like Saito and Sekino were very big names in those days.

I brought home all this stuff. And one of my best friends from Exeter days, Don Pfeifer, his mother Raida, R-A-I-D-A, was on the board of the Little Rock Museum, and she was intrigued at my enthusiasm for these Japanese woodblock prints. She suggested that I send them down to Little Rock and they would put them on exhibit there. There were several other fellows who had also developed a passion for these woodblock prints. We put our collections together and picked a representative selection from them. I think mine was the biggest; I think I had nine prints and Tom Timberlake had six. But it was enough that it made a real show. Apparently it was a great success.

I could say that I started exhibiting my collection in 1960. Sounds good. [Laughs] So, that was a lot of fun.

Then, the Bissinger & Company business in Japan blossomed and I had gone back into the family business. They started sending me to Asia. I would go to Japan, Taiwan, South Korea, the Philippines, wherever we did business. Japan just was captivating. I just loved everything about it. The people, considering what had transpired not too many years prior, they were courteous and warm and helpful, I learned enough Japanese [including taking Japanese lessons in San Francisco] to fumble my way into where is the train station, and things like that.

05-00:06:35

Farrell:

What was it about the woodblocks that you liked?

05-00:06:42

Bissinger:

They were inexpensive, they were beautiful. They covered a wide range of subjects. They had wonderful instincts. I brought a number of them home already framed in Japan, which of course cost less, too. I don't think I have any other particular points to make about that.

05-00:07:19

Farrell:

Were your parents involved with Asian art as well?

05-00:07:23

Bissinger:

Oh, yeah, because, as I said, on their trips to Japan they really started buying significant amounts of stuff. And then Avery Brundage—big industrialist from Chicago—instead of giving his enormous collection, I think it was several thousand items, instead of giving it to Chicago, we got it for San Francisco. My mother and father were among the very small group of people who really got this together, and my mother in fact, was considered to be the final knockout blow. Avery Brundage was dour, difficult, not particularly pleasant guy, but he loved to dance and my mother was a wonderful dancer, and she would take him dancing at night. So, the legend arose that my mother danced the collection into San Francisco, which makes a good tale, but like all such tales, there are other people who did a lot of wonderful things, too.

I don't know about my father, but I know my mother was on the board from the very beginning until the day she died, which covers quite a range because she died in 2002. She had just turned ninety.

[Section removed by narrator.]

05-00:10:06

Bissinger:

All this activity was just exploding in our circle of people with similar interests. Actually, not quite exploding. Kathy was an art history major at Wellesley, but they didn't even offer a course on Asian art, so she knew little about it. Just about the day she arrived, my mother handed her a stack of fliers to distribute around town encouraging people to vote yes on a proposition to

build a new building in Golden Gate Park to house the Brundage Collection. This was one of the key things Brundage demanded he must have.

Kathy was launched into this environment right away, and she started taking courses from very prominent world renowned scholars, principally over at UC. She's very smart and she picked up a lot of knowledge very quickly.

[Following my mother's death,] she went on the board. Actually, there's two parts; there's a board and a commission. The board supposedly runs the operation, and the commission owns the building and the art. Every time you give a little pot to the museum, it belongs to the city, which is kind of a nuance but it's real.

Kathy went on the commission. Effectively, the two vote together on everything. There's other requirements for the commission, such as there has to be certain percentage attendance. So, the city has its say.

But we have a very good relationship with the city, actually, which has been not without effort. Kathy's a wonderful board member. She's a very wise person. She has a great knack for being able to say no to people in a nice way.

[One of Kathy's first assignments was to define the roles of each committee to eliminate overlaps, particularly as it pertained to travel programs.] Sometimes they would have two groups going to the same place in the same year, so Kathy massaged their egos and got them to agree to a workable plan. That sounds like that's no big deal, but it was a big deal because it was hard to achieve.

Her voice is listened to. She's on the acquisition committee, which is a fun committee, and she's on the development committee. We have a very good development department and right now we're in the midst of a capital drive.

05-00:14:43

Farrell:

Can you tell me a little bit more about your mother's involvement with the opening of the Asian Art Museum as a wing in the de Young. That opened on June 11, 1966, and you mentioned that there was a proposition to open it up in Golden Gate Park. Can you tell me about some of your memories of that or your mom's role in that process?

05-00:15:08

Bissinger:

You know, I really don't have a recollection of that.

05-00:15:15

Farrell:

Do you remember if the city was supportive of it?

05-00:15:21

Bissinger:

Well, within reason. I think they didn't know much about art in general or Asian art in particular, despite the large Asian population we have here. I'm

not sure that the de Young and the other museums were so thrilled to have new competition for donor money, largely. There's a lot of people who consider most Asian art to be craft rather than art. I mean, there's that strange uncertain gray line, which side goes which way. I think it must have been a wonderful event. But in the early years, there were all these nice ladies who were active in the museum, but they were not the big money people, and it took a while before we started getting seven figure contributions.

05-00:16:55

Farrell:

Is that when the discussion started about moving to an independent space?

05-00:17:01

Bissinger:

Yeah. I think the de Young didn't want—they looked down their noses at the Asian, frankly, and they wanted to call the shots. It became increasingly apparent, as the collection was growing, too, that we had to be on our own.

At that time, the new library on Van Ness Avenue was about to be built, and so, what do to with the old main library. You couldn't tear it down because it was architecturally protected. And Dianne Feinstein really was the one who got involved and called in some of her chips and got the thing rolling.

We would have been—financially—vastly better off to have bought some cheap land south of Market, like the SFMoMA did. The remodeling of the old library building was hugely expensive. We had enormous costs in building a whole new underground earthquake prevention system. But it got done. It wasn't perfect. I think after the years that have transpired, they have wonderful leadership and excellent consultants. The development department is doing really well, and I think the plans they've come up with will be great.

05-00:19:22

Farrell:

You and Kathy have a collection there. Can you tell me a little bit about developing that and the process of donating that?

05-00:19:31

Bissinger:

Yeah. We started collecting contemporary Japanese ceramics, and I'm not sure why we got so interested in that; maybe we just liked it. My mother's older sister, Nell, once I was criticizing her art as a boastful teenager would do, and she said, "People think they know what they like and it's not true; they like what they know." I think that's true in music, art, all kinds of things; the more you know about it the more appreciation you get out of it.

As a matter of fact, that takes me back to a wonderful man named Sandor Salgo, who taught music at Stanford. I was trying to be a music minor, but I couldn't even read music even though I played the guitar quite well. Sandor Salgo opened his classes with a remark along the lines that, maybe there's nobody in this classroom who'll end up having a career in music or music administration. However, the fact that you are learning more about music here in the classroom means that you'll be a more appreciative and knowledgeable

listener in the audience, and more effective in administration and on boards. This is not a waste of time. It has great value, actually.

I wrote him a letter when he retired and reminded him of that, and he was very moved. I saw him at a concert subsequently. He held my hand. His wife, Priscilla, ran the chorus at the Bach Festival and he ran the music. Along the way, when you're involved in the arts—music, art, whatever—you meet so many interesting people, and that's part of the reason why it's fun doing.

Another thing, we feel that there are two types of collectors; people who trust their own eye, see as much as they can, and go look at other museums. Their collections reflect their personality and what kind of people they are. There's other collections that are assembled by consultants, and they look like that. They're more—sterile is maybe too strong a word, but you don't look at them and say, "This is an interesting person. I'd like to meet them."

We got interested and we started buying a few things. It was Dessa Goddard from the Bonham's and Butterfield's auction house advised us. She said, "Next time you're here in New York, you really should go and visit a woman named Joan Mirviss, who is the great goddess of contemporary Japanese ceramics."

We were in New York. We went to visit her, and I think we bought maybe three or four, maybe five pieces. Some of which were big. I'm looking up there. [Camera pans to art on the wall.] The piece in the middle which is kind of this shape and with a lot of horizontal black and red stripes? [Gestures] That's one of the original pieces we bought from her. The one on the bottom, right, there's some slabs? That is by an artist who, at that time, had very little money and couldn't afford to buy good clay. So he said, what can I do with this junky stuff? He made what have come to be called plates. Each one is separate, so you can assemble it any old way you want.

05-00:24:44

Farrell:

Oh, interesting.

05-00:24:45

Bissinger:

They're quite charming. I don't know exactly how poor he was, but it makes for a good story.

Joan Mirviss got us—and she's a wonderful woman. She's become a very, very good friend of ours. As a matter of fact, against our better judgment—which is the way it always happens—we just bought another piece from her a couple of days ago. There's one that should be arriving next Monday or Tuesday. Then we're done for the year, I hope, but we always say that.

It does get to be a—obsession is maybe too strong a word—but a disease. It is a sickness, it's a compulsion, and you find it hard to resist if you're in that mode.

05-00:26:02

Farrell: How do you decide what to collect?

05-00:26:05

Bissinger: You mean, among different artists? Well, if you look at the diversity up there [gestures to art on the wall], I can say that the variety of shapes and forms and textures, colors, they're all so very different.

05-00:26:34

Farrell: What do you like? When you look at a piece, what are your deciding factors? What sort of speaks to you about that?

05-00:26:42

Bissinger: Well, those elements, it just comes together where they've got an interesting, novel new shape or design or surface treatment. Look at the middle one on the far right. That looks like glass, but the artist has developed a knack of—

05-00:27:07

Farrell: That's ceramic?

05-00:27:09

Bissinger: Oh, yes. Absolutely. Everything there is ceramic. Even behind the piano, that white flower that's kind of unfolding? Every bit about—all the tiny, little parts—everything is ceramic.

05-00:27:28

Farrell: When you were thinking about donating parts of your collection to the Asian Art Museum, how did you decide what to donate as part of your collection?

05-00:27:42

Bissinger: We simply decided that we would leave the collection to the Asian Art Museum and they could [select what they want.] Like, when my mother died, they poured over [her art collection. They came] to her house, and there was one person for ceramics, and one person for scrolls, and another person for basketry, etc. They went through everything and took what they wanted. We will give them—well, I don't know. I'm not going to disclose the details because it's not necessary.

05-00:28:23

Farrell: That's fine.

05-00:28:25

Bissinger: One way or another, our boys will get their choice of one or two pieces, and everything else goes to the museum.

05-00:28:34

Farrell:

Okay. I'm also interested in the Asian Art Museum's curation. You mentioned that Kathy is on the acquisitions committee. Do you have a sense of how they think about acquiring pieces, kind of what their parameters are for that?

05-00:28:55

Bissinger:

Well, it must be—the cost of having a piece cross their threshold is enormous, because they have to enter it in [the database, give it] an extensive description, they have to insure it, they have to catalogue it, they have to find a place to store it, and they have to attend to repairs as needed. No matter how wonderful we might think things are, they can't afford to take stuff that they can't actually use, either for study purposes or for exhibitions. They also lend pieces out. If Cleveland is doing a show on these little tea pots, they might say, oh, you have so many of them, could we borrow half a dozen for a year, or whatever.

05-00:30:15

Farrell:

Aside from the artists that you were just talking about, do you have some favorite artists?

05-00:30:21

Bissinger:

Something what?

05-00:30:22

Farrell:

Aside from the artists you were just talking about, are there any other that you consider to be your favorites?

05-00:30:27

Bissinger:

Oh, I didn't necessarily figure those to be favorites. You know, every time I look at some of these pieces, I see something new or different, and so it's hard to choose. Here's another thing Kathy is great at; she is trained as an art history major to be more analytical in how she looks at things. I'm more, that's great. I like it. Let's get it I can't even remember the names of these artists. We bought two Chinese ink drawings, one of which has gone up hugely in value we think. I wasn't particularly excited about them when we bought them, but she was excited and she was dead right. She's got a good eye with another perspective.

Now, behind you, the middle white-ish piece on the wall? [Camera pans to wall.] That's a piece that combines the aesthetics of the West and the East. There was a period in Japan where that was—they all wanted to have a Western touch to what they were doing, so the bowl itself—which is upside down there, I think. Maybe not. That's Japanese. But, the etchings, the decoration, the glaze, are Western because what they've done, they've found a tool that's got all the numbers, one through ten or one through nine, and a lot of the alphabet. And they've imprinted the shell with that as décor. So I mean, that's not a very pretty piece, but actually in the show at Joan Mirviss' gallery in New York, the professor of Asian art from Dartmouth said that's the best

piece in the show. But when he says “best,” he’s including a lot of considerations, not particularly including beauty.

05-00:33:39

Farrell: Do you know what some of those considerations are?

05-00:33:43

Bissinger: What they are?

05-00:33:43

Farrell: Yeah. I mean, for somebody who might be listening to this who isn’t quite sure what those considerations are to make a piece the best in a show.

05-00:33:54

Bissinger: Whether it’s historic, how many comparable pieces there are known to exist, where this ranks for one reason or another, what the artist—if they know who it is—what he was thinking when he made it, had he traveled in Europe.

05-00:34:30

Farrell: It’s all context.

05-00:34:32

Bissinger: Yeah.

05-00:34:33

Farrell: What has the role of art meant to you in your life?

05-00:34:40

Bissinger: Well, for so many reasons that we’ve discussed, it’s been a huge, huge enrichment of my life, which includes getting to know people like Joan Mirviss. We’ve traveled with her to Japan several times. We always have dinner with her in New York. She’s just a terrific person. That’s an example of somebody who’s enriched our lives. The museum staff, the curators, these are wonderful people. They work hard, long hours, and they don’t get paid a lot of money but they love what they’re doing and that transmits.

When our show opened in August of 2015, there was a preview where a few of us could come and see it. I mean, I started crying. They had fulfilled so much of what we’d aspired to do, including [overcoming some political issues], because there was not universal support for contemporary art throughout the museum. It’s not traditional, it doesn’t connect visually with traditional forms and so forth. But the attendance was staggering. School kids adored it. Adults said it was so exciting, it’s so different than anything we’ve ever seen. It’s just got, for indescribable reasons, so much charm and liveliness.

05-00:37:13

Farrell: You have your mic on, so just—this one? Is that what you're looking for?

- 05-00:37:17
Bissinger: Let me see. What is that one?
- 05-00:37:22
Farrell: This is going to be difficult because of the equipment.
- 05-00:37:33
Bissinger: No, this is just—that one.
- 05-00:37:31
Farrell: This one?
- 05-00:37:32
Bissinger: Although we have this piece, too.
- 05-00:37:35
Farrell: Is this what you wanted? [Gestures to book.]
- 05-00:37:36
Bissinger: Yeah, that piece, there. Women were not allowed to participate in this art until maybe fifty years ago. This was the first show that was exclusively for women ceramic artists, clay artists. The show traveled to maybe seven or eight different venues all over the world. It ended up in Maui where there was a symposium which we went to. This was the biggest and most dramatic piece in the show. We bought it, but it was so big. There was no place we could keep it at home, so it just stayed at the museum. We gave it to the museum. They were thrilled and we were thrilled. It goes two ways, you know? We're so delighted to be able to do something like that. As I look through this, I can point to a whole bunch of them where we have similar pieces.
- The infection seems to be metastasizing, because our younger son, Matthew, is on a junior committee at the Asian Art Museum, which is to get people in their thirties and forties interested in being potential board members.
- 05-00:39:51
Farrell: What's [Matthew's] role been with the Asian Art Museum?
- 05-00:39:56
Bissinger: Well, he goes to meetings. He sat on the development committee, maybe some of the other committees, I don't know. He does as much as he can. He really doesn't have any money. He has a retail store which is not a cash cow, but he's got great taste. He's got wonderful instincts. His store is terrific and is doing quite well. A lot of it is an expression of his own taste. I equate it a little bit to Gump's, which in its earlier years when Dick Gump was actually running the store, had its own personality.
- 05-00:41:00
Farrell: You had mentioned before that when you look at a collection, you like when it's someone's personal collection as opposed to a consultant's where you

can't really tell much; it kind of lacks character. What do you think that your collection says about you?

05-00:41:24

Bissinger:

I don't know, but it apparently does say something about us because that's what a lot of people tell us; they say, "It's so you." It doesn't look like [it was assembled by a consultant]. We were told this by the curators; they said, "You people have just wonderful taste." I know there's other people who have wonderful stuff, but it may not have the same, maybe just a little bit less in the shape or coloring or textures or whatever.

05-00:42:27

Farrell:

What has it meant to you to have been involved with the Asian Art Museum?

05-00:42:32

Bissinger:

It's so exciting because [the museum] struggled for so many years, and now it's really on a roll, and everybody's thrilled. It's a tourist attraction. We're very sensitive to what's going on in the community, ways that we can hook into.

05-00:43:04

Farrell:

Is there anything else that you want to talk about in terms of art?

05-00:43:24

Bissinger:

Of course, when you say the word art, now my sensory system says oh, contemporary Japanese ceramics. But we don't have any really good scrolls. So, I think if anything, we would like to put a little more emphasis on that. We also have [started to collect] earlier ceramic works. Most of what we have bought is truly contemporary, but we now have a few things that go back a hundred years [or more].

05-00:44:24

Farrell:

This is kind of transitioning a little bit, but one thing you had mentioned that you wanted to talk a little bit about was Kathy's career. We had talked a little bit before about when she was in New York she was working for the [Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and World Affairs] and kind of doing some event planning, and some administrative work. Can you tell me a little bit about her career trajectory after she moved to San Francisco?

05-00:44:53

Bissinger:

Well, she went to Wellesley and then she worked at Peter Bent Brigham Hospital in a clerical position, which she hated. I'm not sure how the transition took place; she went to work for the [Carnegie Endowment]. [She arranged] conferences and meetings and so forth. She had a wonderful boss and she loved that world. It was just an exciting place to go every day.

It also emphasizes how crazy the two of us were; she had to give up a wonderful job, all of her friends, all of her associations—and it was absolutely insanity. But, she's been wonderful all these years, through thick and thin.

Mostly thick. When she came here to San Francisco, before we had kids, she worked in a couple of bookstores. She became the expert on children's books, so she ordered all the children's books, and she liked that.

Then when we had our children, while they were young she dropped out of the workforce as a lot of other women at the time, maybe not men as well. She started working as a travel agent for an agency downtown. Then, she and my [distant cousin Daphne Bransten became business partners when they formed Travel Arts. Other investors included Joan Sinton.]

They had the great advantage of being connected throughout the business and social ranks of the city. They had wonderful clients like the Chronicle and the Giants. Daphne loved baseball and loved knowing ahead of time who would be playing because she could see who's being flown up from the minor leagues. [The business became] very successful.

There was one person who was not family and didn't have any money to put into the business, so she was to be the president and run the place. [However, on a day to day basis,] some personality things developed, so they had to buy her out. When they did that, Kathy was made president. Now she had to work hard again—not that she wasn't working hard before. She ran the place very well. She got systems in place that they needed to have.

[In 1995,] they sold out to a San Jose firm named Casto Travel, which is a sizable business. [Casto Travel was based in Silicon Valley and they wanted her San Francisco clientele.] Daphne decided to stay with Casto. She stayed with Casto, but Kathy didn't want to work for anybody else. What she wanted to do was have a real ultra-high quality expensive, unique experience travel; a lot of service, a lot of handling, very special things the public in general doesn't get to see. That was very successful. I mean, she did regular trips, too; she can book you on a cruise, or you can send you on a balloon trip anywhere. She became quite well acknowledged for her abilities, and I think it was around three years, Condé Nast magazine named her as one of the 100 top travel agents in the United States, with a specialty in Asian/Culture. That was fitting because we traveled so much in Asia, and indeed, we traveled a lot over the years. It's wonderful that we had, because traveling now, you know, I've got Parkinson's and other limitations, and traveling—at least the kind of adventure traveling we like to do—is not going to happen.

So, she's been wonderful. As I've become more limited, she's gradually had to take over more and more of running the household, finding caregivers, doctors and pills, all this stuff. It's been a comfort to me but a burden to her, I think. It's been far more difficult and stressful for her than for me, and she's a wonderful person.

05-00:52:30
Farrell:

You also mentioned that she's a wonderful grandmother.

05-00:52:34
Bissinger:

Oh, yeah. We've got this one granddaughter, Hannah, who will be nine in September, and she's a pistol. She's an alpha girl. She's [one of the tallest people] in her class, boys or girls, and she's strong as an ox. She's got a lean, beautiful figure and she's very athletic. From an early age she was doing all kind of crazy things on the bars at the park. She loves to take gymnastics. She can do a double cartwheel perfect. She can be temperamental. That's more around her parents than us. She's perfect with us.

05-00:53:44
Farrell:

I wanted to ask you at this point some reflective questions, and I wanted to start with what it's meant to you to have been a lifelong resident in San Francisco.

05-00:53:58
Bissinger:

Well, first of all, it's a smallish universe of people, but more than you think. For one reason or another, I meet more and more people who are San Francisco natives, but it used to be a very small group when you're talking about third and fourth generation. I don't know what it means. It doesn't have the same panache as when the old residents were the dominant players in running the city.

05-00:54:52
Farrell:

What has your involvement with art and music and [your cultural life meant to you?]

05-00:55:09
Bissinger:

Well, I can think from the sanctuary of being eighty-three, I can say that music and art have been more meaningful to me than business. I was sufficiently successful and we've lived well, but I never had the focus or the intense pursuit of becoming the president of something. I like my music friends and my art friends.

05-00:56:01
Farrell:

Lastly, what are your hopes for the future of the Asian Art Museum, or the San Francisco Youth Orchestra? What direction do you hope that those things that have been important to you in your cultural life, what direction do you hope they go in in the future?

05-00:56:27
Bissinger:

Well, let's take them separately. The youth orchestra has reached such a pinnacle of success, that it's hard to really envision what more we could really do. The one area that I think would be interesting to explore would be to set up a junior youth orchestra, to use kids who are not yet ready for the youth orchestra, and where they could train.

We already have an instrument training program. Private lessons, everything we do is free. The kids pay nothing, except when we go on tour when there's a small percentage of the tour that we hope most of them can pay. [We purchase

quality instruments that we loan to the kids.] We restring all the string instruments every year. [Above all in importance,] we have this fabulous coaching team made up of members of the big symphony who love the kids; they are mentors to them.

We have a lot of Asian kids. I would guess it must be, if not 50 percent, at least 40 percent are Asian, and they're coming more and more from other countries than just China and Japan and Korea. The last concert we had a wonderful piece that was for a gamelan. A group of I think six of the kids, they got somebody who knew gamelan to coach them, and they learned to play gamelan. That was terrific. We're reaching out like that.

We have not been able to find more than a handful of black American musicians, [but] we've had some particular successes. One who comes to mind, is a black boy from the projects. He lived with his grandmother. He didn't even know who his parents were. He was a trumpet player.

He had a friend [whose father] was a doorman at the Fairmont, and Wynton Marsalis was in town, so this doorman arranged for Jerome and his friend to come hear Wynton play. After wards, they were taken back stage and met Wynton and he said, "I hear you're a trumpet player. Would you come by and play for me tomorrow?" Jerome did and Wynton said, "You play really well. Who do you study with?" He said, "Never had a lesson." Wynton said, "Starting tomorrow, you'll be studying with one of the conservatory trumpet teachers." Wynton said, "The trumpet you're using is not right for you," and he gave him one of his trumpets [and paid for his lessons].

Some years later, Jerome got in some trouble and it kind of sidetracked his career. I asked Wynton, "Do you remember a kid named Jerome who you helped out some years ago?" "Jerome?" he said. "I talk to him at least once a week. I talked to him this morning." I said, "How's he doing?" "He's doing good. Coming along. He gets gigs here and there." There's nice things like that that happen. But we need to broaden the base, I think. We never aspired to be a teaching program. This is a pre-professional orchestral training experience.

05-01:01:31

Farrell:

How about the Asian Art Museum? What direction do you hope that goes into?

05-01:01:35

Bissinger:

Well, there's one other couple that has a sizeable collection [of contemporary Japanese ceramics] as we do, and between the two of us, we could put the Asian Art Museum today on a ranking right up there among the top half dozen collections in the country, including one from one [in New York] of the earliest and best collectors. They are leaving [their collection] to the [Metropolitan Museum of Art].

We can't be all things to all people; we don't have a big enough building. Eventually we're going to have to do something about that, but that's a long-term eventuality. I'd like to see us have certain categories where we are the best you can find anywhere. I guess there's parts of the world where—maybe we don't have enough art from the Sudan or Siberia. I don't know. I can't remember, what's the word for a historical—the de Young is—they've got something from everywhere.

05-01:03:07

Farrell: From all eras?

05-01:03:12

Bissinger: Well, it's a comprehensive collection. I mean, they have Oceanic art [as well as] Eskimo art, for all I know. Never is a long time, but I think at this point, with the resources that we have, we're better off building on what we have already. That would be my goal for the museum, and that's just my own thoughts.

05-01:04:00

Farrell: Is there anything else you want to add before we wrap up?

05-01:04:04

Bissinger: I think one of your earlier questions was, how San Francisco has changed over the time I've lived here. It has changed in two significant ways; first of all, when I grew up, we were a big headquarters city. We had lots of major corporations. We had all these department stores; Liebes, I. Magnin, White House, and so forth. We had shipping companies, we had oil companies, Chevron, Bank of America. We had big, major headquarters companies.

The other way it's changed, it's gotten so big, so crowded. The quality of life, I think, has deteriorated. You have to come across the bridge? Do you drive?

05-01:05:32

Farrell: I live five minutes from here, but yeah.

05-01:05:34

Bissinger: Oh. So you don't have a problem.

05-01:05:36

Farrell: Not getting here, but getting to Berkeley, I drive.

05-01:05:39

Bissinger: Yeah. Well, it's getting to be a bigger consideration for a lot of people, just how you structure your life to live with the difficulty of congestion. For example, we go to the opera. We're going tonight to see Rigoletto. We take one of the cab services now. We don't even try to drive down and park. We don't know what the traffic will be like, and by the time we get there, the parking [garage is nearly full], you could be up on the roof. We're one of the

few people left that have not sold their big old family homes and moved into a condominium.

We were up in Sonoma for a month. It's so glorious. It's peaceful. We're about half a dozen blocks from the square. Just far enough. The birds are chirping and you take walks and you aren't constantly getting out of the way of cars. Those are two ways.

The third way, I guess, would be that, when I was young, the [arts were] in San Francisco. There was no Houston opera, no Los Angeles opera, no Seattle opera, no Salt Lake opera. Oklahoma, I think west of the Mississippi, there was very, very little. I don't think they had major museums. People came to San Francisco as a destination for culture in its many forms, whereas today, Stanford, Cal, Sacramento, Crocker Museum, Stanford's got a burgeoning museum life, and music. Look at all the different music halls, concert halls or places to play that there are today. The conservatory has a nice space. Herbst has been fixed up, the opera house has been fixed up, symphony had acoustics fixed up. There's lots and lots of new performing spaces.

Those are some observations, for whatever they're worth. We feel very fortunate that we've been able to live in a nice area and have beautiful outlooks like this.

05-01:08:56

Farrell: Yeah, it's beautiful.

05-01:08:57

Bissinger: Kathy hates the fog and the wind. It doesn't bother me, but the sunshine out in Sonoma is nice, too. We've had a very nice life. I think we've made a contribution. It's fun to be part of a community's expansion.

05-01:09:29

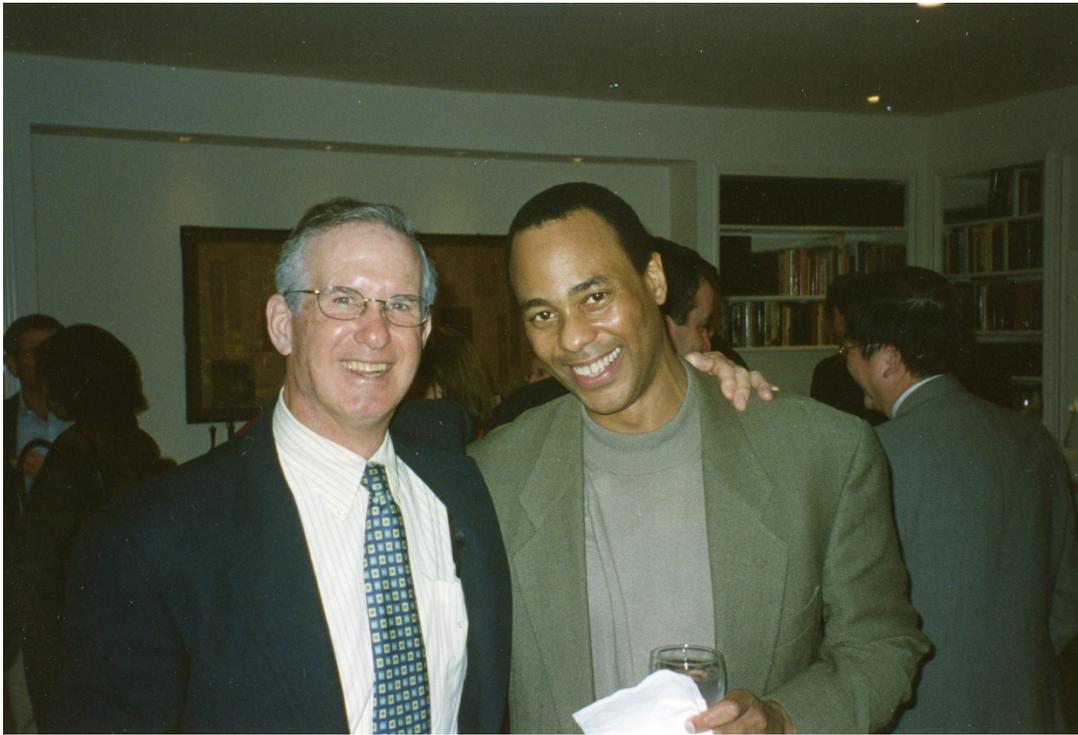
Farrell: Yeah. Well, thank you so much.

05-01:09:33

Bissinger: You're very welcome. This has been a great pleasure.

[End of Interview]

-
- ⁱ See Appendix A for Marjorie Bissinger Profile
- ⁱⁱ See Appendix B for Bissinger Ancestors
- ⁱⁱⁱ See Appendix A for Bissinger's resume.
- ^{iv} See Appendix B for "Stars and Stripes"
- ^v See Appendix E for "The Story of To-Jin Okichi"
- ^{vi} See Appendix F for Bissinger's newsletters
- ^{vii} See Appendix G for supplement on Junior Chamber of Commerce
- ^{viii} See Appendix F for Starduster's flyer
- ^{ix} See Appendix D for email from Dick Mansfield
- ^x See Appendix E for San Francisco Symphony Youth Orchestra "Decades of Critical Acclaim"
- ^{xi} See Appendix F for San Francisco Symphony Youth Orchestra Conductors
- ^{xii} See Appendix G for San Francisco Symphony Youth Orchestra Rules of Participation
- ^{xiii} See Appendix H for San Francisco Symphony Youth Orchestra 70th Birthday Performance Dedication and tributes



Bissinger with Ron Gallman



Bissinger with wife, Kathy



Bissinger with Alasdair Neals (ON L) Phyllis Watting (ON R)



Bissinger with Agnes Albert



Bissinger Family at Marjorie Bissinger's 90th Birthday



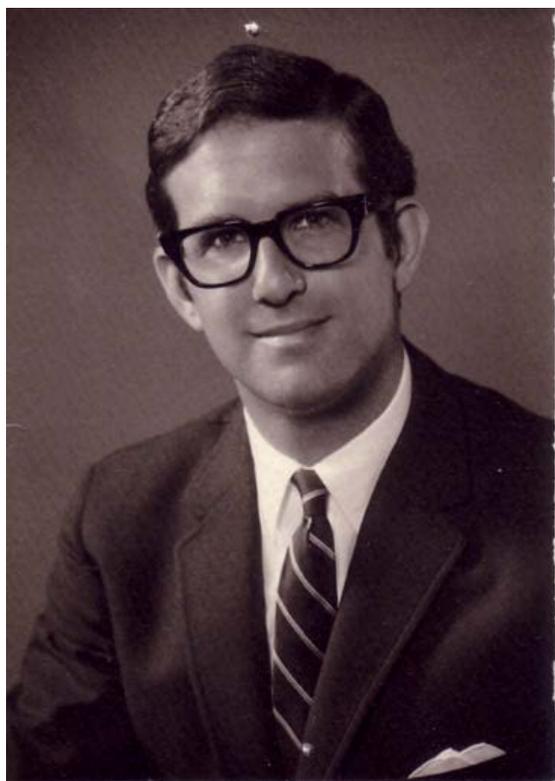
Bissinger and wife, Kathy, at the beach



Bissinger as a young Boy Scout



Bissinger with sons, Stephen and Matthew





Bissinger siblings



Bissinger skiing



Introduction to Japanese ceramics

This exhibition celebrates selected works of contemporary Japanese ceramics from the Paul and Kathy Bissinger Collection of San Francisco Works displayed here demonstrate how Japanese artists are continuing the long tradition of Japanese ceramics, even as they depart from the traditional in search of the new.

Japanese ceramic production began with Neolithic-period earthenware with rope-imprinted patterns. In the fifth century, Korean immigrants introduced gray unglazed stoneware (sueki) technology. Influenced by Chinese ceramics, Japanese artisans produced glazed earthenware by the eighth century. The ceramics were produced in local centers where kilns were established. Although many pottery centers were established in medieval Japan, the six greatest pottery centers—Bizen, Echizen, Seto, Shigaraki, Tanba, and Tokoname—are often referred to as the Six Old Kilns. These ancient kilns, established around the twelfth century, mainly produced ceramics for daily use. They are still producing works in the traditional styles to the present day.

The emergence of the Way of Tea led to a boom in tea-related wares in the fourteenth century. The term Way of Tea refers to the preparation and drinking of powdered green tea with guests. It was primarily based on aesthetic and spiritual principles of Zen Buddhism. Japanese potters from the fourteenth to the nineteenth century produced tea ceramics that elevated pottery from simple everyday ware to fine art objects. Still, as in other cultures, potters produced functional vessels until the modern time.

After the Second World War, Japanese potters began to challenge the assumption that clay objects should be utilitarian. The development of ceramics took a new turn when young ceramists formed a group called Sōdesha in 1948 in Kyoto. Sōdesha artists opposed the folk-craft



(Fig. 1) Hori Ichirō 堀 一朗

movement (Mingei) that was the dominant ceramic style and philosophy in Japan at the time. Unlike the folk-craft artists who saw beauty in everyday utilitarian vessels, postwar artists, who refused to copy wares of the past, set the course for nonfunctional and purely sculptural forms of ceramics in modern Japan.

This exhibition displays Japanese ceramics produced since the late twentieth century. After the disbandment of Sōdesha in 1998, many younger artists developed individual styles by incorporating tradition—clay mixtures, glazes, and firing techniques—instead of rejecting the

past. They also have been open to accepting influence from various other art forms such as sculpture. Compared to their predecessors, many contemporary Japanese potters have had greater access to higher education. Most of the artists received formal art education from academic institutions and some hold teaching positions. For those highly educated potters, personal fulfillment is more important than practicality and functionality. By using clay as an artistic medium of personal expression, the artists included in this exhibition are no longer artisans who repetitively produce traditional utilitarian vessels but artists with individual identities.

The Bissinger Collection

The twenty-two works by twenty artists exhibited here reflect the excellent connoisseurship and love of Japanese contemporary ceramics of Paul and Kathy Bissinger. Since 2008, the Bissingers have amassed a large collection of representative works by artists active from the late twentieth



(Fig. 2) Konō Takahiro 近野 崇弘

Artists biographies

All Japanese names listed below appear in traditional style, with family names preceding given names.

Akiyama Yō 秋山 陽 b. 1953 (see cover)

Akiyama Yō was born in Yamaguchi prefecture but he established himself as a potter in Kyoto. He was a student of Nagi Kazuo (1918–1979), co-founder of Sōdesha. Unlike his work on display, most of Akiyama's works are large installation pieces. But regardless of size, his works are black, cracked, and nonfunctional, and they often take a form similar to cooling volcanic magma. Akiyama uses a gas burner to induce cracks and fissures that imply energy beneath the surface—just like the surface of the earth.

Fujino Sachiko 藤野 さち子 b. 1950 (see fig. 3)

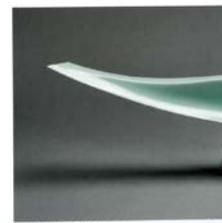
Fujino Sachiko was a fashion designer and fabric dyer in Kyoto. She became interested in ceramics and studied under an influential woman artist, Asuka Tsuboi (b. 1931). Fujino was initially interested in geometric shapes, but she explores the texture of clay and an organic sense of design in her more recent work. Her thin orange peel-like forms show that she is conscious of both the suppleness and the fragility of the clay.



(Fig. 3) Nagai Shigeharu 長井 重晴

century to the present. Contemporary Japanese ceramic art has exerted a special appeal to the Bissingers, who maintain, "We are living today in what is arguably a Golden Age of Japanese ceramics." They actively continue to acquire new works.

This exhibition is not meant to be comprehensive. Instead, it seeks to highlight the works of the most talented and innovative artists exploring the potential of clay from the Bissinger Collection. We hope the exhibition will introduce visitors to the exciting shapes and textures of contemporary Japanese ceramics and demonstrate the accomplishments of a new generation of ceramists. The Asian Art Museum offers sincere gratitude to the Bissingers for the loan of their exquisite objects.



(Fig. 4) Fukami Sachiko 深見 さち子



(Fig. 3) Fujino Sachiko 藤野さち子

Fukami Sueharu 深見陶治 b. 1947 (see fig. 4)

Fukami Sueharu was born into a Kyoto pottery family that manufactures Chinese-style blue-and-white porcelain. After experimenting with many forms and glazes, he became known for his elongated nonfunctional porcelain "blades" and "waves" sculptures, finished with pale blue-green glaze. Fukami often uses the slip-casting method to create his work, using a compressor to inject liquid clay into a mold under high pressure. Unlike other artists who intentionally leave their handprints, Fukami carefully erases all the flaws to make his works perfect.



Fukumoto Fuku 福本双紅 b. 1973

Fukumoto Fuku is a daughter of renowned textile artists. To distance herself from her textile heritage, she studied ceramics in college, and eventually found her passion in white, delicate porcelain. Fukumoto takes her inspiration from nature, such as clouds, ice, and moonlight. On her website she says, "I don't force my own idea on the clay. Instead the form arises through interplay of actions and reactions between the clay and myself. An accumulation of emotion is recorded in the clay through working directly with the form."



Hori Ichirō 堀 一郎 b. 1957 (see fig. 4)

Hori Ichirō was born and trained in Gifu prefecture. He studied under Kōbō Kōzō (b. 1933), who was named Living National Treasure in 2010. After his apprenticeship, Hori built his anagama, a single-chamber sloping tunnel kiln, in Mino, Gifu. Hori says he is living like a hermit in a mountain village. He works in the Shino ware tradition. His works often have practical functions, yet his vessels are full of self-expression.



(Fig. 4) Tokuda Yasuichi 三代 建田八十八



Hoshino Kayoko 星野佳世子 b. 1949

Hoshino Kayoko was born in Kyushu, studied in Kyoto, and currently works in Ōtsu, Shiga prefecture. As a student she studied European history but later became interested in Kyoto wares. She is inspired by the mountain peaks of rural Japan. Hoshino often slices a slab of mixed coarse clay with wires to extract her sculptures, which are boldly faceted, twisted, and textured with simple lines. Her works are usually unglazed, exposing their earth-brown surfaces. Hoshino occasionally applies reflective silver glaze to accentuate the textured surface.



(Fig. 7) Mihara Ken 三好健

Kaneta Masanao 兼田昌尚 b. 1953



Kaneta Masanao, an eighth-generation Hagi potter, received formal education in sculpture. His signature technique of *kuinuki*, where he carves and digs a form out of solid mounds of clay instead of shaping it on a wheel, sets him apart from other potters from his region. Kaneta has developed his individual styles based on traditional Hagi ware techniques. He sculpts bold forms resembling mountainous landscapes, covering them with creamy white glazes characteristic of Hagi ware.

(Fig. 8) Nakamura Takao 中村たか夫



Kohyama Yasuhisa 神山易久 b. 1976 (see fig. 9)

Kohyama Yasuhisa was born in Shigaraki, the center of Shigaraki ware production. He uses Shigaraki clay that retains rough inclusions to give his works a coarse texture. Kohyama fires his works in an anagama kiln—a simple tunnel-like single chamber kiln—for about a week at more than 2350 degrees Fahrenheit (1300 degrees Celsius). He sometimes fires a few more times to produce the warm gray brown and orange associated with Shigaraki ware. Kohyama often takes his inspiration from *suzuki*, a natural ash-glazed stoneware made from the mid-fifth to the tenth centuries.



Kawase Shinobu 川瀬忍 b. 1950

Kawase Shinobu, regarded as one of the best contemporary celadon artists, has been given the nickname "Seiji (Celadon)." He was taught by his grandfather and father, Kawase Chikushun and Chikuan II, who specialized in blue-and-white and polychrome ware. Young Kawase found beauty, however, in refined blue-green glazes similar to the Chinese Song-dynasty (960–1279) celadons. While his earlier works resemble classic Song forms and colors, his later works, such as the one on display, depart from the Chinese prototype to create elegant forms of his own.



Kondō Takahiro 近藤高弘 b. 1938 (see also fig. 3)

Kondō Takahiro is a grandson of the renowned National Living Treasure Kondō Yuzō (1902–1983), who is famous for his cobalt blue-and-white porcelain ceramics. Despite his heritage, Kondō has explored the theme of water in unique ways in his work. He applies glass and precious metals such as silver, gold, and platinum on his porcelain works to create a beaded waterlike surface. His signature technique, called "silver drops" (*giretsu*), is often referred to as "water born out of fire."



(Fig. 9) Kohyama Yasuhisa 高濱康久

▼ Koike Shōko 小池頌子 b. 1943

Koike Shōko, born in Beijing, China, has established a kiln in Tama, Tokyo, influenced by her mother, Kaiko Che (b. 1916), known as the “Godmother of Fashion” in Japan. Shōko originally wanted to become a fashion designer. Her organic works in stoneware are inspired by ocean shells. The shell-like texture, which also represents geological layers of seaside cliffs, was created using rough-grained Shigaraki clay. She applies thick, creamy white glaze and highlights the edges with iron brown and metallic glazes. Her works are energetic, unlike the serene delicate works made by her female colleagues.



▼ Matsui Kōsei 松井康成 (1927–2003)

Matsui Kōsei was a Buddhist priest who established a kiln within the precincts of Gessōji Temple. In 1993 he was designated as a Living National Treasure for his “marbling” (nengede) technique. This technique, developed in Tang-dynasty China (618–906), was commonly used at the Cizhou kilns in Hebei Province during the Song dynasty (960–1234). Matsui used vibrantly colored clays to create delicate marbled patterns and abstract designs.



Mihara Ken 三原研 b. 1958 (see fig. 7)

Mihara Ken works in Shimane prefecture near Izumo, where he was born. He was trained under the Minge potter Funaki Kenji (b. 1927). Although his earlier works are more decorative, Mihara became inspired by sueki, a natural ash-glazed stoneware made from the mid-fifth to the tenth centuries. Using clay from his native region, he builds up his sculptures by hand. After the initial firing, Mihara repeats his reduction-firing process. He constantly changes his firing strategy in order to achieve a wide range of rustic gray colors.



Nagae Shigekazu 長江重和 b. 1953 (see fig. 2)

Nagae Shigekazu grew up in Seto, where he established his studio in his family ceramics business. He developed his own technique in akoni, a slip-casting method developed for mass production. Nagae forms his sculptures by pouring slip (liquid clay) into plastic molds, which burn out during the initial firing. He then forms a pair with the larger forms encasing the smaller ones. The final firing process fuses the pieces together to produce his signature curved and draped forms.

Nakamura Takuo 中村卓夫 b. 1945 (see fig. 8)

Nakamura Takuo was born in Kanazawa as the second son of Nakamura Baizan II, a master potter. He trained under his father in Kutani ware. Nakamura is known for linking traditional Kutani glazing techniques with unconventional modern forms, as seen in the work displayed here. He is also known for juxtaposing rough textured, glazed clay with gold and silver inlay in a design similar to the decorative wave patterns painted by the Rinpa school artists from the Edo period (1615–1868).

▼ Ogawa Machiko 小川持子 b. 1946

Official recognition of women ceramic artists has been slow to develop. Ogawa Machiko, born in Hokkaido, is one of six women artists who have received the prestigious Japan Ceramic Society Award. Her works are originally inspired by her travels and exposures to other cultures. She studied at the École d’Arts et Métiers in Paris and lived in West Africa for three years in the mid-1970s. Through her works, Ogawa expresses themes associated with nature, especially water and earth.

Sakiyama Takayuki 崎山隆之 b. 1958 (see fig. 10)

Unlike most of the artists in this collection, Sakiyama Takayuki was not born in a famous ceramic center, nor did he have famous teachers. He was born in the seaside town of Shimoda, Izu peninsula, where the seascapes influenced his work. Sakiyama acknowledges that he has been always drawn to the ocean and the most critical influence in his work has been the environment. His double-walled spiraling vessels made of rough Shigaraki clay seem as if they are made of combed sand on the beach and often represent the movement of ocean waves capturing the rhythm of the rippling water and wind.

▼ Takiguchi Kazuo 滝口和男 b. 1953



Takiguchi Kazuo grew up in the heartland of Kyoto pottery, Goyozaki, where he briefly studied under the famous potters Kiyomizu Rokubei VI and Yagi Kazuo. Despite his apprenticeship, Takiguchi developed his own highly individualized method to form thin sheets of clay (less than a quarter of an inch) into balloon-like hollow forms. When the clay dries enough to retain the shape, Takiguchi makes a small opening at the top to reveal the hollow interior and surprisingly thin skin. At first glance, his works seem solid and heavy, but the thin shell gives a fragile and delicate nature to his sculptures.

(Fig. 10) Sakiyama Takayuki 崎山隆之



Tashima Etsuko 田嶋悦子 b. 1959 (see fig. 11)

Tashima Etsuko was born in Osaka, where she continues to live and work. She belongs to the generation of women artists who take a feminist approach to their creation. Tashima leads an artistic movement called the Chō-Shōjo Genshō (Super-Girl Phenomenon) that explores the significance of the female body and femininity in ceramic art. She expresses herself by incorporating colored glass into stoneware to make flowerlike sculptures, which she calls her Cornucopia series. Tashima is a pioneer in combining glass with clay.



(Fig. 11) Tashima Etsuko 田嶋悦子

Takuda Yasokichi Ⅲ 三代 徳田八十吉 1933–2009 (see fig. 6)

Takuda Yasokichi Ⅲ was born in Ishikawa prefecture, where his grandfather and father were prominent Kutani ware ceramic artists. Young Yasokichi learned the traditional Kutani glaze technique from his grandfather. Yasokichi Ⅲ employs traditional Kutani colors; however, he has developed his own technique and style. He meticulously polishes his pieces prior to glazing, then fires them at a higher temperature.

One of San Francisco's premier arts institutions, the Asian Art Museum aims to lead a diverse global audience in discovering the unique material, aesthetic, and intellectual achievements of Asian art and culture. Located across from City Hall in Civic Center, the museum holds one of the world's most comprehensive collections of Asian art, comprising more than 48,000 objects ranging from the Neolithic to the present and spanning the vast expanse of Asia. Now we are pleased to add one more exceptional work to that list, as Phil and Kathy Bissinger have donated the work by Tashima Etsuko (shown above, fig. 11) to the museum. We are immensely grateful for this gift, which will enable us to better tell the story of contemporary Japanese art to our visitors.

Asian Art Museum
Chong-Moon Lee Center for Asian Art and Culture
300 Larkin Street, San Francisco, CA 94102
415.241.3300
www.aamuseum.org

People in the neighborhood: Marjorie Bissinger

Marjorie Bissinger: great lady and great patron

Maire Isaacs

Native San Franciscans know that the city's greatest assets are those remarkable people who have shaped the course of events and affected the community for generations by their generosity and wisdom. The City has much of its cultural character determined far-sighted women like Louise Davies (the San Francisco Symphony), Marjorie Stern (the new Main Library), Alma Spreckels (the face of the Legion of Honor), Edna Klussman (Save the Cable Cars) and many more. Fillmore neighbor Marjorie Bissinger is one of the great, gracious and extremely determined women who have given San Francisco its reputation for leadership in the arts.

Marjorie Bissinger can look back nearly 50 years of effort spent acquiring great art and helping to found the Asian Art Museum in Golden Gate Park to house it. "I was one of many," she says of the people she played in finding a home for the Avery Brundage collection there, then helping to move it into its new space in the old Main Library at the Civic Center. But she is part of a parcel of San Francisco's art tradition, contributing not only dollars and knowledge, time and passion, but stability, continuity, and common sense to art-related causes she has believed in for the better part of her life. Best of all, she's managed to maintain a sense of humor to share with those around her.

From early childhood Marjorie was surrounded by influences which

Picasso, Matisse, Kandinsky, and Chagall then inhabiting Paris, Marjorie shakes her head in mock shock faintly tinged with regret and says, "Oh no, we were heavily chaperoned!"

Marjorie's marriage to Paul Bissinger in 1932 opened a new

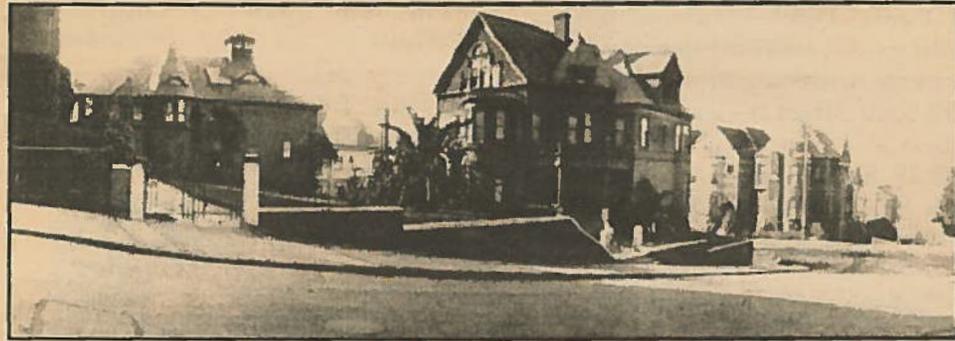
it. Friends from major San Francisco families — Gerbode, Stern and Alice Kent among them — formed the Society for Asian Art to pursue this civic prize. Marjorie and her husband Paul joined the group and Paul, who had been Chairman of Events for the Golden Gate

classes were conducted by Rene-Yvon d'Argence, Catherine Caldwell Professor of Art History.

In 1959 Avery and his wife decided to donate the collection to San Francisco if a museum were built to house it, a decision that would put San Francisco on the map as having the finest and largest collection of Asian art in America. The Society for Asian Art lobbied for its construction in Golden Gate Park. It was to be called The Asian Art Museum

Professor d'Argence became its first director. Marjorie volunteered to help with the major job of cross-filing every single piece of art in the collection, because d'Argence was short on staff. According to Emerita Curator of Japanese Art Yoshiko Kakudo, who also worked on the project, the task was tedious. "Marjorie and I worked in a basement which was dinky, cold, and unfinished, with metal bins and a cement floor. Our typewriters were castaways from the de Young."

San Francisco's first chance to see the Avery Brundage Collection came at the Museum's opening in June 1966. The impact of that exhibit was life-changing for many local citizens, most of whom had only seen junky "Oriental" tourist souvenirs. For them the soaring quality of Asian art was a revelation. Clarence Shangraw, for example, who was to become the Museum's first curator, changed his academic studies and devoted the rest of his life to Chinese



aria, Germany, first supporting herself by selling newspapers and, in 1858, by founding DN&E, a business dealing with carpets, rugs, and draperies. The business continued to flourish under father, John I. Walter, and the family moved into a beautiful mansion at Clay and Buchanan built by Mark Hopkins. Nearby was the Ford Lane Hospital on the site occupied by California Pacific Medical Center. The old mansions are gone, but the graciousness and hospitality of that surrounding is still in Marjorie's demeanor.

Marjorie came by her love of art naturally. Besides being a businesswoman her father was also an uncle cartoonist and his brother, Edgar, was the sculptor who created the sculptures of the statues which adorn the Proscenium of the War Memorial Opera House, and her sister, the late Nellson, was a renowned California

like so many of her friends, the young Marjorie attended Miss Burke's Private School. "It wasn't very exciting," she says, but classes in charcoal drawing at one of the city's first art schools located in the Park Hopkins Hotel proved more interesting. After graduation, it was to Paris with a good friend. They studied art history at the Sorbonne, took architectural tours and studied painting at the Cordon Bleu. "I'm not quite as fluent now, but I'm still comfortable in French," she says. While her friend practiced piano Marjorie studied sculpture. Asked whether the girls ever encountered any of the famous artists such as



(top) a panoramic view of the elegant San Francisco neighborhood where Marjorie Bissinger grew up; (center) collections of books and objects of art grace her current residence; (below) she has remained active in the arts throughout her life

chapter in her arts experience. She frequently traveled with her husband to Japan, and on a trip to New York purchased her first piece of Asian art from the Myron Falk collection there. During the 1930's and 40's she devoted the major part of her time to the San Francisco Opera, however, and on one occasion put on the Fol de Rol. The beautiful gowns and jewels were as newsworthy back then as they are at today's Black and White Ball.

In the 1950's she became interested in a large collection of Asian art that was being amassed by Avery Brundage, a millionaire contractor from the Midwest who had just been appointed President of the International Olympics Committee, succeeding no less a personage than Gen. Douglas MacArthur as president of the American Olympics Committee.

While traveling throughout the world, Brundage's collection had grown to 12,000 pieces. Cities began to vie for

Committee as well as its Exhibitions and Publications Committees. Today the Society for Asian Art that started it all schedules scholarly lectures and other forms of educational programming which she attends. She has also served on the executive committees of both the Asian Art Commission, which determines policy, and the Foundation, which raises support. "The hours I've spent have been countless," she says.

Soon the Asian Art Museum will move into its new home in the Old Main Library building downtown. In the 1990's Marjorie worked tirelessly for the passage of the bond issue that has helped convert what was once a library into a museum. The new Museum will only be able to exhibit about 15% of the Brundage collection but it will fulfill a greater and more public destiny after its move to the Civic Center. It is to become The Asian Art Museum of San Francisco and The Chong-Moon Lee Center for Asian Art and Culture in recognition of a major donor who has helped fund the project.

The new Museum and Culture Center is scheduled to open in the fall of 2002. "But you know how that is," says Marjorie, with a meaningful shrug. The implication is that time, in this as in so many endeavors with which she's been associated, is not the critical factor. Intention, quality, and persistence, these are what matter to her.

Will there ever be another generation with so much generosity and time to support the arts? One does wonder.

Appendix B: Bissinger Ancestors

Ancestors of Paul A. Bissinger, Jr. (13 generations)

Exported from Geni.com on May 21, 2017 at 9:54 AM

1. Paul A. Bissinger, Jr. b. April 3, 1934, San Francisco, San Francisco County, California, United States
2. Paul A. Bissinger b. June 12, 1905, Portland, Multnomah County, OR, USA; d. October 15, 1969, London, Greater London, England, United Kingdom
3. Newton Bissinger b. December 13, 1877, Ichenhausen, Bavarian Swabia, Bavaria, Germany; d. June 30, 1966, Atherton, San Mateo, CA, USA
4. Max Bissinger b. April 1, 1845, Ichenhausen, Bavarian Swabia, Bavaria, Germany; d. December 31, 1927, Ichenhausen, Bavarian Swabia, Bavaria, Germany
5. Heinrich Samuel Bissinger b. April 10, 1819, Ichenhausen, Bavarian Swabia, Bavaria, Germany; d. January 27, 1902, Ichenhausen, Bavarian Swabia, Bavaria, Germany
6. Samson Samuel Bissinger b. 1780, Ichenhausen, Schwaben, Bavaria, Germany; d. April 18, 1854, Ichenhausen, Schwaben, Bavaria, Germany
7. Henoch Baruch Bissinger b. 1747, Bissingen, Bavaria, Germany; d. July 29, 1816, Ichenhausen, Bavaria, Germany
8. Loew Ben Baruch Bissinger b. 1720, Bissingen, Bayern, Deutschland; d. 1780, Ichenhausen, Bayern, Deutschland
9. Loew (Low) (Loeb) Ben Baruch
9. Tissel
10. Rabbi Hanoch-Henoch von Schwaben b. circa 1650
11. Rabbi Yehuda Loeb b. circa 1630
11. ?
12. Rabbi Henoah ben Avraham b. circa 1620; d. circa 1660
8. Schannett Bissinger (unknown)
7. Frumet Bissinger (unknown) b. 1748, Bavaria, Germany; d. December 23, 1829, Ichenhausen, Schwaben, Bavaria, Germany
6. Edele Bissinger (Bernheim) b. 1790, Ichenhausen, Swabia, Bavaria, Germany; d. 1854
7. Oswald Bernheim b. circa 1752, Ichenhausen, Bavarian Swabia, Bavaria, Germany; d. March 24, 1827, Ichenhausen, Bavarian Swabia, Bavaria, Germany
7. Rösle Bernheim

5. Jette Bissinger (Heilbronner) b. March 6, 1812, Ichenhausen, Bavarian Swabia, Bavaria, Germany; d. November 30, 1847, Ichenhausen, Bavarian Swabia, Bavaria, Germany
4. Rosa Bissinger (Henle) b. June 14, 1848, Heilbronn, Stuttgart, Baden-Württemberg, Germany; d. June 16, 1921, Ichenhausen, Bavarian Swabia, Bavaria, Germany
5. Samuel Henle
5. Fanny Henle (Wurmbacher)
3. Mildred Bissinger (Heilner) b. July 14, 1879, Baker City, Baker County, OR, USA; d. April 17, 1930, San Francisco, San Francisco County, CA, USA
4. Sigmund Aron Heilner b. August 13, 1834, Urspringen, Lower Franconia, Bayern, Germany; d. September 7, 1917, Baker City, Baker County, Oregon, United States
5. Aron Heilner b. March 22, 1804, Sulzdorf an der Lederhecke, Lower Franconia, Bavaria, Germany; d. May 14, 1891, Stuttgart, Stuttgart, Baden-Württemberg, Germany
6. Maier David Heilner b. May 9, 1748, Sulzdorf an der Lederhecke, Lower Franconia, Bavaria, Germany; d. October 1, 1825, Sulzdorf an der Lederhecke, Lower Franconia, Bavaria, Germany
7. David Maier Heilner
6. Rechta (Rachel) Heilner (Aron) b. 1759, Sulzdorf an der Lederhecke, Lower Franconia, Bavaria, Germany; d. December 31, 1818, Sulzdorf an der Lederhecke, Lower Franconia, Bavaria, Germany
5. Magdalene (Mandel) Heilner (Hirsch) b. March 6, 1798, Nordheim vor der Rhön, Lower Franconia, Bavaria, Germany; d. September 8, 1836, Urspringen, Lower Franconia, Bavaria, Germany
6. Simon Hirsch b. February 24, 1759, Unsleben, Lower Franconia, Bavaria, Germany; d. July 27, 1833
6. Gitel (Sarah Hirsch (Loeb)) b. 1769; d. January 24, 1811
4. Clara Heilner (Neuberger) b. May 11, 1854, Hainstadt, Buchen (Odenwald), Karlsruhe, Baden-Württemberg, Germany; d. April 20, 1915, Baker, Oregon, United States
5. Josef Neuberger b. 1800, Hainstadt, Buchen (Odenwald), Karlsruhe, Baden-Württemberg, Germany; d. 1867, Hainstadt, Buchen (Odenwald), Karlsruhe, Baden-Württemberg, Germany
6. Jacob Neuberger b. 1762, Hainstadt, Buchen (Odenwald), Karlsruhe, Baden-Württemberg, Germany; d. March 22, 1850, Hainstadt, Buchen (Odenwald), Karlsruhe, Baden-Württemberg, Germany

6. Esther Neuberger (Oppenheimer) b. 1765, Hainstadt, Buchen (Odenwald), Karlsruhe, Baden-Württemberg, Germany; d. September 25, 1853, Hainstadt, Buchen (Odenwald), Karlsruhe, Baden-Württemberg, Germany
5. Sara "Chaja" Neuberger (Sinsheimer) b. July 12, 1815, Breuberg, Darmstadt, Hesse, Germany; d. August 18, 1898, Hainstadt, Buchen, Karlsruhe, Baden-Württemberg, Germany
6. Zacharias Sinsheimer b. 1771, Hainstadt, Buchen (Odenwald), Karlsruhe, Baden-Württemberg, Germany; d. February 20, 1841, Hainstadt, Buchen (Odenwald), Karlsruhe, Baden-Württemberg, Germany
6. Jachet Sinsheimer (Oppenheimer) b. between 1783 and 1784, Hainstadt, Buchen (Odenwald), Karlsruhe, Baden-Württemberg, Germany; d. November 15, 1857, Hainstadt, Buchen (Odenwald), Karlsruhe, Baden-Württemberg, Germany
2. Marjorie Seller (Bissinger) (Walter) b. November 3, 1912, San Francisco, San Francisco, CA, USA; d. January 7, 2003, San Francisco, San Francisco, CA, USA
3. John Isidor Walter, Sr. b. September 11, 1879, San Francisco, San Francisco County, California, United States; d. March 5, 1930, San Francisco, San Francisco County, California, United States
4. Isaac Nathan Walter b. May 1, 1844, Reckendorf, Bayern, Germany; d. October 2, 1925, France
5. Nathan Walter
5. Rosalie (Rosa) Walter (Hessberg)
4. Caroline Walter (Greenebaum) b. June 3, 1858, Sacramento, CA, USA; d. February 15, 1935, San Francisco, CA, USA
5. Hermann (Greenebaum) Greene b. November 12, 1826, Münchweiler an der Rodalb, Rhineland-Palatinate, Germany; d. February 1, 1883, San Francisco, San Francisco, CA, USA
6. Jacob Greenebaum (Grünebaum) b. circa 1796, Münchweiler an der Rodalb, Rhineland-Palatinate, Germany; d. May 15, 1873, Philadelphia, Philadelphia, PA, USA
7. Abraham Benjamin Grünebaum b. 1752, Münchweiler, Donnersbergkreis, Rhineland-Palatinate, Germany; d. June 18, 1802, Münchweiler an der Rodalb, Rhineland-Palatinate, Germany
8. Hirsh Grünebaum (Hirsch ben Benjamin) b. between circa 1719 and circa 1724, Fußgönheim, Rhineland-Palatinate, Germany; d. August 3, 1799, Münchweiler an der Rodalb, Rhineland-Palatinate, Germany
9. Benjamin ben Joseph b. circa 1699, Fußgönheim, Rhineland-Palatinate, Germany

10. Joseph b. circa 1679
9. Feile "Viola" b. Fußgönheim, Rhineland-Palatinate, Germany
8. Barbara (Beier) bas Jacob Jacob b. 1720, Imsbach, Rhineland-Palatinate, Germany; d. Y/, Italy
7. Sara bas Jacob Grünebaum (Felsenthal) b. circa 1758, Rathskirchen, Rhineland-Palatinate, Germany; d. January 28, 1836, Münchweiler an der Rodalb, Rhineland-Palatinate, Germany
8. Jacob ben Isaac (Felsenthal) b. 1732, Waldgrehweiler, Germany; d. September 14, 1807, Rathskirchen, Germany
9. Isaac Felsenthal b. circa 1700, Idar-Oberstein, Birkenfeld, Rhineland-Palatinate, Germany; d. circa 1785, Waldgrehweiler, Rhineland-Palatinate, Germany
10. Abraham Felsenthal
9. Johanna Bayer Felsenthal (Herz) b. 1719, Rhineland-Palatinate, Germany; d. 1775, Rathskirchen, Donnersbergkreis, Rhineland-Palatinate, Germany
8. Hanna Bayer Herz b. 1719, Nachbollenbach, Idar-Oberstein, Rheinland-Pfalz, Germany; d. 1762, Rathskirchen, Rhineland-Palatinate, Germany
6. Caroline Greenebaum (Spiessburger) b. circa 1798, Kaiserslautern, Rhineland-Palatinate, Germany; d. February 9, 1841, Kaiserslautern, Rhineland-Palatinate, Germany
7. Levi Spiessburger
7. Sara Spiessburger (???)
5. Rosalia Greenebaum (Cauffman) b. February 2, 1840, Kaiserslautern, Rheinland-Pfalz, Deutschland; d. June 1, 1919, San Francisco, CA, USA
6. Marcus Cauffman b. June 29, 1797; d. October 5, 1868, Philadelphia, Philadelphia, PA, USA
6. Isabella Cauffman (Wolf) b. March 11, 1805, Philadelphia, Philadelphia, PA, USA; d. November 1883, Philadelphia, PA, USA
7. Simon Wolf
7. Catherine Wolf d. October 13, 1850, Philadelphia, Philadelphia, PA, USA
3. Florence S. Walter (Schwartz) b. April 4, 1884, Oakland, Alameda, CA, USA; d. March 27, 1972, San Francisco, San Francisco, CA, USA
4. Isidor Schwartz (Schwarz) b. February 1, 1852, Kepno, Kępno County, Greater Poland

Voivodeship, Poland; d. September 14, 1903, San Francisco, San Francisco, CA, USA

5. Scheffel Schwarz b. 1819, Kepno, Kępno County, Greater Poland Voivodeship, Poland
6. Hillel Gerschel Schwarz b. circa 1795, Kepno, Kępno County, Greater Poland Voivodeship, Poland
7. Asher Loebel Schwarz b. 1774, Kepno, Kępno County, Greater Poland Voivodeship, Poland; d. September 20, 1844, Kepno, Kępno County, Greater Poland Voivodeship, Poland
8. Loebel Schwarz b. circa 1750, Kepno, Kępno County, Greater Poland Voivodeship, Poland
8. Zorel Schwarz (Scheye) b. 1790, Kepno, Kępno County, Greater Poland Voivodeship, Poland
9. David Scheye
9. Sorel Scheye (Abraham)
7. Sarah Schwarz b. circa 1775, Kepno, Kępno County, Greater Poland Voivodeship, Poland
6. Pauline Schwarz b. circa 1800, Kepno, Kępno County, Greater Poland Voivodeship, Poland
5. Zorel Schwarz (Kasztan) b. 1818, Kepno, Kępno County, Greater Poland Voivodeship, Poland
6. Jacob Kasztan
6. Gittel Kasztan
4. Henrietta Schwartz (Cohn) b. June 1863, Iowa, United States; d. August 4, 1906, San Francisco, San Francisco County, California, United States
5. Israel L. Cohen (Cohn) b. 1821, Golub-Dobrzyń, Golub-Dobrzyń County, Kuyavian-Pomeranian Voivodeship, Poland; d. December 21, 1879
5. Hannah Cohn (Bloom) b. 1821, Germany; d. December 21, 1879, California, United States

Geni

Appendix C: Bissinger's Resume

Paul A Bissinger, Jr. Resume

Age: 77

Wife: Kathleen; married 52 years

Two sons, Stephen, 47, and Matthew, 41

Daughter-in-Law Taara Hoffman, and Granddaughter Hannah

Residence: San Francisco

Background and Education:

Born in San Francisco 1934; graduated from the Phillips Exeter Academy 1952; graduated from Stanford University 1956 with B.A. in History; U.S. Naval Officer on aircraft carrier U.S.S. Hornet 1956-58; graduated from the American Institute for Foreign Trade, Scottsdale, Arizona, 1959.

Business Background:

2001 – Present

Actively Retired

1986 – 2000

Paul A Bissinger, Jr. Investment Counsel
Position: Owner & Principal

1976 – 1986

Paul A Bissinger, Jr., Financial Consultant & Planning,
Real Estate Investments and Asset Management
Position: Owner & Principal

1971 - 1976

Property Resources, Inc., Real Estate Syndications
Position: Director and Vice President, Sales

1966 - 1970

Bissinger & Co., domestic and export dealer in hides,
skins, wool and tallow
1966-1969 Assistant to the President
1969-1970 President

1960 - 1966

J. Barth & Co., Investment Bankers
Position: Security Analyst and Broker

Early Adult Life- partial listing

Bissinger & Co. Father- cancer-died 1969

Company sold to Beggs & Cobb- Paul becomes President- Disaster\Resigned

Sold warehouse and office properties

Big Brothers of the SF Bay Area- President 1966-67, Chairman 67-68

Economic Roundtable of SF President 1963

Stanford Class of 56 10th reunion largest 10th reunion in Stanford History

Paul A Bissinger, Jr. Resume
Page Two

Other Affiliations:

Business Related

Past member, Finance Committee, San Francisco Planning & Urban Research

Past Board of Directors and Vice Chairman, D. N. & E. Walter & Co.

Past Board of Directors, Property Resources, Inc., Real Estate Investment Trust

Member and Past President, Economic Round Table of San Francisco

Community & Cultural Related

Life Governor (previously Board of Governors), San Francisco Symphony;
Founding Chairman, San Francisco Symphony Youth Orchestra Committee

Past Board of Directors, American Symphony Orchestra League Youth Orchestra Division

Past Board of Directors & Vice Chairman, San Francisco Performances;
Past Chairman, Education Committee

Past Advisory Board, San Francisco Classical Voice

Past Long Range Planning Committee, The Fromm Institute

Past Board of Directors, Merola Opera Training Program

Past Major Gifts Committee, Committee to Restore the Opera House

Past Board of Governors, Town School for Boys

Past Board of Directors & Chairman, Big Brothers of the San Francisco Bay Area

Past Board of Directors & Regional Vice President, Big Brothers of America

Member and Past Board of Directors, California Tennis Club

Past Board of Directors, Presidio Heights Neighborhood Association

March 10, 2011

USN
#2

Our second cruise (and new skipper) to the Far East was a different story. I was happily reassigned to an assortment of definitely non-gunnery activities: Education & Training Officer; Character Guidance Board (in charge of morale, citizenship, and ship spirit); Precious Metals Audit Board (i.e. weighing the gold in the Dental Dept. monthly); Venereal Disease Control Officer; Tour Officer (arranging in-port sightseeing for the crew); cruise book editor (for each tour to the Far East – just like a college year book. As well as providing free to roam days in Tokyo where the book was produced & printed; and volley ball officer (our skipper loved to play so I put him on my team).

During the second cruise, our new skipper qualified perhaps 10 or 12 of us junior officers as Officers of the Deck i.e. in command of this enormous ship with several thousand personnel, even at night during flight operations. In addition we were promoted from Ensign to Lieutenant Jg.

General Quarters was another matter: it turned out that the ship's navigator had never been to sea before, and didn't want to occupy his assigned General Quarters station on the bridge next to the captain. Simultaneously, it was found that the Education & Training Officer had no assigned General Quarters Station. So, I was given this plum position, and ended my Navy career on a high note.

Source

USN

Shortly following graduation in 1956, I reported aboard the aircraft carrier USS Hornet and was assigned to the gunnery department. This misjudgment of my talents was soon evident when during "operation readiness inspection" off Hawaii; I bumped my 5" gun barrels into the wing of a parked jet on deck. That pretty much defined my first year, but then thing got much better as I acquired more appropriate responsibilities: Education and Training Officer; Precious Metals Audit Board (weighing gold in the dental office monthly); Character Guidance Board (citizenship, morale and ship's spirit); Athletic Officer (Our skipper liked to play volleyball so I put him on my team); Venereal Disease Control Officer (Mediating between the medical officer, who wanted to give more penicillin, and the chaplain, who wanted to give more sermons); tours officer(so that our culture starved crew could see the sights rather than stopping at nearby bars and w houses); and cruise book editor (just like school yearbooks).

For the second year, I and several other young officers were qualified as officer of the deck with the serious responsibility of being in command of the ship. Our navigator had never been to sea before(speaking of inappropriate assignment), and since he didn't want to take his designated station as officer of the deck during general quarters, I was given this position, on the bridge with the Captain. All in all, these were exciting and eye-opening years, including a considerable amount of free time to explore Japan.

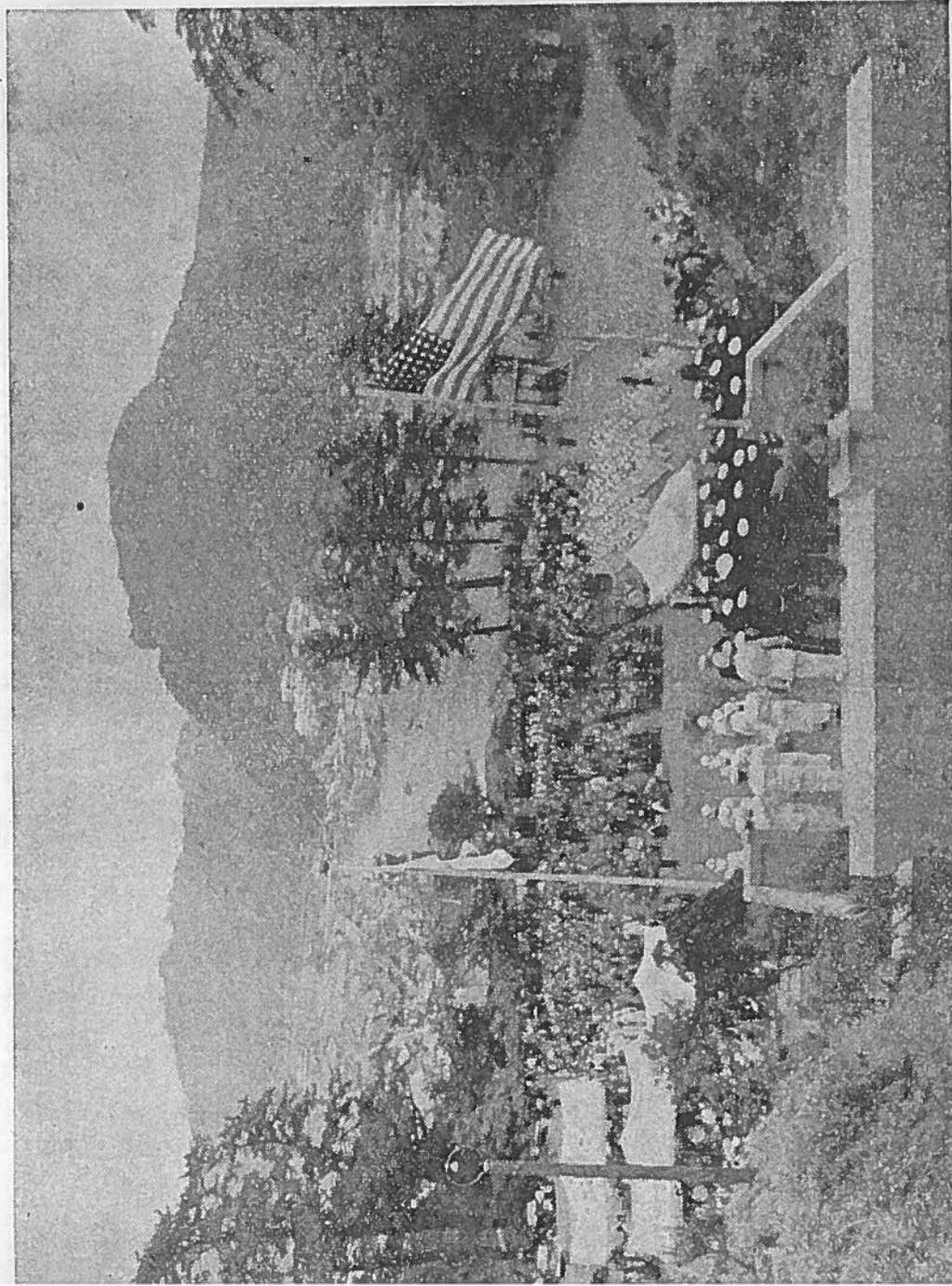
American Institute for Foreign Trade (1959)

DR & MRS RANALD L F
PHOENIX SIMMONS
DISC - J. S. H. F.

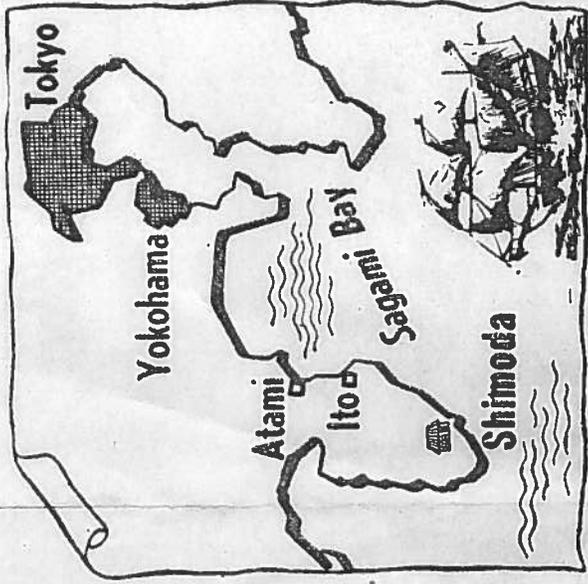
SABINA
BUD BELL

Whirlwind romance with Kathleen Bell - engaged in 10 days

TARS + STRIPES MAY 21 1958



AMERICAN AND JAPANESE FLAGS WERE RAISED DURING AN IMPRESSIVE CEREMONY AT THE MONUMENTAL SITE OF COMMODORE PERRY'S VISIT TO SHIMODA PORT (BACKGROUND).



SHIMODA, BEST PORT ON IZU PENINSULA, HOUSED PERRY'S FLEET.



TOWNSEND HARRIS
1st U.S. Envoy to Japan

U.S. Ambassador to Japan Douglas MacArthur II led a group of Americans to the Japanese port town of Shimoda Friday to take part in the annual Kurofuna Matsuri or Black Ship Festival, commemorating the 105th anniversary of Commodore Matthew Perry's landing and the achievements of Consul General Townsend Harris.

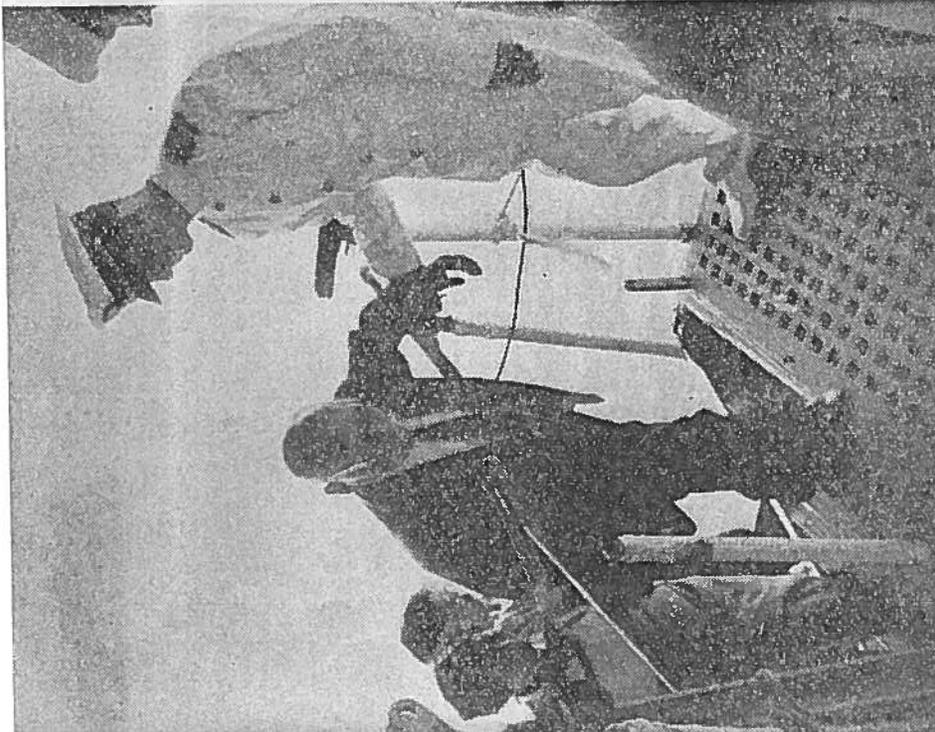
The annual three-day affair, started in 1934, has now become one of the major festivals of the country.

The ambassador participated in a parade through town, in which U.S. marines and personnel of the aircraft carrier Hornet all took

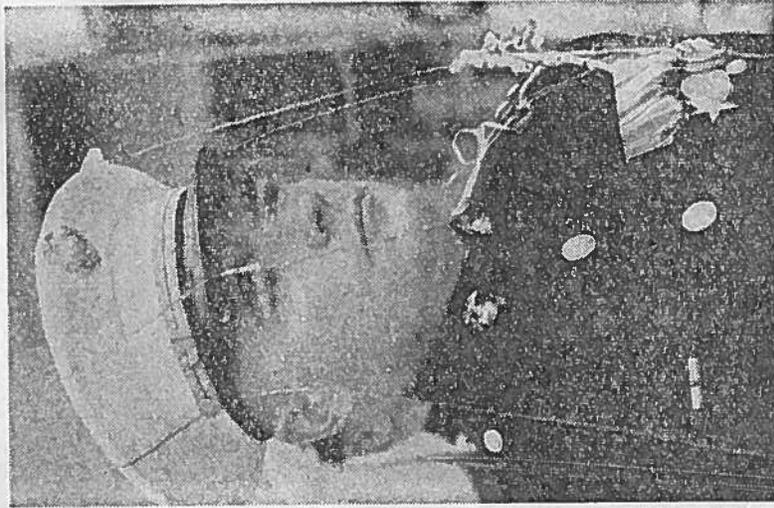
Historic Black Ship Festival

545 PHOTOS BY SANDY COLTON

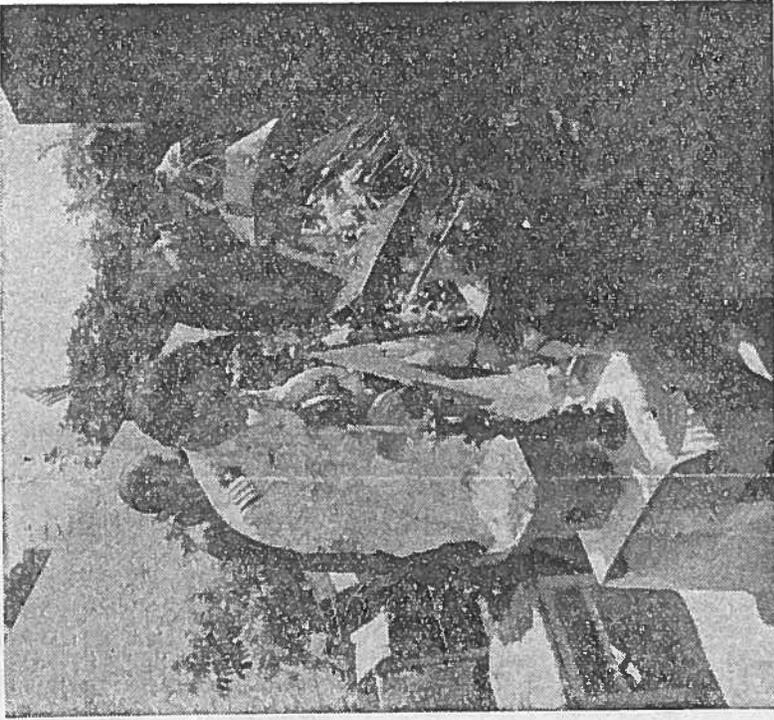
part. Mr. MacArthur also visited various historic landmarks hailed U.S.-Japan ties. The festival included color dances, fireworks, contests and visits by local residents to Hornet.



OFFICER OF HORNET helps an elderly sailor up the ladder of the carrier, anchored off Shimoda. Small boats shuttled back and forth for three days bringing enthusiastic Japanese visitors to look over the ship.



PAPER STREAMERS drape over Capt. R. W. Oliver, commanding officer of the Hornet's Marine company, as he leads a platoon during the parade.



CAPT. KEMP TOLLEY, commander of Fleet Activities, Yokosuka, pays homage to the souls of five U.S. servicemen whose graves are kept at Gyokur Temple, where Harris first took up a dance in 1856.

Appendix E: The Story of "To-Jin Okichi"

The Story "To-Jin Okichi"

This romantic story occurred in the middle of the 19th century when Japan awakened from her peaceful two hundred year dream of world seclusion.

Paintings by
ENKYU SEGAWA

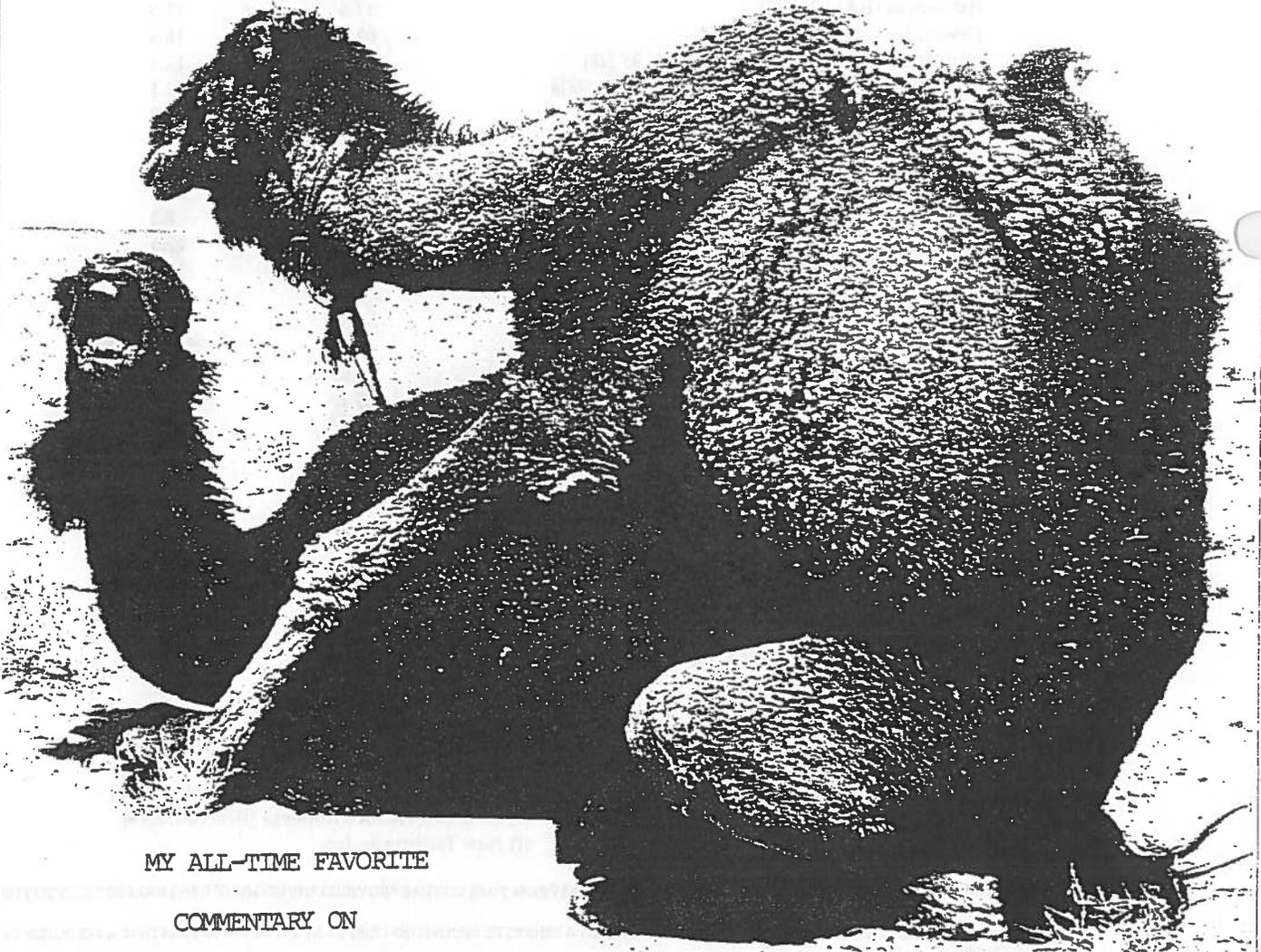
1. The natives of Shimoda were flurried and trembled at seeing the black ships (ships of the American Squadron led by Commodore Perry) anchored off here in May 1854.
2. Glamorous appearance of 17-year-old 'Okichi' when she became the concubine to American Consul-General Townsend Harris after forcibly separated from her fiance Tsurumatsu in 1857.
3. All houses were washed away by devastating tidal waves and earthquakes in November 1854 but Ryo-sen-ji Temple remained safe.
4. Okichi, 16, sought refuge in the mountains with her mother. Her house and all properties were completely gone.
5. "Okichi" had her house built by her fiance, Tsurumatsu who was a carpenter. They were an ideal couple and the envy of the villagers. This shows lovely Okichi and Tsurumatsu at Shimoda Summer Festival.
6. First American Consul-General Townsend Harris arrived at Shimoda in Summer 1856. Horrible fate creeps behind these two persons.
7. To secure her livelihood; "Okichi" as a Geisha. Her looks, singing and dancing were most outstanding and distinguished her all over Shimoda.
8. Harris was attracted by the charming Okichi who had come from her bath and he demanded the local Japanese authorities employ her as his concubine.
9. Okichi was ordered to report to the local Japanese office and to be employed as a concubine. She firmly refused this.
10. While confined at a local government official's office, she drank desperately fearing torture.
11. Shinjiro Isa, a representative from the local Japanese authorities finally convinced her at the futility to refuse.
12. Her fiance Tsurumatsu was forced by the local Japanese official to part from her and he left for Tokyo (then called Yedo)
13. Sobbing in great sorrow Okichi was sent to Harris riding in a cage which still remains at the temple here. Since then diplomatic relations between the two countries went smoothly.
14. All the natives here without knowing her suffering spoke ill of her and insulted her calling "Foreigner's concubine Okichi" (To-Jin Okichi)
15. Okichi, waited on Harris respectfully and she bravely protected him from assassination when imperialists were ordering the exclusion of all foreigners.
16. She frequently drank and wandered about the sea shore in desperation.
17. She abandoned herself to grief in a room of the Consul's mansion with snow falling outside.
18. Harris Dutch interpreter, Heusken was assassinated by a nationalist in Tokyo.
19. Okichi now 19, was ordered to Tokyo by the Japanese Government to nurse the sick Harris.
20. When Okichi was 21 years old, Harris returned to America and the next year, alone and without livelihood she took the only work allowed her. Okichi became a Geisha.
21. Okichi remembers. Thinking over the past when she was a forced concubine and companion of Harris.
22. Desperately drinking day by day she felt forsaken by her mother and people.
23. Okichi soon tired of the meaningless life at Shimoda and sought to escape her fate in a journey to Kyoto.
24. She was accompanied to Kyoto Takeshiro Matsuura.
25. Longing for her lover Tsurumatsu, she left for Tokyo after two years stay in Kyoto.
26. She chanced to see Tsurumatsu at Yokohama. Both of them were ashamed at their indolent and poverty-stricken lives.
27. Life together at Yokohama, while Tsurumatsu worked as a carpenter at ship-building and Okichi as hair-dresser.
28. After coming back to Shimoda, they lived together for three years. Okichi led a dissipated life of drinking and finally obtained a divorce.
29. Tsurumatsu died suddenly at the age of 39. Okichi crying before his grave.
30. Okichi 42 opened a restaurant 'Anchoku-Ro' at Shimoda which is still seen here.
31. Okichi drinks with a favorite cup Harris left and plays the Japanese Classic music 'Shin-Nai' which she was accomplished at.
32. She became despondent after the sale of her restaurant.
33. Okichi 47 became hemiplegic due to high blood pressure. Convalescing at Yoshina hot spring.
34. Okichi 50 had never begged or asked for favors even when reduced to poverty.
35. The evening of March 27, 1890. Okichi at the age of 50 drowned her sorrowful life in the gulf just north of Shimoda. To this day it is known as "The Gulf of Okichi"
36. A memorial service is held to honor Okichi the first martyr in the era of Japan's reawakening.



INTERNET INC	page 73
EUROPE A LA CARTE	pages 14, 21-23 and 57-58
BOUND FOR THE STARS?	page 99
CAMPAIGN KICK-OFF	page 25

Appendix E: Newsletters

The trouble with mergers



MY ALL-TIME FAVORITE
 COMMENTARY ON
 MERGERS AND ACQUISITIONS

Australia	US\$ 50	China	RMB 40	Hong Kong	HK\$ 35	Japan	¥550	Russia	US\$ 50	Switzerland	SFr 7.50
Bahrain	Dinar 5.5	France	FFr 25	India	Rs 10	Mexico	Peso 17.50	Saudi Arabia	Rials 15	UK	£2.00
Canada	CA\$ 50	Germany	DM 50	Italy	Lira 1,300	Netherlands	ƒ 3.50	South Africa	Rand 15.50	USA	US\$ 50

Table 1
NIFTY FIFTY

	P/E Ratios	
	1972 High	1974 Low
American Express (AXP: 22 1/4)	37.2	8.1
American Home Products (AHP: 78 3/4)#	38.0	18.4
American Hospital Supply (a)	55.6	9.8
AMP (AMP:66 1/2)#	48.9	16.3
Avon Products (AVP: 46 1/2)#	64.8	9.7
Baxter Travenol (a)	72.7	19.8
Black & Decker (BDK: 20)	51.4	18.2
Burroughs (b)	48.8	16.8
Citicorp (CCI: 14 3/8)	21.9	8.2
Coca-Cola (KO: 74 7/8)#	47.0	13.6
Colgate-Palmolive (CL: 48 1/8)#	29.9	10.4
Digital Equipment (DEC: 53 5/8)#	47.7	12.9
Disney (Walt) (DIS: 131 3/4)#	82.1	10.9
Dr. Pepper++@ (c)	65.1	12.5
Eastman Kodak (EK: 49 3/8)	44.2	14.8
Emery Air Freight (d)	56.1	15.0
Gannett (GCI: 45 5/8)	36.8	12.4
General Electric (GE: 79 1/2)	25.1	19.0
Genuine Parts (GPC: 46 3/8)	44.2	11.1
Halliburton (HAL: 30 1/8)	37.6	13.6
Hewlett-Packard (HWP: 59 3/4)#	62.9	16.9
International Business Machines (IBM: 95 5/8)	38.7	12.1
International Flavors & Fragrances (IFF: 100 5/8)#	72.7	22.1
Johnson & Johnson (JNJ: 107 1/2)	61.9	26.2
K mart (KMT: 50)	50.0	21.0
Lilly (Eli) (LLY: 81 3/8)#	43.2	21.5
Lubrizol (LZ: 60)#	42.3	11.4
Marriott (MHS: 18 7/8)#	43.3	8.2
McDonald's (MCD: 43 1/8)#	81.9	12.5
Merck (MRK: 154 7/8)#	45.2	16.7
Minnesota Mining & Manufacturing (MMM: 96)	40.1	16.8
NCH (NCH: 68 3/8)#	63.6	22.0
Pennney (J.C.) (JCP: 56 3/8)#	32.2	16.5
PepsiCo (PEP: 33)	29.8	7.9
Philip Morris (MO: 78)#	25.3	10.8
Polaroid (PRD: 26 1/4)	115.4	16.4
Procter & Gamble (PG: 95 7/8)	33.4	17.4
Revlon (c)	27.4	10.3
Schering-Plough (SGP: 60 7/8)#	48.3	18.0
Schlumberger (SLB: 63 1/2)	49.0	12.2
Sears Roebuck (S: 40 1/4)	30.3	12.8
Standard Brands (e)	17.8	9.9
Tampax (f)	58.8	8.1
Tektronix (TEK: 20 1/2)#	34.4	6.0
Texas Instruments (TXN: 34 1/2)#	43.8	15.0
Warner-Lambert (WLA: 72 1/2)#	32.3	9.2
Xerox (XRX: 69)	54.4	11.7

Note: This list from August 1987 was already the Nifty Forty-Seven. Prices are as of the close, January 22, 1992.

(a) Now Baxter International (BAX: 37)#

(d) Now Consolidated Freightways (CNF: 16 3/8)

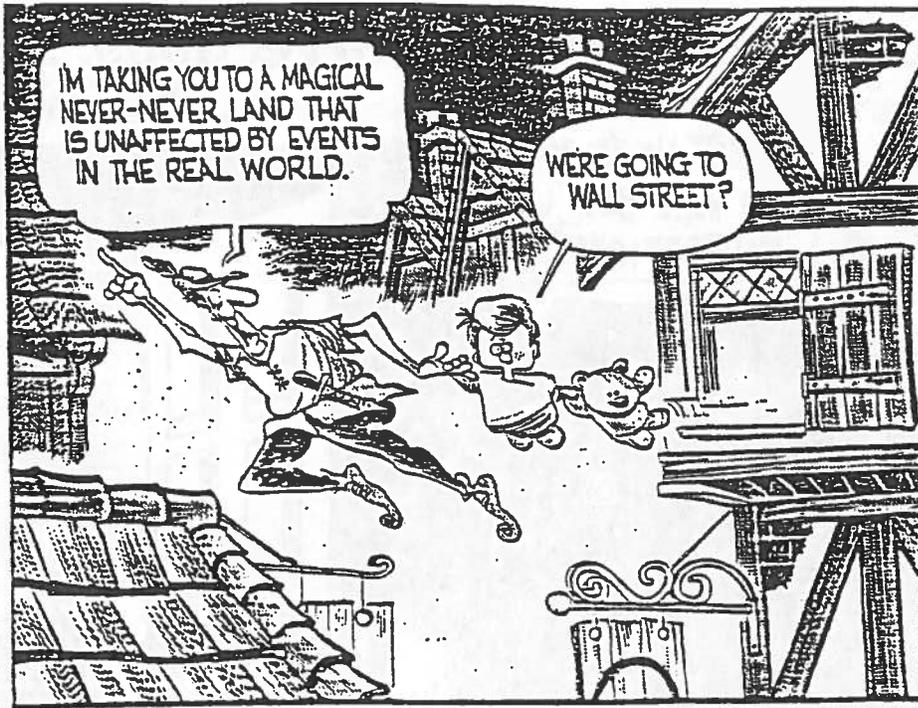
(b) Now Unisys (UIS: 5 3/4)

(e) Now RJR Nabisco Holdings (RN: 10 7/8)#@

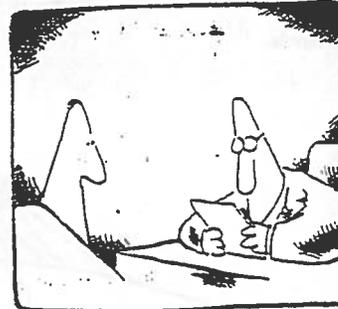
(c) Now private

(f) Now Tambrands, Inc.

- DONALDSON, LUFKIN & JENRETTE SECURITIES CORPORATION HAS FROM TIME TO TIME PROVIDED INVESTMENT BANKING SERVICES TO THE COMPANY AND HAS BEEN COMPENSATED FOR THOSE SERVICES.
- ++ AN OFFICER, DIRECTOR OR EMPLOYEE OF DONALDSON, LUFKIN & JENRETTE SECURITIES CORPORATION OR AN AFFILIATE IS A DIRECTOR OF THIS CORPORATION.
- DONALDSON, LUFKIN & JENRETTE SECURITIES CORPORATION MAKES A MARKET IN THIS SECURITY, HAS PERIODIC POSITIONS IN THIS SECURITY IN CONNECTION WITH THIS ACTIVITY AND MAY BE ON THE OPPOSITE SIDE OF PUBLIC ORDERS EXECUTED ON A REGIONAL STOCK EXCHANGE WHERE WE ACT AS A SPECIALIST.



"As far as we can project, barring some unexpected event, our fund should continue to yield about 35% per annum forever."

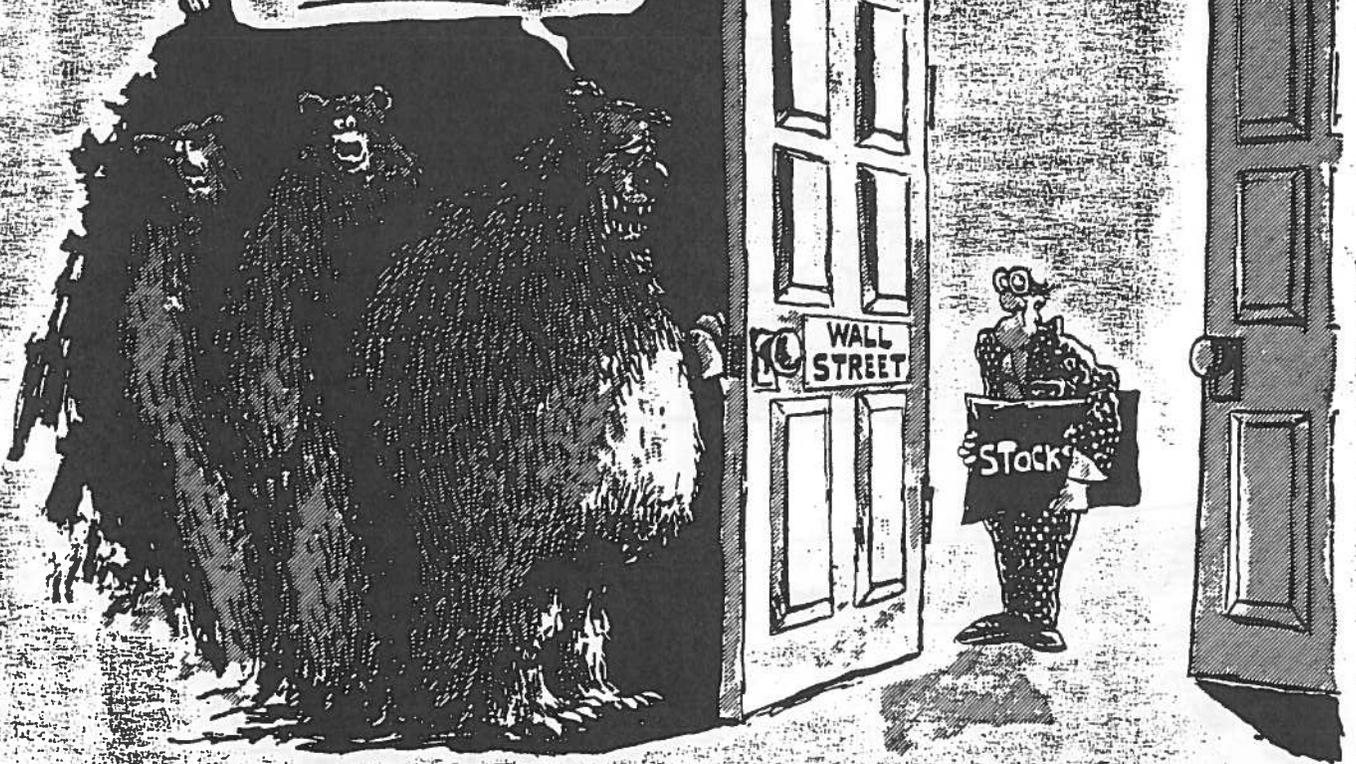


"One question: If this is the Information Age, how come nobody knows anything?"

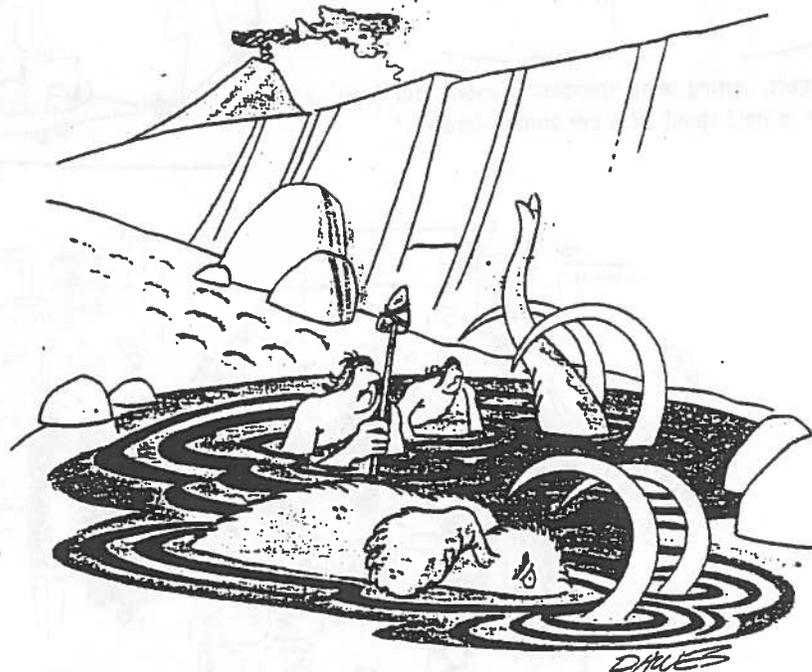
Nobody Here But Us Corrections...

WELLS
THE AUGUSTA CHRONICLE

BEARS?!? NO BEARS HERE!
NOBODY HERE BUT US
'CORRECTIONS...



Reprinted by permission
Clide Wells, Augusta Chronicle.



"I can't wait for the time when we become
intelligent enough not to follow the herd into the tar pit."

Observations on the Market

In order to gain some perspective on the historic changes currently taking place in the world, I took out my grandmother's beautiful leather-bound 19th century postage stamp albums last weekend.

I was reminded that in the mid to late 19th century, not much more than 100 years ago, a grand tour of Europe might have included the Grand Duchies of Baden and Tuscany; the Kingdoms of Bavaria, Poland and Prussia; the Free Cities of Frankfort-on-Main and Hamburg; the Papal Province of Romagna; the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy (including Albania, Montenegro and Croatia); and the Turkish Provinces of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

There were Palace Guards but no Gap Stores in London, Duck a l'Orange but no Donald Duck in Paris, Michelangelos but no McDonalds in Florence, no American Express offices anywhere to replace lost travelers' checks, no telephone or fax to stay in touch, no computers to reconfirm your reservations and no airlines to bring you home in an emergency.

Over the past one hundred plus years, the geo-political map of the world has undergone dramatic and continuous change. In this century alone, we have had two world wars plus countless local and regional wars. Communism has risen and collapsed. In its wake Islamic fundamentalism is growing as a major force not only throughout the Arab world but in significant parts of Africa and Asia including the entire southern flank of Russia.

At the same time, the world has been impacted as much by astonishing advances in science and technology as by wars and politics. We live on an ever-shrinking planet reflecting dramatic increases in the speed of travel along with remarkable advances in voice and data communications.

Although the essential characteristic of our world is change, I am struck with the propensity of economic and market forecasters to project into the future whatever the current trend happens to be. If interest rates are dropping, the prognosis will be for further reductions. If unemployment is rising, the expectation will be for continued layoffs. Now that the DJIA has topped 3,200, leading market analysts will predict a further rise to 3,600, but if the Dow retreats to 2,800 the same gurus will predict a collapse to 2,400.

I exaggerate intentionally to highlight the fact that seemingly intractable trends do reverse themselves, often for reasons that cannot be anticipated. The December 21 issue of The Economist comments: "This article is about why extrapolationism makes bad futurology, and why predictions about the future will be as wrong as those made in the past...Most of America's gloom derives from an excessive dose of what might be called extrapolationism. Trade deficits will grow forever. Japanese domination of the aerospace industry is inevitable. Health care will eat the budget. Productivity will never rise again. Indebtedness will continue to grow. And so on."

The predominantly gloomy public mood is reinforced by a press determined to report bad news only, a perception, possibly correct, that our political system is ineffective, and a recession that seems particularly severe to you and me because it has been focused so harshly on the financial and service sectors of the economy. Few of us knew an unemployed steelworker in 1981; yet many of us know a banker or real estate developer whose job disappeared in 1991.

Keep in mind that other sectors of the economy - the farmers, the oil & gas industry, and manufacturing as a whole - have already undergone this "restructuring" process starting in the late 1970's, and these industries are today more efficient, productive and competitive as a result.

As The Wall Street Journal recently commented, "...some employers will always be shrinking, and often they will be the largest ones. The Fortune 500 employed 3.5 million fewer people in 1990 than it did in 1980...(yet), during the 1980's, despite the decade's shaky start, the economy produced enough new and growing businesses to offset the job decline by the Fortune 500 and add more than 18 million new jobs". The issue is not the loss of jobs at General Motors, Sears or other declining or inefficient companies; it is the encouragement of innovative and entrepreneurial new companies through policies that provide access to capital and other investment incentives including a lower capital gains tax rate.

While I do not wish to ignore or make light of the serious human and structural problems we face in this country, it must be kept in mind that the current recession, while among the longest, is far from the deepest in the post-World War II era. In the downturns of 1973-75 and 1981-82, output fell by 4.1% and 2.8% respectively, peak to trough, and unemployment rose to 9% and 11%. In 1990-91, by contrast, output fell but 1.6% and unemployment rose only to 7%.

I recently came upon an article from The New York Times dated October 3, 1982, that could have been written last week. Housing starts were at a 15-year low, no one was buying cars, unemployment claims were rising and bankruptcies were at a postwar high. While inflation was slowing and six-month Treasury Bills had fallen 35% in four months, credit card rates were high and rising. Capacity utilization was low and business spending on plant and equipment was declining. Indebtedness at all levels was considered to be precariously high. Third World loans were seen to be valueless or nearly so. It was doubted that the traditional mechanisms of economic recovery could operate. Economists believed that "the recovery may amount to nothing more than a few quarters of paltry growth - and possibly not even that". Many consumers felt the worst was yet to come and were saving rather than spending.

Of course, the 1981-82 recession **did** end and the 1980's turned out to be a period of considerable, albeit unevenly distributed, growth and prosperity.

I believe that the equity and bond markets are probably telling us the truth and that an economic recovery is underway. The Federal Reserve has recently pushed short-term interest rates to the lowest levels in recent memory and long-term rates are also declining. 30-year fixed-rate mortgages are close to 8%, the lowest level since early 1973. While the banks are reluctant to

lend because of the credit crunch they helped create by their own improvidence and greed in the 1980's, the Federal Reserve is likely (in an election year) to keep pushing until the money supply does begin to grow.

In the meantime, inflation has been falling led by surprisingly weak oil and gas prices. Excessive corporate debt accumulated in the 1980's is being refinanced at lower rates or liquidated largely through the sale of new equity. These "re-liquified" companies, with strengthened balance sheets, will be able to invest and grow more rapidly.

The weak U.S. dollar will stimulate exports and our better multinational companies will participate strongly in a generally robust world economy. Mexico, Europe, Eastern Europe and potentially the Russian Commonwealth look particularly promising.

We may yet have a peace dividend with government spending shifted from generally unproductive defense spending to domestic programs and possibly deficit reduction and/or tax cuts.

The above factors are positive for corporate earnings and the equity markets. As issuance of debt and retirement of equity symbolized the excesses of the 1980's, increased equity and the retirement of debt are likely to symbolize the 1990's.

Furthermore, I believe the individual investor is beginning to rediscover the stock market. A recent study revealed that only 17% of all Household Financial Assets is presently invested in equities compared to a 35-year norm of 24%. With money-market funds yielding under 4.5%, 1-year CD's 4.25% and 6 month Treasury Bills 4%, investors will either extend their maturities, placing further downward pressure on long-term interest rates, or switch into equities. These trends are already taking place.

This does not mean that I am unreservedly bullish on the market, and I have my usual concerns about the "nifty 50" category of favored and over-loved stocks that have been run up to rather generous price-earnings ratios. I have never pretended to be able to predict the market as a whole. As always, there are good stocks in bad markets and bad stocks in good markets.

Returning to my original thesis that the essential constant is change, my predilection, as always, is to focus on overlooked, underfollowed and under-loved issues, exercise patience, and not to become overly distracted by chatter about what the market as a whole might do.

Paul A Bissinger, Jr.
January, 1992



YES. WE'RE TWO EXPERT ECONOMISTS. WE'LL BE YOUR NIGHTMARE TONIGHT!



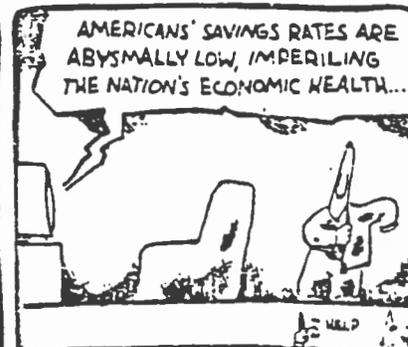
THE ECONOMY? OH, IT'S IMPROVING!

NO, IT'S NOT.



GENTLEMEN...

PHOOEY! THE DEFICIT! WHAT OF THE DEFICIT!



THIS MUST BE SOMETHING NEW-



Appendix G: Oral History Supplement: Junior Chamber of Commerce

ORAL HISTORY – SUPPLEMENT – 01-15-2018

JUNIOR CHAMBER OF COMMERCE – KENNETH REXROTH

An amusing event occurred during my early business career. I must have joined the Junior Chamber of Commerce, through whom I was asked to organize panel discussions with foreign students – one at U. C. Berkeley and another at Stanford. The discussions would be radio broadcast and I was to find moderators. I don't recall who moderated the Stanford discussion, but I do recall lining up Kenneth Rexroth, the famous voice of the Beat Generation at that time, for the U. C. discussion. And I also recall that he was a terrible moderator as he did all the talking and the students couldn't get a word in edgewise.

A week or two later, I got a telephone call from my new friend, Ken, inviting me to come to a dinner that was held from time to time with a select group of leading intellectuals enjoying their thoughts and insights together with fine food and wine. Well, you can imagine my coming home that afternoon with my head swollen over my new status as part of the City's intelligentsia.

I arrived at a private room in the designated restaurant, and was seated between two gentlemen I did not know. Indeed, I knew no one at the table. At a point, I decided that I had to say something, and turning to one side, I commented (more or less) "isn't it terrible how irresponsible the newspapers in San Francisco are". The response was (more or less) "oh really? I am the editor of the Examiner". So I lurched for the nearest bottle of wine, bringing on a tirade ("you're shaking the sediment").

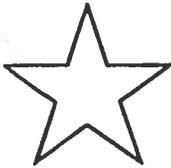
I came home that night, thoroughly soused, and told Kathy that I was a disaster. Nonetheless, I was invited to another dinner, and then another, by which time I figured out that these so-called elite intellectuals were for the most part a bunch of egoists who loved their own voices. Thus ended my foray into intellectual society.

The Stardusters



"Music from the Stars"

Dick Reyna
Alex Ferreira
Gordon Best
Dick Babb
Dave Walter



Leon Ardzrooni
Hal Hansen
Bob Webster
Paul Bissinger

Spike Lynch

Spike Lynch
Box 1238
Stanford University
Stanford, California

Appendix I: Email from Dick Mansfield

Paul Bissinger

From: "Richard Mansfield" <rgmans34@gmail.com>
Date: Tuesday, October 31, 2017 10:42 AM
To: "Paul Bissinger" <paulbis.sf@gmail.com>
Subject: Melodians

Paul, thank you (and Kathy!) again for the wonderful time we spent with you yesterday.

The three-piece combo in which you (guitar) and I (accordion) performed during the last half of our senior year at Exeter was called the Melodians (I'm not sure why). The third member was Charles (Charlie) Forbes, a member of the class of 1954, who was a first-rate cellist who learned and played the contrabass with us and with the Royal Exonians; the online alumni directory says he graduated from Harvard in 1959 and received the M.S. from Manhattan School of Music in 1961, and that he now lives in Langhorne, PA, with his wife; they had four kids. His email address is listed as cdfcello@gmail.com, which suggests that he remained active in music. I used to have an 8x10 glossy photo of the three of us, but I haven't been able to find it.

All the best.

Dick

--

Dick Mansfield
rgmans34@gmail.com



Virus-free. www.avg.com

Appendix J: SF YO Critical Acclaim

SAN FRANCISCO SYMPHONY YOUTH ORCHESTRA

DECADES of CRITICAL ACCLAIM

"Dazzling start for SF youth orchestra season: In an exciting season-opening concert in Davies Symphony Hall under its new music director, the dynamic young German conductor Christian Reif, the orchestra demonstrated both a wonderful degree of artistic ambition and the level of execution required to fulfill those goals.

-*San Francisco Chronicle*, Nov. 2016

"The San Francisco Symphony Youth Orchestra revealed itself at the Amsterdam Concertgebouw as an important part of the future of classical music in the United States. What sets this youth orchestra apart was not a typical, energetic camaraderie, but rather its precision and a focus of great maturity. The nuance and clarity were stunning—their crisp, tight sound worthy of a mature orchestra! ...It takes quite some courage to perform Mahler successfully at the Concertgebouw, so this mature youth orchestra pulled off an impressive feat.

-*Bachtrack (Amsterdam)*, 2015

"Once again these young Americans live up to their reputation as one of the world's best youth orchestras with a mixture of perfection and expressiveness."

-*Der Tagesspiegel (Berlin)*, 2015

"So precise and so professional – the San Francisco Symphony Youth Orchestra at the Berlin Philharmonie...It's striking how much the precision for which adult American orchestras are known is already a part of this youth orchestra....The resulting sound and clarity of their ensemble playing is impressive."

-*Berliner Zeitung*, 2015

"Dramatic build-ups, tricky rhythms, rapturous passages alongside abrupt staccato—these were challenges that the Youth Orchestra as conducted by Donato Cabrera mastered to an almost fantastic extent. Indeed, more than that: they carried the audience away with effortless enthusiasm, with the optimism of the new American dream. What a way to start this [Audi Festival] 25th anniversary season!"

-*Donaukurier(Bavaria)*, 2015

"Outbursts of Cheering at the Opening Concert of the Audi Festival's 25th Anniversary Season: The 100 or so musicians of the San Francisco Symphony Youth Orchestra created a musical marvel across a spectrum of moods that had the concert hall shaking with excitement."

-*Bayerische Staatszeitung (Bavaria)*, 2015

"Donato Cabrera and the teenage musicians of the San Francisco Symphony Youth Orchestra concluded their season with a formidable account of Mahler's Fifth Symphony, bringing out all the tempestuous energy and expressive tenderness of the score. This was an account that conjured up nothing but awe and admiration. The brass played with bravado and brilliance, and the strings produced a luxuriant sheen."

-*San Francisco Chronicle*, 2015

"Although the San Francisco Symphony Youth Orchestra is composed of young musicians, nothing about their performance indicated that they were children — these seemed like full-grown artists, seasoned to perfection."

-Peninsula Review, 2014

"[the SFSYO] provides a dazzling ray of hope that the venerable tradition of classical music will continue to delight future generations."

-San Francisco Classical Voice, 2014

"It's one thing to hear the members of the San Francisco Symphony Youth Orchestra tear through works of the standard orchestral repertoire with precision and dramatic flair - hugely impressive, naturally, but also par for the course. To hear them tackle new music just as fearlessly, as they did during Sunday afternoon's season-ending concert in Davies Symphony Hall, is yet another level of artistry."

-San Francisco Chronicle, 2013

"Maestro Donato Cabrera and his musicians, meanwhile, handled the score with inspiration and conviction. Their recently issued CD, which features a brilliant version of Mahler's First Symphony, recorded live (and in a single take) at the Berlin Philharmonie, proves that they know their way around Mahler's musical language."

-San Francisco Classical Voice, 2013

"SFSYO has a long-standing reputation for delivering high-quality performances of some of the most ambitious works in the standard repertoire."

-Examiner.com, 2013

"The appearance by the San Francisco Symphony Youth Orchestra was a highlight of the past season. Under its Music Director, Donato Cabrera, it achieved a real triumph."

-Berliner Morgenpost, 2012

"The San Francisco Symphony Youth Orchestra appeared and immediately reduced popular notions of the capabilities of a youth orchestra to absurdity. They performed at the level of a professional orchestra...At this concert the listener was impressed by youthful perfection – and by the silvery clear sound of the ensemble."

-Berliner Zeitung, Berlin, 2012

"Rarely have we heard a youth orchestra that behaves and plays with as much discipline as the large San Francisco Symphony Youth Orchestra under its extremely effective conductor, Donato Cabrera, at the Echternach Trifolion on Friday. Absolute reliability was the cardinal rule from the first note to the last...The instrumentalists' technical skill and their optimally organized and shaped ensemble playing guaranteed vivid sound of striking uniformity."

-Luxemburger Wort, 2012

"If there's anything more thrilling and heartening than hearing the young musicians of the San Francisco Symphony Youth Orchestra flaunt their considerable talents, it's hearing them do it in a virtuoso vehicle like Mahler's First Symphony."

-San Francisco Chronicle, 2012

"There were, in Sunday's concert, any number of moments when the future seemed to have arrived fully formed. In the last movement of the Prokofiev [Symphony No. 5], to choose one example, the violins fell into an intimate conversation with a limber, wryly inquisitive clarinet that charmed, beguiled, and haunted in equal measure. Caught up in the twittery pulse of the symphony's second movement, the woodwinds winked and smirked with a ripened sense of pungency."

—*San Francisco Classical Voice*, 2011

"With its series of character sketches of the seven known planets besides Earth...Holst's *The Planets* provides ample opportunity for everyone to shine. That's just what these young players did in Davies Symphony Hall, performing with gusto and finesse under Music Director Donato Cabrera. From the forceful stride of the opening "Mars" through the misty fade-out of "Neptune," the orchestra sounded sleek and strong."

- *San Francisco Chronicle*, 2011

"Given their performance of Haydn's Symphony No. 84 in E-flat Major, there is no way that I would have recognized that this was being played by a youth orchestra. We are so very fortunate to have these young people in our community, and even luckier to have a symphony that nurtures their skills. When I hear the Youth Orchestra, I can rely on it the same way I rely upon their adult counterpart: for virtuoso musicians of the highest caliber who work together in presenting great works of art. I enjoyed this piece as much, if not more, than if it was played by any of the very capable baroque orchestras around today."

- *Stark Insider*, 2011

"The performance went beyond mere accuracy to project a miraculous emotional depth. Maturity abounded amid the various groups, and beautiful balances, as well. Over the years, I've experienced professional performances of this work that failed to reach such a level."

- *San Francisco Classical Voice*, 2010

"What was heard performed by the San Francisco Symphony Youth Orchestra under the baton of Benjamin Shwartz in the Philharmonie sounded so phenomenal, that one must rank this ensemble among the top professional orchestras."

- *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (Munich), 2008

"The performance presented by the San Francisco Symphony Youth Orchestra cannot be rated highly enough. This ensemble of talented young musicians tackled two genuinely difficult highlights of orchestral literature and interpreted these works with an artistic maturity that was overwhelming."

- *Passauer Neue Presse* (Passau), 2008

"The combination of strict orchestral discipline and playing that was full of spirit and commitment was altogether impressive. The result was dynamic, fully styled music-making."

- *Ostsee-Zeitung* (Rostock), 2008

"When Americans tackle something, they do it right. The self-assured name of the ensemble—the San Francisco Symphony Youth Orchestra—stresses the close relationship with the San Francisco Symphony. Old Europe could definitely learn a thing or two from this young group."

- *Abendzeitung* (Munich), 2008

"Well, the San Francisco Symphony Youth Orchestra is ready, and good. They played as though every measure mattered—as indeed it does."

- *San Francisco Chronicle*, 2007

"This is an ensemble that can play with the sweep and vigor of any of its more experienced adult counterparts."

- *San Francisco Chronicle*, 2005

"Playing in Davies Symphony Hall, the Youth Orchestra's teenage players sounded splendidly ferocious. But there was more to the performance than mere roof-raising. The performance was delectable."

- *San Francisco Chronicle*, 2003

"The ensemble of young musicians tackled a demanding program and turned it into an astonishing display of group virtuosity. The brass gleamed and blazed heroically, the woodwinds and percussion offered piquant tendrils of color and the strings conjured up textures of extraordinary plushness and versatility. The overall effect was simply remarkable. I have heard orchestras of veteran adult professionals -- orchestras with recording contracts and national reputations -- play with less polish and vitality, and certainly with a less palpable sense of artistic commitment."

- *San Francisco Chronicle*, 2002

"This performance was filled with the deep philosophical understanding necessary to the concept of serious classical music. From the very beginning to the end of the concert, the audience was filled with utter amazement."

- *Kommersant (Russia)*, 2001

"We should be jealous of their intense commitment, enthusiasm, and passion... This was playing of the truly highest level. Tonight's Moscow Conservatory audience witnessed an orchestra that combined the high quality of modern American symphonic playing with the traditional Russian art of performance."

- *Culture (Moscow)*, 2001

"They are a truly fabulous ensemble, and not only in the sense of a youth orchestra. They work with discipline, seriousness and total devotion to music-making, which is pure joy. To watch and listen to these young musicians is simply a refreshing experience."

- *Wiener Zeitung*, 1998

"If at first one is tempted to say that they are really good for their age, one drops the reservation quickly: they are good, period."

- *Le Monde*, 1998

"Their interpretation of Ravel's *La Valse* can only be described with such words as 'astounding' and even then the vocabulary would prove utterly inadequate."

- *Stuttgarter Zeitung*, 1998

Appendix K: SF YO Conductors

Music Directors of the San Francisco Symphony Youth Orchestra

<u>1981-82 through 1983-84</u>	Jahja Ling
<u>1984-85 through 1985-86</u>	David Milnes
<u>1986-87 through 1988-89</u>	Leif Bjaland
<u>1989-90 through 2000-01</u>	Alasdair Neale
<u>2001-02 through 2004-05</u>	Edwin Outwater
<u>2005-06 through 2008-09</u>	Benjamin Shwartz
<u>2009-10 through 2015-16</u>	Donato Cabrera
<u>2016-17</u>	Christian Reif

**Narrators of San Francisco Symphony Youth Orchestra
Performances of *Peter & the Wolf***

1985	Herb Caen
1986	Sid Caesar
1987	Geoff Hoyle
1988	Geoff Hoyle
1989	Bobby McFerrin
1990	Bobby McFerrin
1991	Linda Ronstadt
1992	Linda Ronstadt
1993	Robin Williams
1994	Luis Valdez
1995	Michael Tilson Thomas
1996	Henry Tenenbaum (performance canceled due work stoppage)
1997	Henry Tenenbaum
1998	Danny Glover
1999	Sharon Stone
2000	Mickey Hart
2001	Jan Wahl
2002	Rita Moreno
2003	Daniel Handler, a.k.a Lemony Snicket
2004	Diane Baker
2005	Val Diamond
2006	Florence Henderson
2007	Sara Ramirez
2008	Leonard Nimoy
2009	Linda Ronstadt
2010	Eden Espinosa
2011	Chita Rivera
2012	Olympia Dukakis
2013	John Lithgow
2014	Rita Moreno
2015	Kathy Najimy
2016	Linda Ronstadt

Guest artists who have worked with the San Francisco Symphony Youth Orchestra in Concerts, Rehearsals and Master Classes (1985-current)

Roberto Abbado	Yo-Yo Ma
John Adams	Kurt Masur
Vladimir Ashkenazy	Bobby McFerrin
Emmanuel Ax	Sir Yehudi Menuhin
Diane Baker	Midori
Alexander Barantschik	Rita Moreno
Tzimon Barto	Jon Nakamatsu
Joshua Bell	Sir Roger Norrington
Herbert Blomstedt	Garrick Ohlsson
Renaud Capuçon	Libor Pešek
Sarah Chang	Florence Quivar
James Conlon	Vadim Repin
Sir Andrew Davis	David Robertson
Edo de Waart	Paula Robison
Jeremy Denk	Mstislav Rostropovich
Val Diamond	Mikhail Rudy
Charles Dutoit	Nadja Salerno-Sonnenberg
Christoph Eschenbach	San Francisco Symphony Chorus
Nicolle Foland	Gil Shaham
Davide Franceschetti	Rinat Shaham
Pamela Frank	Joseph Silverstein
Valery Gergiev	Leonard Slatkin
Evelyn Glennie	Robert Spano
Danny Glover	Susan Starr
Zacharias Grafilo	Michael Steinberg
Members of the Grateful Dead	Isaac Stern
Lynn Harrell	Richard Stoltzman
Daniel Handler (a.k.a. Lemony Snicket)	Sharon Stone
Chloë Hanslip	Michael Tilson Thomas
Mickey Hart	Maxim Vengerov
Florence Henderson	Robin Williams
Hong Wang	Hugh Wolff
Joseph Kalichstein	David Zinman
Tamaki Kawakubo	Pinchas Zukerman
Witold Lutoslawski	

San Francisco Symphony Youth Orchestra Touring History

- 2015** Milan, Italy – Milan Conservatory, Sala Verdi
Udine, Italy – Teatro Nuovo Giovanni Da Udine
Ingolstadt, Germany – Audi Sommerkonzerte, Festival Hall
Berlin, Germany – Berlin Philharmonie
Amsterdam, Netherlands – Concertgebouw
Prague, Czech Republic – Smetana Hall
- 2012** Regensburg, Germany – University of Regensburg
Munich – Munich Philharmonie
Wiesbaden, Germany – Rheingau Musik Festival, Kurhaus Wiesbaden
Echternach, Luxembourg – Festival international d'Echternach/Atrium Hall
Berlin – Berliner Philharmonie
Salzburg, Austria – Salzburg Congress/Europa Hall
- 2008** Rostock, Germany – Mecklenburg-Vorpommern Festival
Berlin – Berliner Philharmonie
Passau, Germany – Passau "European Festival Weeks," Studienkirche St. Michael
Ingolstadt, Germany – Audi Sommerkonzerte, Festsaal, Theater Ingolstadt
Munich – Philharmonie im Gasteig
Prague, Czech Republic – Smetana Hall
- 2004** Vienna – Musikverein
Lyon – "Les Nuits de Fourvière" Festival, Grand Amphitheater
Paris – Théâtre des Champs-Élysées
St. Riquier – Festival de St. Riquier, St. Riquier Abbey
Berlin – Radio-Free Berlin Summer Concerts, Haus des Rundfunks
Wiesbaden – Rheingau Musik Festival, Kloster Eberbach
Amsterdam – Concertgebouw
- 2001** Moscow – Moscow Conservatory
Vilnius – Vilnius International Music Festival
Kaunas (Lithuania) – Pazaislis Music Festival
St. Petersburg – White Nights Festival, Mariinsky Theatre
Limerick – University of Limerick, Ireland
Cork – City Hall Concert Hall
Dublin – National Concert Hall / broadcast nationally on Lyric FM Radio

- 1998** Paris – Cité de la Musique
 Ludwigsburg – Ludwigsburger Schlossfestspiele
 Amsterdam – Concertgebouw
 Villach – Carinthischer Sommer, opening concert
 Teplice (Czech Republic) – Dum Kultury
 Prague – Dvořák Hall
- 1995** Copenhagen – Tivoli Hall
 Ludwigsburg – Ludwigsburger Schlossfestspiele
 Baden-Baden – Grosser Saal des Kurhauses, benefit concert gala
 Leipzig – Gewandhaus / broadcast on MDR – German Radio
 Bad Kissingen – Kissinger Sommer Festival
 Vienna – Klangbogen Wien Festival
 Amsterdam – Concertgebouw
 Rotterdam – De Doelen
- 1992** Bergamo (Italy) – Basilica de S. Maria Maggiore
 Aix-en-Provence – Aix-en-Musique Festival
 Torroella de Montgri (Spain) – Torroella de Montgri International Music Festival
 Buñol (Spain) – Auditorio de San Luis
 Valencia – Palau de la Musica / International Festival of Youth Orchestras, opening concert
 Madrid – El Escorial / Music and Theater in Royal Venues
- 1989** Hong Kong – Sha Tin Town Hall
 Singapore (2 concerts) – Victoria Concert Hall
 Kuala Lumpur – Dewan Merdekor Hall
- 1986** Bad Gastein (Austria) – Great Hall of the Kongresshaus
 Vienna – Sophiensäle competition concert, 15th International Youth and Music Festival
 (SFSYO awarded First Prize) / broadcast on ORF – Austrian radio
 Baden (Austria) – Stadttheater
 Budapest – Musikakademie / broadcast nationally on Hungarian National Radio
 Strasbourg – Palais de Congrès

###

2017-18 SEASON

Appendix L: SF YO Rules

MEMBERSHIP HANDBOOK AND SEASON CALENDAR

35TH ANNIVERSARY SEASON

SFS ●
YOUTH ●
ORCHESTRA ●



SAN FRANCISCO
SYMPHONY

ORCHESTRA LOUNGE

The SFS Orchestra Lounge—off-limits to the YO except by permission—is located on the basement level of Davies Symphony Hall. The lounge is for use exclusively by San Francisco Symphony musicians. The SFS musicians have given the Youth Orchestra musicians permission to use the Orchestra Lounge during 2 occasions:

1. 1-2:15pm on Saturdays for Cello Sectional Rehearsal.
2. 12:30-2pm on Youth Orchestra concert days for lunch.

YO musicians shall respect the premises of the SFS Orchestra Lounge during these two occasions when usage is allowed. YO musicians are not permitted to use the computers or the pool table in the lounge. YO musicians are not permitted to enter the Orchestra Lounge during any other time unless given permission by Youth Orchestra staff.

DEPORTMENT

Youth Orchestra members should conduct themselves in a professional manner at all times during rehearsals, sectionals, performances, and other Youth Orchestra functions such as run-out concerts, tours, and recreational events. This means alert, observant, and courteous attention; enthusiasm for the activities; cooperation; respectful good manners; punctuality and dedication; and attention to all directions given by the conductor, coaches, Youth Orchestra staff, and San Francisco Symphony staff. Failure to do so may result in immediate dismissal, at the discretion of the Music Director.

Disruptive behavior, sexual harassment, and drug usage will not be tolerated. In some cases, the Music Director and/or Youth Orchestra staff will notify orchestra members of problems regarding personal deportment. Orchestra members so notified must show improvement in the designated areas of deportment within a reasonable time frame as determined by the Music Director and/or Youth Orchestra staff. Failure to demonstrate improvement in specified areas of deportment within the designated time frame may result in dismissal from the orchestra, at the discretion of the Music Director.

CONTACTING THE SFS

Please direct all San Francisco Symphony related questions to the YO staff instead of contacting any SFS musician or SFS staff member directly. The YO staff is here to assist you with all questions or concerns whether they are related to the Youth Orchestra specifically, or the San Francisco Symphony in general.

PHOTOGRAPHY AND RECORDING

YO members, their families, and friends are prohibited from any photography or sound and/or video recording while inside Davies Symphony Hall. Only members of the Symphony's Public Relations Staff have Union permission to do so. Photographs of YO members and recordings of YO performances and rehearsals may be used in Symphony publicity, marketing, and periodical materials aimed at promoting and supporting the Youth Orchestra program.

ATTENDANCE

Specific information pertaining to attendance requirements can be found on pages 12-13 of this handbook.

SEATING AUDITIONS

The Youth Orchestra holds seating auditions to determine part assignments and chair placement for each section. In accordance with the YO mission to provide the finest orchestral training at the pre-professional level, the primary focus of the season is on rehearsals and concerts. For this reason, seating auditions are held only twice each season for strings, and three times for winds, brass, and percussion. Detailed information about the seating audition procedure for each section will be provided.

MUSIC

Two sets of music parts will be distributed—practice parts and concert parts. All parts will be clearly marked and will be of performance quality. **Concert parts should under no circumstances be removed from their folders and must remain at Davies Symphony Hall.** Concert parts are supplied at every rehearsal and concert. Practice parts may be taken home, but must be brought to each rehearsal so that markings made during rehearsal may be noted for practice at home. It is the responsibility of each YO member to bring your concert part and the accompanying folder from the sectional rehearsal to the full orchestra rehearsal.

PARTICIPATION IN SCHOOL PROGRAMS

Each Orchestra member is expected to participate in his/her school's music program, and we may ask for proof of participation. If for any reason you feel participation in the school program is not possible, please arrange an appointment with the YO staff to discuss the situation. Written notice from your school principal and music instructor excusing your participation may be required.

TICKET SALES

Each Orchestra member is expected to sell twelve (12) tickets for each Youth Orchestra Subscription Concert scheduled in Davies Symphony Hall. The procedure for selling tickets will be explained at the Parent Meeting on October 7.

ORCHESTRA LOUNGE

The SFS Orchestra Lounge—off-limits to the YO except by permission—is located on the basement level of Davies Symphony Hall. The lounge is for use exclusively by San Francisco Symphony musicians. The SFS musicians have given the Youth Orchestra musicians permission to use the Orchestra Lounge during 2 occasions:

1. 1-2:15pm on Saturdays for Cello Sectional Rehearsal.
2. 12:30-2pm on Youth Orchestra concert days for lunch.

YO musicians shall respect the premises of the SFS Orchestra Lounge during these two occasions when usage is allowed. YO musicians are not permitted to use the computers or the pool table in the lounge. YO musicians are not permitted to enter the Orchestra Lounge during any other time unless give permission by Youth Orchestra staff.

DEPARTMENT

Youth Orchestra members should conduct themselves in a professional manner at all times during rehearsals, sectionals, performances, and other Youth Orchestra functions such as run-out concerts, tours, and recreational events. This means alert, observant, and courteous attention; enthusiasm for the activities; cooperation; respectful good manners; punctuality and dedication; and attention to all directions given by the conductor, coaches, Youth Orchestra staff, and San Francisco Symphony staff. Failure to do so may result in immediate dismissal, at the discretion of the Music Director.

Disruptive behavior, sexual harassment, and drug usage will not be tolerated. In some cases, the Music Director and/or Youth Orchestra staff will notify orchestra members of problems regarding personal department. Orchestra members so notified must show improvement in the designated areas of department within a reasonable time frame as determined by the Music Director and/or Youth Orchestra staff. Failure to demonstrate improvement in specified areas of department within the designated time frame may result in dismissal from the orchestra, at the discretion of the Music Director.

CONTACTING THE SFS

Please direct all San Francisco Symphony related questions to the YO staff instead of contacting any SFS musician or SFS staff member directly. The YO staff is here to assist you with all questions or concerns whether they are related to the Youth Orchestra specifically, or the San Francisco Symphony in general.

san francisco symphony youth orchestra

Benjamin Shwartz wattis foundation music director

Sunday, May 17, 2009 at 2:00

Davies Symphony Hall

Benjamin Shwartz conducting

Barber

Symphony No. 1, Opus 9 (1936/1943)

Allegro ma non troppo—Allegro molto—

Andante tranquillo—Con moto

I N T E R M I S S I O N

Berlioz

Symphonie fantastique, Opus 14 (1830/1832)

Reveries; Passions

A Ball

Scene in the Fields

March to the Scaffold

Dream of a Witches' Sabbath

Appendix M1: SF YO Bissinger Performance Dedication

Please be sure that you have switched off cellular phones, watch alarms, and pager signals.

This concert is dedicated to Paul A. Bissinger, Jr., a founding member of the Youth Orchestra Committee, on the occasion of his 75th birthday.



THE BEAUTIFUL ESCAPE

HERMÈS
PARIS

Bracelets
and rings in silver

San Francisco
125 Grant Avenue
(415) 391-7200

hermes.com

Publicis Effhaus

Appendix M2: SF YO Bissinger 70th Birthday Tribute

For Paul Bissinger, on his 70th Birthday

Behind every orchestra are those backstage who remain invisible to the audience but whose absence the audience would regret. These people play many roles. They are inspirations, advocates, cheerleaders, boosters, consciences, fund-raisers. From the San Francisco Symphony Youth Orchestra's beginning—indeed, before the ensemble ever played a note—it was blessed with the leadership of an individual who played all these roles and who continues to play them with increasing virtuosity, Paul A. Bissinger, Jr.

A native San Franciscan and a member of the San Francisco Symphony's Board of Governors since 1975, Paul Bissinger has the Symphony in his blood, his father having served on the SFS Board from 1935 until 1969. Paul has been, as we said, with the YO from the beginning, and before. He was a motivator behind its founding, served as Chair of the Youth Orchestra Committee from 1981 until 1989, and continues on the Committee today. He has shown his extraordinary dedication to YO members in many ways, accompanying the orchestra on each of its tours abroad, attending virtually every one of its concerts since its debut in 1982, sitting in on its Saturday rehearsals. In the YO's early days, he was tireless in helping the ensemble acquire instruments, and he was the driving force behind procuring the violin, made by Riccardo Antoniazzi of Milan in 1904, that YO concertmasters have used since 1993. That instrument has been dedicated to him and today is known as the *Bissinger Antoniazzi*. In 2000, he established an endowment fund for YO instrument purchases. For all this, Paul is much more than someone who helps provide the tools with which young musicians may realize their dreams. His intelligence, energy, rigor, and scrupulous adherence to the highest standards are reflected in every YO performance.

Paul turned seventy on April 3. It is an age that some think of as venerable, though to apply that word to Paul is done at one's own peril. He must, however, allow at least one term that combines respect, awe, and gratitude for his wisdom and support: He is the YO's *paterfamilias*. In giving so freely of his own generous and vital spirit to the Youth Orchestra, Paul seems to have absorbed the enthusiasm and passion of these young musicians. In honor of his birthday, and for all he has done for music and youth for so many years, Edwin Outwater and the grateful musicians of the San Francisco Symphony Youth Orchestra dedicate this performance to Paul A. Bissinger, Jr.

Presented to

PAUL BISSINGER, JR.

by the

Parents, Musicians and Staff

of the

San Francisco Symphony

Youth Orchestra

on Sunday, June 18, 1989

in appreciation for

eight years of dedicated leadership as

Chairman

of the

Youth Orchestra Committee

San Francisco Symphony Youth Orchestra

Leif Bjaland, Music Director and Conductor
San Francisco Symphony Affiliate Artists Assistant Conductor

Richard L. Bains, Manager

May 25, 1989

SAN FRANCISCO SYMPHONY

Herbert Blomstedt, Music Director
Mrs. Joachim Bechtle, President
Peter Pastreich, Executive Director

YOUTH ORCHESTRA COMMITTEE

Paul A. Bissinger, Jr., Chairman
Mrs. Agnes Albert
Mrs. Carole B. Berg
Philip S. Boone, Jr.
Yonek S. Chiu, M.D.
Ramon C. Cortines
David Fleishhacker
Elizabeth Folger
Sarah R. Giffen
Scott R. Haldford
Niam McEvoy
Mrs. Bernard Osher
Mrs. Perry Parkhurst
Mrs. Robert Reis
Elizabeth B. Seaman, M.D.
Mrs. Don Stephens
Bruce P. Vanda

EX-OFFICIO

Mrs. Joachim Bechtle
Mrs. F. William Heer
Mrs. H. O. Zumsteg

Dear Youth Orchestra families,

The Parents Association Steering Committee would like to salute Paul Bissinger with a very special gift.

Since 1981, the founding year of the Youth Orchestra, Paul Bissinger has served as Chairman of the Youth Orchestra Committee. However, Paul has done much more than that job implies. He has been our ambassador and advocate in Europe and Asia as well as in San Francisco. He has sung our praises wherever he has gone. Paul has raised thousands and thousands of dollars to support the Youth Orchestra annual budget, tours and special projects. He and his wife, Kathy, have opened their hearts and their home to countless musicians.

Some of you may not know Paul; by the end of the Asian tour all of our musicians will know him well. He will be there for all of us; greeting dignitaries, making speeches and always doing his job with a winning smile and an inspiring amount of enthusiasm.

Paul is stepping down as Chairman this July. The Steering Committee would like to thank him by presenting him with a book created by the YO musicians. This will be a loose-leaf binder with clear plastic sleeves. Into the binder sleeves we will insert pages designed by YO members. We will use the standard 8 1/2" X 11" format. These pages will be supplied to the musicians at the next rehearsals on June 2nd and 3rd.

This should be a fun project and an expression of each musician's personality and YO experiences. Some suggestions are included on the following page. It is similar in concept to many school year books that include "senior pages" for the graduating class. Each senior is asked to design his own page.

We would like to present this to Paul at the Stern Grove concert on June 18; please get your "Page for Paul" to a Youth Orchestra rehearsal before then. This is a SURPRISE; please help us keep it a secret.

We hope to get 100% participation on this project. We encourage parents to participate in the page design if possible. We would like to suggest that each musician include one snapshot of his whole family.

Thank you for your help!

The Youth Orchestra Steering Committee

The wrenching Tale of A MAN torn between
two loves:



His musical
brilliance
surfaced
early...

Years later he would inspire
adulation as he drove the
Youth Orchestra to international
fame and glory and his
friends and family to Davies Hall.





*To my dear friend Paul,
Ode to Friendship*

I wish you the best of happiness. Love Always, Kim

Into my thin, unknowing hand I took your caring friendship - at the very touch of your amiable fingertips these flowed clandestinely from your soul a sea of comfort to my heart;

I saw at long last the sun begin timidly to rise, opening up a most beautifully new horizon of warmth.

I carried this solacing support with me, draped about my fragile shoulders like a wreath of thornless, fragrant rosebuds, each one blossoming gracefully to unveil the gentleness of your eyes in every flower.

And when into barbarous brambles I stumbled, remembering the spirit of my beloved friends always replenished the will to rekindle a sweeter hope than I had ever envisaged...

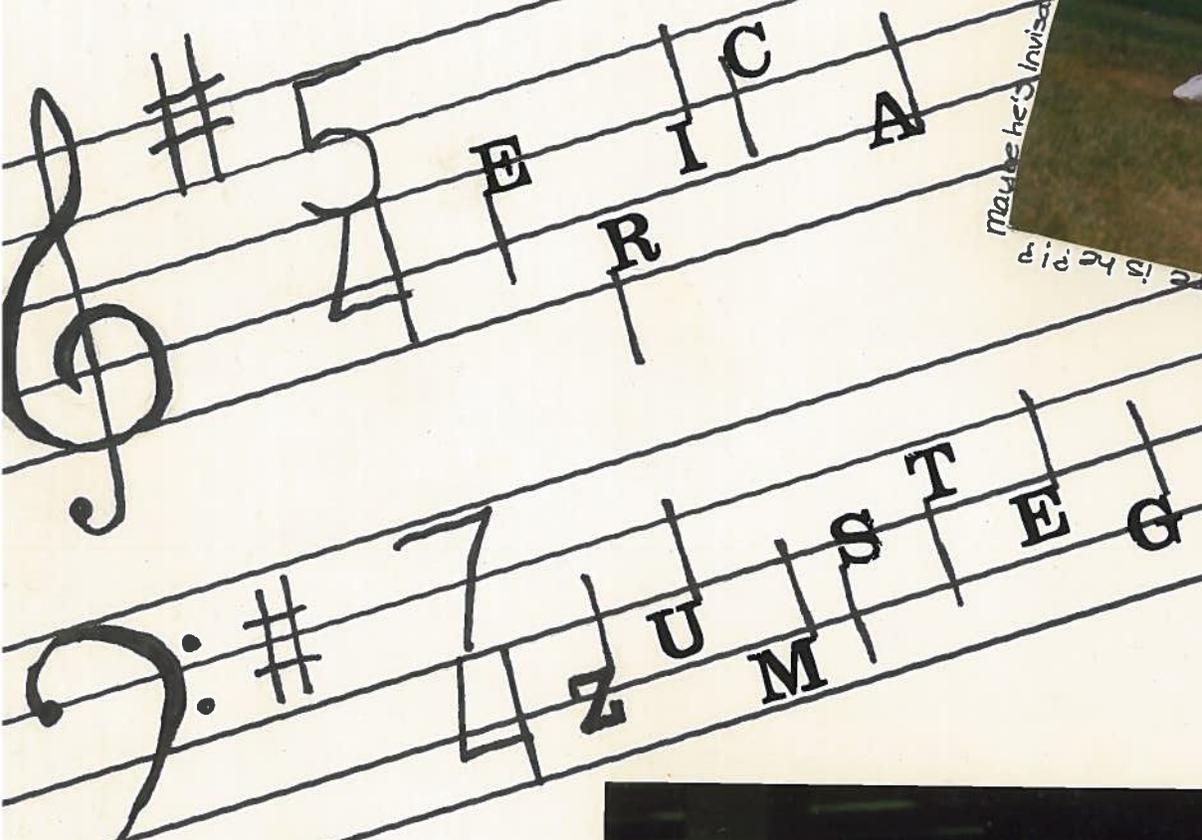
How can I ever thank you for the light you have been so kind to share with me? Because of you,

I have always a reason to smile.

- Kim Walle (14 Nov 1989)



Music, when soft voices die,
 vibrates in the memory.
 - Shelley



Violin.

Viol. I.

Fl. Solo.

Ob. *ff*



ff

II *ato.*

ato.



ato.

restez.

Solo.

ff



Those who bring
 Sunshine to the lives
 of others cannot
 keep it from
 themselves.