

San Francisco Museum of Modern Art  
75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary  
Oral History Project

Regional Oral History Office  
The Bancroft Library  
University of California, Berkeley

SFMOMA 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

RICHARD GREENE

SFMOMA Board of Trustees, 1995-present  
Secretary/Treasurer, 1997-1998  
President, 1998-present

[Part of the manuscript has been sealed by SFMOMA until January 1, 2031]

Interviews conducted by  
Lisa Rubens  
In 2007

Copyright © 2008 by San Francisco Museum of Modern Art

Funding for the Oral History Project provided in part by Koret Foundation.



Since 1954 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 Richard Greene, dated March 9, 2008. This manuscript is made available for research purposes. All copyrights and other intellectual property rights in the manuscript, including the right to publish, are reserved to the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art.

Excerpts up to 1000 words of this manuscript may be quoted for publication without seeking permission as long as the use is non-commercial and the attribution below is included.

Requests for permission or questions should be addressed to SFMOMA Research Library and Archives, 151 Third Street, San Francisco, CA 94103 or [archives@sfmoma.org](mailto:archives@sfmoma.org) and should include identification of the specific passages to be quoted, anticipated use of the passages, and identification of the user.

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

“SFMOMA 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary: Richard Greene,” conducted by Lisa Rubens, 2007, Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley; © San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, 2008.

Copy no. \_\_\_\_

## **Discursive Table of Contents—Richard Greene**

### **Interview #1: May 16, 2007**

Audio File 1 1

Working with Inge-Lise Eckmann to restore damaged work in Greene’s collection—first involvement with the museum in the mid-1980s—Gerson Bakar—Binnie Quist Gates—Brooks Walker—tax-planning issues related to acquisitions—developing an approach to fractional gifts that satisfied both donor and museum interests—learning about art from his wife—developing a legal practice—Greene and his wife begin collecting art—joining the museum board of trustees in 1996—Elaine McKeon—agreeing to serve on the executive committee—service at other non-profit organizations—identifying new priorities for the museum after moving into the new building on Third Street—need to develop the collection—Phyllis Wattis’s support for a more ambitious acquisitions program—Elaine McKeon and Brooks Walker as leaders.

### **Interview #2: July 25, 2007**

Audio File 2 20

Greene’s favorite museums—Moses Lasky—Don and Doris Fisher—work at the Koret Foundation and increased funding for arts-related projects—on philosophies of giving—on Jack Lane’s decision to resign as director.

Audio File 3 38

Searching for a new director—hiring David Ross—growth of the collection during Ross’s tenure as director—Ross’s managerial style—on Ross’s leaving the museum—hiring Neal Benezra—on board leadership and developing new members—on the need to expand museum gallery space—more on David Ross.

**Interview #1: May 16, 2007**

Begin Audio File 1 05-16-2007.mp3

Rubens: Because we have it as a backdrop, would you tell me about the painting behind you?

01-00:01:27

Greene: Well, the painting is one of the early works by Roy De Forest, who is an artist from Benicia. My wife and I bought it about fifteen years ago. It's representative of his early style, because there aren't a lot of dogs in it. In the later paintings for De Forest, you'd see a lot more dogs. The other part of it is that it has all the colors, the bright colors, and that's really part of his style, along with the dogs.

Rubens: The texture, too.

01-00:02:00

Greene: Yes. Actually it got damaged when we moved from our other offices. An SFMOMA involvement. I was with Jack Lane and his wife Inge-Lise [Eckmann], and Inge-Lise was staring at the painting. I said, "You really like the painting?" She said, "Well, I can't tell you I like it or not, but it's damaged." Inge-Lise was a conservator, and she had noticed that. Fortunately, my wife was here. So Lori [Greene] and Inge-Lise got together, and Inge-Lise told her where the damage was, and then she inspected every piece in the office.

Rubens: Did Inge-Lise repair it?

01-00:02:36

Greene: She didn't repair it, but we had it repaired. Fortunately, the moving company repaired it for us.

Rubens: Your wife's name is—?

01-00:02:43

Greene: Lori.

Rubens: What's her last name?

01-00:02:45

Greene: Lori Levin Greene.

Rubens: Did you meet her at Berkeley?

01-00:02:52

Greene: Lori and I met in 1960, at Berkeley, when we had something called the pushcart relays across the top of campus, on Piedmont. Lori was the driver of the pushcart that my fraternity put together, and I was one of the pushers, in

the context of pushing a soapbox derby wheeled Flexi. I figured anybody crazy enough to ride that might want to go out with me.

Rubens: We're here today to talk about your involvement with the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. I officially see it in 1996, when you come on board. You can begin anywhere you'd like.

01-00:03:40

Greene: Well, actually, it predates that. In the, I think mid-1980s, a very good friend of mine and a client of mine, Gerson Bakar, had a dinner party at his home. My wife and I were seated at the same table with a man by the name of Henry Hopkins, who was then the director of SFMOMA. We had a very interesting discussion with him. My wife has an art history background, and I have none. It turned out that I was the executor of an estate that had a fabulous collection of Richard Diebenkorn paintings. We had some issues in the estate, and it became important that one major painting go to a museum other than the museum to which all the other paintings were left; that's the Oakland Museum [of California]. Because of my meeting with Henry and Gerson, I asked Henry to come to my office. I asked him if SFMOMA would like to receive Richard Diebenkorn's painting, which many people have referred to as one of his figurative masterpieces, called *Woman in a Window*. [Editor's note: correct title is *Woman in Profile*]. Henry said that would be terrific, and the painting was given to SFMOMA. That would've been in, I'd say '85, maybe '86, maybe '85 [accessioned 1984]. That was my first involvement.

Rubens: Was this a coincidence? Or Gerson is inviting you because he knows you have this estate you're dealing with, and Gerson has already been involved with the museum?

01-00:05:20

Greene: I don't think Gerson knew about the estate. It was a pure coincidence. He knew that my wife had involvement and interest in art, and Gers was just trying to be nice and, as usual, assembled some very interesting people to be at dinner. Henry happened to be one of the guests. So when this occasion arose, I ended up using it. I think everybody's been happy. The piece has been displayed a few times and has toured. That was the first involvement.

My next involvement was before I went on the board. I began doing work for a lot of individuals. It turns out that many of the individuals had an interest in modern and contemporary art. Among them are Binnie Quist, or Binnie Quist Gates now, who was a trustee at SFMOMA, Shirley Davis, the Henderson family, and a man by the name of Brooks Walker, who of course is—along with Gerson and a number of other people, like Phyllis Wattis, some of the cornerstones of building the museum we now have.

Rubens: Tell me the name Quist one more time.

01-00:06:47

Greene:

Binnie, B-I-N-N-I-E; Quist. Her second husband's last name is Gates, and her name is Binnie Quist Gates. Her first husband was George Quist, of Hambrecht & Quist, the investment banking firm in San Francisco. Binnie had an interest in art and became a trustee and was one of the major donors to the campaign for the new building. But prior to that time, Brooks Walker and I began doing some work together. Brooks would ask me periodically to provide advice to him, as one of the key trustees in the museum, on museum matters. It ranged from a gift that someone had left to SFMOMA, and it turned out that the decedent's partner really wanted the art, and what were the museum's rights? Should the museum sue? The answer to both were, the museum had rights, but it made no sense for the museum to file a claim. Then there were some other art-related matters that Brooks would call me about, and I would have the pleasure, great pleasure of working with Brooks on them and advising him. Then as the campaign began for the new museum, it was self-evident to all the trustees that the museum needed to build its collection. The art collection—I think David Bonetti's wonderful article in the [*San Francisco*] *Chronicle*, after the museum opened, basically concluded: Great building, not so great collection. Part of what I did before the opening of the museum, and as part of the opening, was to work with museum patrons, primarily trustees, who had major works of art the museum would like, to get them to make fractional gifts, that is, a gift of a percentage interest in the painting—hopefully, 10 percent or more. If they did that, then the painting could be part of the opening show at the museum. So most of the works in the opening show at SFMOMA that were not owned by the museum were ones where the museum had been given a fractional-interest gift of 10 percent or more.

Rubens:

Well, let me just unpack that for a minute. There's even some things I want to go back further. When did the phenomena of fractional gifts start, just as a tax issue?

01-00:09:35

Greene:

Well, it's primarily a tax-planning issue. The idea is that if you have a piece of art that's worth a million dollars, and you give a 10 percent interest to a museum, you can deduct 10 percent of the fair market value. That's part one of it. The second part is that the museum has the right to use the piece 10 percent of the time each year. But the piece can remain in the possession of the donor. The museum had the right, not the obligation, to do that. So what happened was, in—

Rubens:

Obligation to show it a certain percentage of the time.

01-00:10:16

Greene:

No obligation to show it, just a right to show it.

Rubens:

A right to. Let me ask you, 10 percent is for example? Could it be any percentage one decided?

01-00:10:26

Greene:

Any percentage one decided, but the museum wanted at least a 10 percent gift. I'd like to come back on that one, to tell you a cute story in that regard. But this phenomenon developed in the 1980s. At the Carnegie Museum [of Art] in Pittsburgh, where a man by the name of Jack Lane was, I believe, the chief curator, or perhaps the assistant director, a family by the name of Winokur owned some sculptures. With Jack Lane's participation, the family gave 10 percent undivided interest in the sculptures, to the museum. The sculptures were never shown by the museum, and the man took a deduction, income tax deduction for 10 percent of the fair market value. The Winokur case was contested by the Internal Revenue Service, and the Internal Revenue Service lost. The tax court ruled in favor of the taxpayer, allowing the deduction, and noting in a footnote that the museum had the right, but not the obligation, to show the pieces, and it indicated that there was an unwritten understanding, not an agreement, that the museum would not show the pieces without the consent of the donor. So this was an excellent vehicle for everyone. Museums received an interest in art, and donors received a tax deduction. The law's since changed, a year ago, and this no longer is done. But for the period we're talking about, this was a very important way for SFMOMA to increase its collection. The hope is that when the donor dies, the donor will leave the remaining interest—ninety, eighty, seventy percent—to the museum.

Rubens:

But that's not clear from the fractional gift arrangement.

01-00:12:29

Greene:

Initially, we did not require that. Because of issues that developed, and because of what happens when you do fractional gifts, the museum changed its rules.

Rubens:

Right. You'll get to that in the context of telling stories.

01-00:12:41

Greene:

I'll get to that. But let me go back to one person and one story. I was the one who structured the fractional gifts. Because of my tax background, Jack Lane felt it would be very helpful if I talked to the donors.

Rubens:

I just need to situate you in time; as an historian, I need to do this. So we're talking about 1986, '87?

01-00:13:06

Greene:

No, we're talking 1994, '95, '96. Because the building opened in '96 [actually 1995].

Rubens:

The building opened in '96, but Jack was here five years before.

01-00:13:18

Greene:

Right, but I started this project during, I believe, early 1995. He would tell me a donor who he thought was interested. He'd tell me the name of the piece and the artist, and he would suggest that either the donor call me, or in one case,

that I call the donor. The case involved one of the trustees, Frances Bowes. Frances and her husband John owned a Sigmar Polke painting that they had apparently bought, along with other San Franciscans, at a show where Jack was with them. The thought was that the piece would go to SFMOMA. So I called Frances, who did not know me, did not know my name. I did mention I was an attorney and a tax attorney, and I told her I wasn't charging her for the advice, so she spoke with me. What bothered her was that if she gave a 10 percent interest, the museum would have the right, but not the obligation, to show the piece thirty-six or thirty-seven days a year. She said this was a large piece, and it would be very disruptive if the museum removed the piece. I said, "As a practical matter, it's not likely this would occur." But she still wasn't convinced. So she said, "What about a 5 percent interest?" I said, "Well, that would be eighteen or nineteen days." She said, "That's still too many. What about a 1 percent interest?" Because surely, the museum would not go to the trouble of having it removed just to show it for three or four days. She thought about that, and she said, "That might work. I'd be willing to do a 1 percent gift." So I called Jack Lane back. I was very excited I was able to convince her to do this. Jack and I worked together for about two or three years, both before I went on the board and afterwards. He became a client of mine. This was the only circumstance he got very angry. He said, "1 percent. That's meaningless. You can't agree to that. You had no authority to bind the museum to that." I said, "Well, we're not bound." So in the end, Frances and John did not give the 10 percent, 5 percent or 1 percent interest.

Rubens: Why were you excited about 1 percent?

01-00:15:56

Greene: Because getting any interest from her was really a victory. She did not want to do these gifts. She was very concerned the museum would want to show the piece too often.

Rubens: One percent meant? How much was a Sigmar Polke worth then, in '95, '96? It had gone up extremely.

01-00:16:13

Greene: I would imagine the piece was worth a million or two million dollars. She was not interested in the income tax deduction. Many of the people were interested in the income tax deduction. It was an extra bonus for them. What they were all interested in was the ability to continue to display the piece in their homes or offices, without being worried that they mandatorily had to give up possession and control. I can tell you that of all the fractional gifts on which I worked—and I did on every one at that time, and most of the ones thereafter—the museum, at one time or another, has shown the pieces for more than the fractional interest period. So the museum does show the pieces. What this does for the museum, by the way, is it solves a very important problem, besides having the ability to hopefully get the piece: storage. There's

no storage cost. Because when the piece is in the donor's home, the donor pays all costs, insurance, whatever. That was my first major involvement.

Rubens: Does the museum pay for it being taken from the home and properly transported?

01-00:17:23

Greene: Yes. The museum will pay for the transportation to and back, and the insurance at that time.

Rubens: The installment, of course.

01-00:17:30

Greene: Right.

Rubens: With proper credit given to the majority owner.

01-00:17:38

Greene: Absolutely. The donor had the choice on the credit line. Some donors want names; some donors want to be anonymous.

Rubens: What's that about, do you think?

01-00:17:49

Greene: In today's world, knowing that you have very valuable pieces of art, some people just simply do not want that known. I think the people were split. Some of the major patrons of the museum would not put their names on any piece, whether it's gifted to the museum, whether there's a fractional-interest gift, or whether it's loaned. Some like to see their names.

Rubens: Right. I've been struck that Gerson Bakar is a person who doesn't like to have his name shown a lot.

01-00:18:20

Greene: Gerson is one of the people—and there are others—who would simply not want their names shown along with the piece. But when pieces are in a show, or at the museum, or travel, and you see San Francisco—usually it says “Anonymous donor, San Francisco”—you can pretty much figure it out.

Rubens: Well, sure, because you know who collects what kind of things. All right. So let me stay with this for a minute. When you were making these arrangements—did you say that Frances Bowes, this failed 1 percent deal was the first one you did for the museum?

01-00:18:55

Greene: It was one of the first.

Rubens: One of the first. Was your time and labor donated to the museum, or did they pay you?

01-00:19:02

Greene:

I always donated my time to the museum. The only way that our firm and I were paid for any work I did was by patrons of the museum, in connection with special projects where the museum was involved in large acquisitions. At that point, the patron would donate money to the museum to pay our fees. But I did not charge for any of the work that I did. Once the acquisitions were over in, I believe 2000 or 2001, I'm very pleased to say that I and our firm have not charged the museum for any work that we do on any matters where we help them.

Rubens:

Now, this may seem obvious, but I think because we're conducting this interview for the historical record, why did you choose to do this, to donate your time and effort?

01-00:19:58

Greene:

Well, I'm a great believer—This may sound altruistic; it's really not. We're very fortunate to live in probably the most beautiful area in the world. We have all kinds of things here: art, culture, a fabulous setting, all kinds of activities, everything. When you're fortunate enough to live in a place like that, you should give back. Everybody is obligated to give back. I encourage everybody in our law firm to do that. I'm fortunate, because I work in an area where a lot of the work I do for my clients has application to helping the museum either obtaining art or solving problems for the museum: acquisitions of real estate, other types of problems involving donations, operating issues, contracts, whatever. I think it's a real pleasure and a privilege to be able to do that. I can say for me personally, it's been the most rewarding thing I have ever done. My partners have gone along with it. We are major contributors. The value, if one believes the value of our time that's donated, is six figures. We're a small law firm; that's a very large donation. It's an absolute pleasure. We're working on a number of matters now for the museum that not only am I doing, but one of my partners is helping me with them. It's all pro bono, and it's going to be that way. That was the initial reason.

There is another issue that arose about three or four years ago, when Congress finally got interested in potential conflicts of interest, that when somebody serves on the board of a nonprofit, and then, through some other means, is compensated, not for serving on the board, but for rendering other services, this is called a self-dealing transaction. Not in a bad way. The self-dealing connotation here is not self-enrichment, it's simply that somebody on the board is being compensated for providing services to the nonprofit. Those situations are permitted. They're permitted under California law, they're permitted under the tax law, and even with Sarbanes-Oxley and the Enron scandals, they're permitted by federal law. But what you do is, you have to disclose it and get board approval. Frankly, that is—It's not worth the trouble. It's not worth the trouble for us to do it. I'd much rather not have to worry about that, be able to answer questions when they're asked—and they're asked almost on a daily basis—and be able to do this, and have the joy of

knowing that I'm doing something to help one of the major cultural institutions in the Bay Area and in the United States, if not the world. So for me, it's been a fabulous personal experience.

Rubens: It seems like a real melding of, interweaving of, exactly as you said, your interests, your abilities, if you stick with that story where you first met Hopkins and you happened to be dealing with an estate issue.

01-00:23:12

Greene: Well, and on top of that, it allowed me to learn a lot about art. I have no art history background.

Rubens: This is what I wanted to ask you.

01-00:23:21

Greene: My wife had an art history minor at [UC] Berkeley.

Rubens: She had Frankenstein?

01-00:23:26

Greene: Yes.

Rubens: Oh, wonderful teacher.

01-00:23:29

Greene: I rarely went to museums. I never went to art galleries. I'm a sports nut. Not a fan, but a nut. My wife is not a sports fan. We would travel. So when we went to Europe the first time, my wife dragged me to art galleries, and I started to see things I didn't understand, and of course, reacted the normal way one does when you don't understand something: I denigrated it. Even I could do what [Joan] Miró did. [Marc] Chagall, the paintings didn't make any sense to me. I couldn't understand a lot of the art. I couldn't figure out a lot of [Pablo] Picasso, and still can't. I had no understanding and therefore no appreciation of it. But being involved with the museum, you learn by osmosis. You learn by meeting people. I've developed a greater appreciation for it. Now whenever I travel, sporting events or not, I go to museums.

Rubens: Let me just stretch this out a bit. You're married in 19—

01-00:24:36

Greene: Lori and I were married on January 27, 1963.

Rubens: You were how long out of Boalt [UC Berkeley Boalt Hall School of Law]?

01-00:24:43

Greene: Well, I was in between my last two semesters of law school.

Rubens: At law school. Then you went to work immediately in San Francisco?

01-00:24:51

Greene: No, when I graduated from law school, I studied for the bar, and then on September 16, 1963, I went into the United States Army Reserve program, having missed President Kennedy's exemption of all married men from the draft.

Rubens: Wait, wait, why do you mean you missed it? Because it had ended?

01-00:25:14

Greene: Because I enlisted before he did the exemption.

Rubens: Right. Got it, got it, got it. So you went into the Reserves. Had you taken ROTC at Berkeley?

01-00:25:23

Greene: It was mandatory. I took a year. I went in as an enlisted man. I was at Fort Ord for basic training and then came to the Presidio, where they didn't have enough room in the barracks, so they forced me to—I'm kidding—to live at home. I was at the Presidio for the balance of my basic training and did on-the-job training. I got out of the Army March 15, 1964; and I started work on April Fools Day, 1964.

Rubens: So you did not have to serve in Vietnam.

01-00:25:57

Greene: Fortunately not. However, had Westmoreland's request for one million men been granted, my unit would have immediately gone to Fort Lewis, Washington to open a basic training post. Because of my rank—by that time, I was a Sergeant First Class, an E-7—I would've immediately been shipped to Vietnam.

Rubens: How fortunes change. You went to work for—

01-00:26:26

Greene: I went to work for Bronson, Bronson, and McKinnon, which at the time, I was, I think, the thirty-first or thirty-second attorney in the law firm.

Rubens: That's all?

01-00:26:35

Greene: Yes. Yes. It grew to 155, before fifteen other people and I left to form our firm, on December 1, 1984.

Rubens: So since you mentioned "our firm," and "my partners go along, and we're a small firm," I wanted to you say it. What's the name of your firm?

01-00:26:54

Greene: Firm name is Greene, Radovsky, Maloney, Share, & Hennigh.

Rubens: Were all of those people partners with you at Bronson?

01-00:27:03

Greene: No, only Joe Radovsky. Graham Maloney and Don Share were partners. Mark Hennigh was not a partner. He would've been a partner had we stayed another year.

Rubens: In '84, you formed your current law firm. Were you specializing in—

01-00:27:28

Greene: I had specialized, almost from the time I started, in income tax and estate planning. Then I started doing business negotiations.

Rubens: The firm itself?

01-00:27:39

Greene: Our firm is what's called a transactional law firm, which means that we do business transactions. Or we do tax, estate planning, general corporate. We have a huge real estate practice. We don't do any litigation. We do some insolvency work. We don't do any marital dissolution work, but we do advise on property settlements, because of the tax aspects. We do some banking work. We just do a lot of general transactional matters, with—Some of us are tax people; none of us are really what I would call absolutely focused, only tax. All of us do general business work. Some of the real estate people have expertise in tax aspects of real estate. My partners will tell you I'm dangerous in real estate; but I certainly know the tax aspects of it.

Rubens: So '84. It's now twenty-three years that the firm has existed.

01-00:28:52

Greene: Yes, that's correct.

Rubens: How big is the firm?

01-00:28:55

Greene: The firm now is twenty-eight. When we started, we started with seventeen—sixteen from Bronson and a person who wasn't at Bronson. We got as high—I think we might've been up to thirty, but since we don't do any litigation, it's very hard for us to grow to be a large firm.

Rubens: So now, let me ask one other piece to flesh out, and then we'll get back to the narrative of the museum. You're saying your wife schlepped you to the museums in Europe. But did you come to—you know, before the dinner with Gerson—did you come to some enjoyment or interest in SFMOMA or any of the developments in art in the Bay Area or L.A.?

01-00:29:51

Greene: I started to look at art, go to galleries, see things that I liked. I didn't understand them. I didn't understand any of the particular nuances.

Rubens: Did your wife particularly want to collect?

01-00:30:06

Greene:

My wife did. I did, too, so we began collecting art. In the 1970s, we began collecting art and actually have in the office, the second piece we ever bought, which was in 1965, in New Orleans—a pen and ink drawing which was done by a guy whose name I can't remember from San Francisco. Then we would see pieces, and I would ask questions about certain artists. I began to be able to recognize artists. My wife tried to explain. To the extent of my attention span, she tried to explain some of the pieces, and some artists, and the types of movements. Then there were people with whom my wife or her family had business relationships and friendships, one of whom became a client. His name is Peter Voukos. Pete was the ceramicist who turned ceramics into contemporary art. Unrelated to my father-in-law, who sold Pete all the scrap metal he ever used for any of the pieces that are anywhere in the world—and they're all over the world—I began doing some legal work for Pete. He was a fascinating guy. I also started doing legal work for other artists. Accountants who represented artists would suggest I talk to them. Pete would tell people. So I've done work for a number of artists.

Rubens:

That would be starting as far back as when, that you did work for artists?

01-00:31:42

Greene:

That began in the seventies, late seventies.

Rubens:

In the seventies. So it's only about fifteen years later, when you're talking about the Diebenkorn issue.

01-00:31:51

Greene:

Well, that, the whole interesting situation was, I had heard from a client that he had a number of Diebenkorns. I'd never seen them.

Rubens:

But you already, by then, knew who Diebenkorn was.

01-00:32:02

Greene:

I knew who Richard Diebenkorn was. After a hearing he had, where I was with him in Nevada, he told me was redoing his estate plan. I said, "What are you doing with the Diebenkorns?" He was from Minneapolis, so he was leaving them to the Walker Museum [Walker Art Center] in Minneapolis. He said, "What do you think?" I said, "I don't think it's a good idea." He said, "Why?" I said, "Because I won't be able to see them. I'm not going to get to Minneapolis." He said, "What would you suggest?" I had read—my wife had told me about it—of a retrospective, Diebenkorn retrospective, at the Oakland Museum. So I suggested he leave them to the Oakland Museum.

Rubens:

At the Oakland, or [M. H.] de Young [Memorial Museum]?

01-00:32:42

Greene:

The Oakland. I *thought* it was at the Oakland. He was from Oakland. I mean, my client lived in Oakland, that's where he got his wealth, that's where he

actually bought the Diebenkorns. He thought that was a good idea. So that was part of his estate plan.

Rubens: Have we named him? We don't need to if you would prefer not.

01-00:33:00

Greene: His name is Howard E. Johnson. We always say, "No, not the Howard Johnson from Hojos. Not the Howard Johnson the motels. But he had a collection of Diebenkorn paintings and some lithos. To this day, there is a Howard E. Johnson bay at the Oakland Museum, and some of those pieces are up. But we had to solve a problem. The problem was only solved by me being able to give a major piece to another museum. That's what led to SFMOMA getting *Woman in a Window*. Although, that was not my first choice. My first choice was another painting by him called *Nude with Hand on Knee*. But the Oakland Museum said they preferred to have that piece. They already had a major figurative.

Rubens: I was going to ask you that question when you first told the story; I wanted to get back. Who actually made the choice of what was the painting that was—

01-00:34:00

Greene: The original decision on that, I said, had to be mine; I was the executor of the estate. The Oakland Museum asked me to just take a minor piece. I said I couldn't do that. So I selected one piece, which was a smaller painting called *Nude with Hand on Knee*. Tina Orr-Cahall was the curator at the time with whom I dealt. Tina called me back and said if I wouldn't reconsider a major piece, that the board felt it should be the biggest piece, which was *Woman in a Window*. That's how it ended up at SFMOMA.

Rubens: But let's go back just a little bit. Peter Voulkos, what a story. I think we should, just for the record, say what your father-in-law's name is.

01-00:34:48

Greene: My father-in-law's name was Harold Levin. He was called Pinky by his friends. He had a scrap iron and metal dealership in San Francisco. He somehow met Pete. He came in one day, looking around. My father-in-law had all this scrap iron and metal lying around. My father-in-law was a very friendly guy, as was Pete. They began talking. Then when Pete wanted to do his metal sculptures, he would buy metal from my father-in-law. At home, we have one of the multiples he did for the Oakland Museum, which it sold to raise money. It's a gold and blue piece. On it, Pete scratched, when he gave us the piece, "Lori, this is your dad's metal. Pete." Pete was a wonderful guy. Crazy. All kinds of problems. The issues I did for Pete, I handled for Pete, besides his estate plan, had nothing to do with my specialty of tax. They were all business type issues, real estate issues. He became a friend. We have in the office several pieces by Pete. Some that he gave me which I reported as income, and some I purchased. When he had some hard times, I bought a couple of pieces from him.

Rubens: I want to stay with your father-in-law for minute and your wife. Did she grow up, then, in San Francisco? Did she have some affinity for the museum?

01-00:36:23

Greene: Lori was born and raised in San Francisco. She, as I said, was an art history minor at Berkeley. She gravitated more towards modern and then contemporary art. She had us become members of SFMOMA very early on. Lori would spend time visiting the museum, and she loved being involved with art and in the museum. When we built our house in Tiburon, in 1969, she said that she talked to her father, and her father said it would be okay to call Pete and ask Pete if he would do a sculpture. She wanted to know whether that was fine. I said, "Sure, but how much is it?" So she went over and met with Pete, and she came back very excited that Pete could do it, would come over, do it over the fireplace in the living room. I said, "How much will it be?" Lori said, "Well, he said it'd probably be three or four thousand dollars." I said, "Are you crazy?" I mean, we didn't have that kind of money; how could you possibly think we could do that? So we didn't. So we didn't get the Peter Voulkos piece. But again, we made up for it. We have a number of his ceramics. We have one of his bronzes. The piece that was at Modesto Lanzone's Opera Café. Because we have the bronze, when Modesto got in trouble and had all of his artwork auctioned off, I just had to buy the original. We have the original. We have one of his collages; we have several of his prints.

Rubens: Are any of these fractional gifts?

01-00:38:03

Greene: No, none of these are fractional gifts. My wife and I haven't really figured out what we're going to do with the art. We have a difference of opinion. But in the end, most of the art will go to SFMOMA. Now, I doubt SFMOMA would keep a lot of the art. But what I would hope would be done is that it could be sold at auction, proceeds put in a fund, and the fund could be used for acquisitions.

Rubens: So I need to get us back to SFMOMA, but I want to ask one more question about your wife. Should we be talking to her at all about serving on the Women's Board or, I don't know, fundraising or that kind of thing?

01-00:38:47

Greene: Life is never fair. My wife should have my position at the board, and I should be simply doing legal work. Instead, because of my activities for the board and my position as president of the board, my wife has felt that it would not be appropriate for her to be closely involved. She has been involved with SECA [Society for the Encouragement of Contemporary Art], which is the contemporary art group, but declined the invitation to be the president of SECA, and declined having any active involvement. I disagree with her on that, but that's life. So she goes to the museum, and we go to the functions at the museum.

Rubens: What's interesting is, you're starting as a family, to collect; in the seventies, you're starting to do business. But you really don't mark your involvement until, would you say, Jack Lane? Was Jack Lane the first director that you really worked closely with?

01-00:39:56

Greene: Yes. That was as a result of Brooks Walker asking me to help with the fractional gifts, after I'd given some advice on a number of other matters. But I did work with Jack. He was the director of the museum when I was asked to be a trustee.

Rubens: But he was about to go out, actually.

01-00:40:16

Greene: It was about a year—He was near the end.

Rubens: You come on in '96. It sounds like you really think of your activities beginning in '97. He's going to be gone. The museum opened in '95, the new building.

01-00:40:30

Greene: That's correct. But I had my introductory meeting about being a trustee with Jack Lane, at the restaurant on Minna Street. Rickenbacker's or something like that [. I could be wrong on the name. But Jack would take every new trustee—

Rubens: Where did the idea come from? Had you yourself been thinking, I'd like to do this; did someone particularly invite you?

01-00:41:00

Greene: I really had no thought that I would ever be asked to serve on the board, and I never made any request to do that. I received a phone call in 1996 from the then chair of the board, Elaine McKeon, a person who was so important to the history of SFMOMA that that's the understatement of the world. Elaine called me. She thought that she knew me, but actually, she didn't really know me; but her daughter Eileen and I had been co-attorneys at Bronson, Bronson & McKinnon. Eileen worked there. Eileen was an incredible lawyer.

Rubens: Is her last name McKeon?

01-00:41:44

Greene: Her last name was McKeon at the time. It's Eileen Michael now. Eileen and I did know each other, though we were in different fields—Eileen was a personal-injury defense lawyer—and respected each other. But Elaine called me. I was flattered that she would call. She said, "I've been talking to Brooks, and Brooks thinks I should have my own attorney on the board." The board has had an attorney for a long time, Moses Lasky. But Moses was in the latter stages of his career at that time and not really spending much time with the museum. Elaine said, "Would you like to serve on the board?" I was

extremely flattered, for all kinds of reasons. Moses Lasky is one of the legends, in San Francisco and in the entire country, as an antitrust lawyer. I not only knew Moses, I was his attorney. So being asked to step into his shoes was really flattering. My concern, of course, was the financial commitment, and any other commitments that involved being on the board.

Rubens: But by then, part of the leadership of Jack Lane was that to be on the board, you made a certain commitment. That had not occurred before.

01-00:43:05

Greene:

That's correct. That's really the name of the game in all major cultural institutions now because trustees have to be participating. So Elaine and I talked about that. She basically said to me, "You give at a certain level right now. If you'll stay at that level—you don't have to meet the normal level—if you stay at that level and agree to be my attorney, the attorney for the museum, then that will be fine. I would like you to serve on the executive committee." Now at that time, I had no idea of the difference between serving on the board, serving on the executive committee, or anything else. But I shortly learned that it is the executive committee, which had twelve or fifteen members, where all the business of the museum was discussed prior to bringing it to the board. It was the executive committee that was involved in all aspects of the museum. So I did say yes, and I was really looking forward to—

Rubens: Twelve people are on the executive [committee].

01-00:44:10

Greene:

Twelve or thirteen. I was looking forward to serving on it. When I got notice of the first meeting, it was to the trustees meeting. So I attended the meeting, and learned that the executive committee meeting had been from 10:30 until noon, and then the board meeting started at noon. So I sat through the board meeting and I listened to what was going on, and the explanations, and it was all very interesting. I was quite impressed with how Elaine ran a meeting. So I dropped her a note and thanked her and mentioned to her that I thought she wanted me to be on the executive committee. She immediately called me and said, "Oh, it was an oversight. Please come to the executive committee meetings. They are always at 10:30 before the board meetings." I told her from a time standpoint that was a little tough for me. She said, "Well, then come to executive committee." So I began going to the executive committee meetings.

Rubens: One more time. Executive committees are usually at 10:30?

01-00:45:15

Greene: Well, they were usually, at that time, 10:30, before the board meeting. They were for an hour and a half, and they were over at noon. Or five minutes to noon.

Rubens: That was the time slot you were saying was tough for you.

01-00:45:46

Greene: No, tough for me would be to do three hours.

Rubens: Making a distinction between the executive and then the full trustees.

01-00:45:35

Greene: Correct.

Rubens: You could do the executive.

01-00:45:36

Greene: Right. But taking three hours at that time was going to be, I thought, difficult. So I went to my first executive committee meeting and then told Elaine I couldn't go to the board meeting. But when I got back, I sent her a note saying how impressed I was. You have to understand, we have twelve or thirteen people on the executive committee. These are people who are the real leaders of the board. They're all very, very prominent people. Some people might say all of them are prima donnas. Elaine ran a meeting with an agenda. Everybody had a chance to speak. Everybody was able to say what they wanted to say. All the business was discussed and resolved, and the meeting adjourned five minutes before the board meeting started. It was an amazing way to watch someone run a board meeting and have the absolute respect of everyone, even though she may disagree with people, and to move the meeting along. Anybody who wanted to see how to run a meeting, watch Elaine McKeon. Just absolutely incredible. After going to a couple of executive committee meetings and missing the board meetings, I decided that I should go to both. I began going to both, and found that that enriched my experience. I learned a lot more, and I met a lot more people. That, I think, was very important.

Rubens: Let me just stay with your observations about how she ran a board. You were no stranger to boards, I imagine. Had you by then become involved with the Koret Foundation?

01-00:47:29

Greene: I'd been a director of Koret since 1981. I'd served on the [Contemporary] Jewish Museum board; I'd served on the board of the San Francisco Hearing and Speech Center; I've served on other boards. I can absolutely say I have never seen anyone run a meeting and get it completed, but more importantly, have everyone able to say what they want and to get the business done. Nobody is equal to Elaine McKeon.

Rubens: Could you summarize in a couple of words what those key things were? That's why I said, you were no stranger to important boards.

01-00:48:07

Greene: Key thing is organization; it's advanced preparation, of knowing what the issues are, of knowing when to ask people to speak, and of having the absolute undying respect of everybody in the room. You earn respect; you're not born with it. She had the respect because of her devotion to the museum. There are a lot of people about whom you can say this. There's clearly no museum without Elaine McKeon. There's no museum, no San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, without Elaine, without Brooks, without Gerson, without Phyllis, Helen [Schwab], Mimi [Haas], or Don [Fisher], without a lot of other people. But Elaine was so dynamic and so well respected and well liked. Everybody liked her. Everybody was happy to work with her. Because of that and because of the respect they had, she was able to move matters along and get things done, and then move on to other issues. That's a talent that few people have. Nobody can do what she does, by the way.

Rubens: These weren't the easiest times, either. The museum had opened, and that was very exciting. I'm sure you went to many of the parties and the opening. Then there's the issue of, well, who's going to lead us into the next phase?

01-00:49:30

Greene: Well, the museum reached a plateau with its opening. Again, Bonetti said, "Great building, not so great collection." No, you got to take it to the next step.

Rubens: Is Jack literally the one, though, who says, "Come talk to me about my plan for the patrons I want you to contact regarding this fractional gift?"

01-00:49:54

Greene: He had some people he wanted to have me contact. But apparently, Gary Garrels, who I don't think was on as a curator initially—he might've been—but he and John Caldwell, along with Jack Lane, prepared a list of artists and pieces that would be key to the museum having a collection that would have national and international respect. That list—which by the way, I think I may have seen once, but I've heard what was on it—the museum was able to acquire every piece, or a piece from that era, period, by the artist, with one exception. That's the Picasso that we could not acquire.

Rubens: Is it a specific Picasso?

01-00:50:54

Greene: Picasso from the 1930s, and it was a specific group. That was the one that gave rise to the problems with—

Rubens: A board member?

01-00:51:09

Greene:

No, no, with—I'm blanking on the name, but we'll get to it. I think it's important that not only is this list prepared—and I'm not sure who the genesis was. I'm not sure whether the genesis would be some of our other patrons, somebody like Helen Schwab or Mimi Haas, Evie Haas, Jack Lane, or the other people I mentioned—you know, Elaine, Brooks, and Gerson, or Phyllis. It might've been Phyllis. The list gets prepared. These people, the patrons, then are instrumental in getting these pieces acquired, and it's absolutely sensational.

Rubens:

This is after the museum opens?

01-00:52:11

Greene:

It's after the museum opens.

Rubens:

Phyllis Wattis was one of the key, key people. I wondered if you knew her.

01-00:52:20

Greene:

I met Phyllis as a result of being on the board. I had several discussions with Phyllis, who was in her nineties. She was incredibly sharp and focused. A wonderful person, and absolutely firm in her beliefs. She and I had a very, very strong disagreement over the Picasso matter. She turned out to be right, and I turned out to be wrong. I did tell her that at one point. She, however, was dedicated to being certain that not only the museum, but the other major cultural institutions in San Francisco were first rate, nationally and internationally. She was the beacon. She set the tone for the giving and for getting us to get to the places we are. I think everyone should be thankful for that. By that, I mean everyone in the Bay Area, everyone who visits here, and all the major cultural institutions. Not only SFMOMA, but also the de Young, the symphony, the opera, the ballet. Then you can pick a lot of other cultural organizations where Phyllis not only gave money, but she gave advice. She always put her money where her mouth was. There's some wonderful things she did—acquisition of the [René] Magritte, a major, major acquisition for our collection; the [Mark] Rothko, which is a wonderful story; and all the other things. now with her bequest to the museum and the acquisition fund that she established, that allow us to make major acquisitions. We're very fortunate.

Rubens:

I'm so interested to hear you describing McKeon's leadership abilities, because one of the things that everyone says is that in the seven-year period or so from when Jack Lane started and the commitment was to build to the building, and then the drive was to get it built, there was something magic about the board, that they just worked together and had a single commitment, and there was no haggling over who the final architect would be and—It just was a wonderful period. Brooks Walker and McKeon sort of switched places, in terms of their roles. Apparently, you came in once she was chairman, not Walker. But you're saying her leadership was just extraordinary. I know you're not saying that it was a magical time, because I think it was a difficult

time, and that's what we want to get to. But did you ever feel like you had missed out on something?

01-00:55:33

Greene:

Well, not really, because I was of some help to everyone on the aspects of having the collection built. Also the Koret Foundation was a major donor, a major initial donor. I was pleased to be on the board of Koret and to help get that grant approved by my colleagues on the board. That was a \$3 million grant, which was significant for the Koret Foundation, and significant at the time for the museum. I think what happened with the museum board was, everybody saw a goal, saw a purpose, and they began to work together. Nobody had to say, you do this; you do that. Working with Elaine, it just evolved. It evolved as to what you would do; it evolved as to what she would do. Brooks was always there to be helpful and to guide. Then you'd have certain people dealing with their strengths. Gerson, in finding a place for the museum and coming up with all the aspects of the museum; not only our existing museum, but the garage, and now what's going to happen with the sculpture garden, which was Gerson's idea. I was in his office when he drew it for me and told me, "This is going to happen." Well before PacBell even knew it was going to happen, it happened. It ultimately happened. But everybody wanted to do something. When you look at an organization—I've been involved in enough—that comes from the leadership at the top. It's because everybody wants to work. When they see somebody devoted, like Elaine, they want to be part of it. When they can use their strengths. The genius of a Gerson Bakar in being able to look at buildings, at raw land, and figure out what should go where; the genius of a Brooks Walker in being respected by everyone and having a background in art and going to his friends and asking them to be involved; the absolute genius of a Phyllis Wattis, who says, "I want San Francisco to be on the map worldwide, culturally."

Rubens:

—who was willing to spend the money because the money was going up astronomically. By the end of the eighties and the early nineties, the amount of money they were spending was just—

01-00:57:50

Greene:

It was. That was going up, and Phyllis was willing to put her money up. She did that. She did it for the major cultural institutions. Then she gave her advice. She continued to give more money.

**Interview #2: July 25, 2007**

Begin Audio File 2 07-25-2007.wav

Rubens: When you travel, do you go to museums?

02-00:06:28

Greene: Oh, of course.

Rubens: Do you have favorites in London?

02-00:06:32

Greene: Oh, yes. Actually, my favorite's kind of what somebody wouldn't expect. My favorite's the National Portrait Gallery. By far, my favorite. I don't go anymore to the permanent collection. I've seen it twice. But I always go downstairs to see the new stuff, because it's topical people. Then I always enjoy the Tate, Tate Modern. We went this time, my wife and I, went to the Tate Britain. We didn't go to the National Gallery; that's someplace I usually go. The Barbican, I usually go. The Barbican's excellent. We've gone to some of the others. But yes, I always make it a point.

Rubens: Are there are few other museums around the world that are your favorites?

02-00:07:24

Greene: Well, I've been to the Walker [Art Center] a couple of time, and I really enjoy the Walker. The Nasher [Museum of Art] in Dallas, I could go back to without any trouble at all. I've been to the Hirshhorn [Museum and Sculpture Garden] a couple of times. I haven't been back in a long time; I have no great desire to go back. MoMA, New York, I've always enjoyed. One of the really great museums—and I've been there twice, and I haven't been in years—is the Clark Museum at Williams College in Massachusetts. That's worth a visit.

Rubens: That's where Jack Lane, in a way, starts.

02-00:08:04

Greene: Yes, Jack started there, along with a lot of directors and curators. I haven't been to MASS MoCA, but I'd like that.

Rubens: Well, we all want to see what the new L. A. is going to be.

02-00:08:19

Greene: The L.A. museums, the ones I've been to—MOCA, and I've been to the satellite—they're not favorite museums of mine at all. L. A. County's [LACMA: Los Angeles County Museum of Art] good.

Rubens: That's what's been rebuilt.

02-00:08:34

Greene: Seattle. We'll make a trip to Seattle to see the new museum and sculpture garden [Seattle Art Museum].

Rubens: I haven't seen it, either.

02-00:08:39

Greene: But those are really—I've been to St. Louis, Philadelphia a couple of times. Boston, that museum—I can't remember the name of it; Fine Arts Museum or something like that—it's not one of my favorites.

Rubens: I'm asking you this; I want to back door a little. I learned so much from you from the last interview. Would you take one minute to just tell us what you're sitting in front of, so that we know?

02-00:09:13

Greene: The large piece, this particular piece is by Elizabeth Dworkin. She is a New York artist. I don't think she's gained any great deal of fame. My wife and I bought that piece in New York many years ago. Then next to it—

Rubens: Why? I think it's magnificent.

02-00:09:34

Greene: Well, I like the colors and I like the composition. My wife, who is my art expert, told me that she thought it was a good piece, an interesting piece. The piece next to it's by Squeak Carnath, who is a Bay Area artist, a piece my wife also picked out. I did some work for Squeak, and that was really the piece that we ended up with from it. But actually, in here is one of my favorite pieces, which I'm looking at but you're not.

Rubens: We'll turn later.

02-00:10:07

Greene: That's Red Grooms, New York Subway.

Rubens: It's fabulous. It's fabulous.

02-00:10:12

Greene: That's a fun piece

Rubens: That is a wonderful piece. I believe that at the end of the first interview, you were telling me about your wife's interest. I thought that she did photography.

02-00:10:52

Greene: Well, my wife *likes* photography. I was never a great fan of collecting photography.

Rubens: Right. Did something change?

02-00:11:02

Greene: I've found some of the photography is very interesting. But from a being able to collect standpoint, photography is much more affordable, and always has been. Although the photography prices are going out of sight now. We started like anybody else, with collecting prints, lithos. Then what you do is, if you

get interested, you graduate from that to try to collect originals. Being someone who doesn't forget what my wife tells me—she would dispute that. She said we shouldn't collect multiples. Well, photographs are multiples. So I sort of nixed that idea. Also, all of us are photographers. All of us have cameras. I've got one in my pocket, actually. I'm going to a baseball game tonight, and I'm going to take Barry Bonds' picture as he ties and then breaks the record.

Rubens: I thought he had two to go?

02-00:11:56

Greene: He does. He's going to hit three tonight.

Rubens: All right, good. Good, good, good.

02-00:11:59

Greene: All of us are photographers. Not all of us are painters or sculptors. So that was something that I didn't realize, because I have no art background, as I've said, no art education, in that regard.

Rubens: She had.

02-00:12:13

Greene: But it really is an art form. I've learned. Being involved with the museum, I've learned a lot about that. I've had some discussions with Paul Sack. He and his wife put together an amazing collection of photographs. Just talking with Paul, and Shirley Davis, who used to be a trustee on our board and has a wonderful photography collection, and sort of listening when my wife talks about photography. I think I understand some of it.

Rubens: So are you collecting it now? Or is she collecting it?

02-00:12:49

Greene: We have some, but the economics of collecting have really priced that out of the market.

Rubens: You had shown me some. When we took a little walk around the building, you were showing me some.

02-00:12:57

Greene: There are two photographs by Michele Rogovin, who is an Israeli photographer, that my wife bought. Then we went to the Biennale two Biennales ago, and she was the featured Israeli artist. Those photographs are interesting. Then there's some photographs here by—I think four—by the son of a very longstanding client of mine, that were a gift, that when we framed them my wife thought, and I did too, that they merited being shown. Then I have my sports photographs. Some taken by me, and most taken—the best ones—by a young woman I sat next to at the finals of the Australian Open in

Melbourne, in 1996. She had a camera, so I asked her if she would send me some photographs, and I'd buy them. So she did.

Rubens: Is she rising in her career? Is she doing well?

02-00:14:01

Greene: I have no idea. Except that I went back to Australia and she lived in Melbourne, and I tried to find her. If she is a photographer, she is not a photographer in Melbourne, in Canberra, or in Sydney.

Rubens: So let me return you, then, to the museum. I hadn't realized that it was McKeon who had called you up and asked you to be on the board. I think that's what you had told me.

02-00:14:29

Greene: That is correct.

Rubens: I didn't realize, while you had known many people and advised people, you came on the board relatively late, to some of your friends and—after the new building opened.

02-00:14:40

Greene: The new building had opened. As I'd mentioned, I worked with Jack Lane and worked on fractional-interest gifts to build the collection for the new museum. Then after the museum was open—about, I think, a year or so afterwards—is when Elaine called and asked me if I'd be interested in joining the board, and acting essentially as her attorney, replacing someone who I consider to be one of the finest attorneys ever in the Bay Area, if not the country, Moses Lasky.

Rubens: I didn't ask you if he was a collector.

02-00:15:17

Greene: Moses? Well, Moses Lasky had a wonderful collection. He had an excellent collection of prints, lithos; he also had original art. He had made some donations to SFMOMA. When he died—You had know Moses to understand this, but Moses had a provision in his estate-planning document, which we drew, but Moses was the architect, that imposed requirements on SFMOMA had it accepted the prints. Those requirements didn't make a lot of sense. I had tried to convince Moses of that, but anybody who knows Moses, you couldn't convince him of anything. But anyway, SFMOMA didn't take the prints. The successor trustees of Moses' trust gave a significant portion of the art to museums, not only here—the Fine Arts Museums [of San Francisco]—but also to other museums, Los Angeles and other museums. None to SFMOMA. I think they sold some pieces.

Rubens: Were some of those restrictions or those specifications observed?

02-00:16:33

Greene: All restrictions were removed, when SFMOMA didn't accept it.

Rubens: I see.

02-00:16:37

Greene: That's the way it was drawn. Moses had his reasons, and I don't dispute the reasons. But the effect is that in today's world, when you impose a lot of restrictions on gifts of art, the museums have to take a hard look at that, see whether they can accept it. Here, the collection had to be kept intact, if SFMOMA accepted it. That just didn't work.

[The next paragraph is sealed by SFMOMA]

Rubens: I do want to hear how you've seen the museum grow, and what you thought your role has been in it. But I wondered if it was worth—

02-00:17:52

Greene: We can do it either way. I know you're going to be interviewing Don. I think it might be better to get Don's version of what was being discussed.

Rubens: I was going to ask your advice, do you think I should just raise it to him?

02-00:18:14

Greene: That's something you should ask him about. I think there may be more than one version of the story. Both Steve Oliver and Neal Benezra and I, the three of us were involved initially.

Rubens: Oliver said very little.

02-00:18:32

Greene: Well, it's a matter where Don and Doris have assembled one of the great collections of contemporary art in the world. Not in the United States, not in San Francisco, but in the world. Any museum which could have those pieces as part of its collection, or on a basis where those pieces could be shown by the museum, as the museum needs or wants to show those piece, any museum in the world would want to do that. What Don had proposed evolved from an idea that he originally had and came to something that was presented to our executive committee, not our board. The executive committee felt that the proposal that was presented to us was a proposal that did not work for our museum. We doubted it could work for another museum. There were certain aspects of that that Don certainly can and should go into. I have my view of the matter. I certainly can explain what the proposals were that I heard. If Don has a different version of that, that would be very interesting, but my understanding is that Don is going to try to do his own museum at the Presidio.

Rubens: Oh, at the Presidio.

02-00:20:05

Greene: It's going to be a very large museum. That's what I've heard.

Rubens: I thought he had said in the—I didn't realize how early the autobiography was, 2002, but I did read it recently. He had talked about Golden Gate Park, not the Presidio.

02-00:20:21

Greene: Well, Don's ideas evolve. They have to evolve.

Rubens: Well, Oliver says Don has an idea a minute. The one thing, he said, was that there was no recrimination on Don's part. There was no grudge, he said.

02-00:20:42

Greene: Well, there is no grudge. There should be no grudge. Don is an active member of not only the museum's board, but also the executive committee. He has a lot of ideas. He presents ideas, and he presents them with a passion. When he presents an idea—Don is a very successful business person, and you can see why when he presents his ideas. Then people sit and discuss them. If the ideas are accepted, that's terrific. If they're not accepted, as long as they're discussed, Don, as far as I know, has no recriminations. This is not the only idea that he's put on the table.

Rubens: Do you want to say your interpretation of it? Or you don't, really?

02-00:21:51

Greene: Let me tell you what I understood was being presented. Let me go into a part that was never presented, but Don mentioned to me. We used to have, until August 17 of last year, something called fractional-interest gifts. The law changed. Congress enacted something called the Pension Protection Act of 2006. Senator Grassley of Iowa, chair of the Senate Finance Committee, was able to get a provision enacted that essentially prevented fractional-interest gifts from being made as that legislation was being enacted.

Rubens: Who's pushing for that?

02-00:22:34

Greene: Really, the genesis of that was Senator Grassley of Iowa and the Senate Finance Committee.

Rubens: But they're trying to go after what?

02-00:22:44

Greene: Well, they're trying to prevent what would be abuses with gifts of fractional interest. I'm happy to discuss that, but let me just follow the train. Don knew about fractional-interest gifts; he's made some. He looked at that, and my understanding is, he came up with an idea that his fabulous collection, he would make that collection a fractional gift to SFMOMA and another museum. I'll leave it to Don to tell you the name of the other museum. That other museum and SFMOMA would have fractional-interest gifts. There would be some requirements which, at the time this started, were not really formulated, about showing those works. But because the way fractional gifts

work, if you don't give 100 percent originally, and if Don and Doris retained a fraction, which I think was what they intended to do, the gifts, the works don't really have to be transferred, and they remain with Doris and Don. That was under the old law.

When the word came out—and it was publicized—that Senator Grassley and both the Senate Finance Committee and the House Ways and Means Committee staffs were looking into fractional gifts, Don got word of it. He figured out what would happen if legislation were enacted—at least what was on the drawing boards being enacted. Don tried, by hiring a lobbyist, tried to get that legislation stopped. Or better yet—because that legislation is incorrect, that's not fair. Nobody tried to get the legislation stopped. What everybody tried to get was a fair hearing on what are the issues and how do you address the issues? Do you have to enact legislation that, as it came out, basically said no more fractional gifts? Now, that's not what it said, but when you read the legislation, you wouldn't make a fractional gift. The consequences of making a fractional gift were horrendous for the donor. He wanted a fair hearing on that. Don attempted to do that through a lobbyist. We attempted to do that through discussions. I personally had—

Rubens: “We,” meaning?

02-00:25:04

Greene: SFMOMA.

Rubens: I would assume. I would assume other museums.

02-00:25:06

Greene: Well, I personally had discussions with staff members of the House Ways and Means Committee and the Senate Finance Committee. Neal Benezra talked with Glenn Lowry, the director of MoMA. MoMA got involved. Everybody tried to present their case. All to no avail. Legislation was enacted. Shortly after the legislation was enacted, fractional-interest gifts could not be used. Now, I'm surmising that this went through Don's mind. Then Don made a presentation to SFMOMA, and he was going to make a presentation to the other museum, on his increasing our space and allowing his collection to be used at our museum and another museum, under a formula with required mandatory display issues. While Don could easily explain his concept and his purpose, when I read it and when others read it, it was very hard to, (A) figure it out and (B) figure out how it could ever be implemented as a practical matter. Don disagreed as did Don's counsel. All three of us, Neal, Steve and I, met on a few occasions with Don and his counsel to discuss this proposal. The initial proposal involved funds to construct one of the wings at SFMOMA, and Don's collection. That was the initial proposal. We talked about that, and that initial proposal, the collection part, was removed from Don's proposal. Instead, substituted for that was, there would be an arrangement where the museum could show the collection on occasions and the museum would build

its wing, and the wing would show Don's collection; and Don would be the person determining how the collection was shown and how it would be handled. That was Don's proposal.

Rubens: A curatorial role.

02-00:27:25

Greene: More than that. He has absolute intimate knowledge of his collection. The idea would be we would have the building and the use of the collection during some period of time. We tried to discuss that and tried to make modifications on that, which would involve more of a commitment on a collection, and tried to work it out. We finally came to the best we could do, as far as Don was concerned. That was presented to the museum's executive committee. It was discussed by the museum's executive committee. All the aspects of it were discussed. Don was not at the meeting; he felt it would be inappropriate. Bob Fisher was there, Don's son, but did not stay—

Rubens: Is Fisher on the board?

02-00:28:15

Greene: Bob's on the board.

Rubens: I didn't realize that.

02-00:28:17

Greene: He's on the executive committee. Bob did not stay for the presentation and discussion, but he made his presentation, I think answered a couple of questions. We had a thorough discussion of this, with everybody, the entire executive committee—

Rubens: How many, about?

02-00:28:35

Greene: I think there were thirteen of us there, maybe twelve, maybe fourteen. Everybody gave their views. Neal presented his views. We asked if there was a motion to accept or reject the proposal. There was no motion. So the matter was thoroughly discussed; there was no motion voted on. Which means, of course, that we did not take it up to be considered one way or another. Now, that's my recollection of everything.

Rubens: How long ago was this?

02-00:29:15

Greene: Oh, this was maybe six months, seven months ago. The matter still continues, and we are still having discussions with Don, and various members of our board are very interested in this proposal and what we're doing. But my understanding is—we gave Don some alternatives, by the way, that at this point, I don't want to go into. We gave him some alternatives, which he said were not acceptable to him. Understandable. He then said he wanted to pursue

his own other alternatives. It's my understanding that he has had serious discussions with the Presidio towards building a 100,000 square foot museum at the Presidio. Now, keep in mind that SFMOMA, in its present configuration, is 50,000 square feet. Adding the wing added another—call it 30,000 to 35,000 square feet. So this would be a museum much larger than even the expanded SFMOMA would be. So it's a gigantic proposal. When you think about it, if Don is able to do that, there are still possibilities for involvement of SFMOMA. Some people thinking, how do you run that museum? Don, like all of us, unfortunately, is not going to live forever. The videographer is, but I'm not. Don isn't either. How do you run a museum? Is there a role for SFMOMA there? It's an idea that's been discussed. I have no clue as to whether Don would be willing to do it. But that's where we were. I believe Don has a different version of that story, at least on what the proposal was on the table. That's certainly—you can ask Don, and he obviously should say what he wants to. But I will tell you—I just did tell you—that's the proposal, as I understand it. There has been some confusion on elements to that proposal. That's an issue that is being continuously discussed, and we'll see what happens.

Rubens: The fact that Oliver, you, Benezra and Don met, is that as facilitators, as friends, as people who've worked together?

02-00:31:49

Greene: He sent us a letter. He sent a letter to Neal Benezra, the director of the museum; Steve Oliver, the chairman; and Dick Greene, the president. He sent them to the senior people. Then we had our meetings. He had his—

Rubens: Why would he have a counsel? Well, because he's working out the details about the—

02-00:32:07

Greene: He had his counsel there because he trusts his counsel, it's Bruce Cowan. He trusts Bruce. We received a written proposal. It was going to be redrafted, and Bruce had done the first draft. He wanted Bruce to do any further drafts. So that's why Bruce would be involved.

Rubens: So you're not the attorney for his estate, for this.

02-00:32:33

Greene: No, unfortunately, that's Bruce Cowan, not Dick Greene.

Rubens: All right, all right. Well, you're saying it in a very articulate way, and we'll see. What that led me to is that it sounds to me—please don't let me put words in your mouth—that you thought there were some problems, that it didn't give the museum enough control.

02-00:32:58

Greene:

The museum, as a museum, is going to have issues with proposals where there are restrictions on use of art that's given. That's always going to be an issue. This was much more than that. That's first. That's first and foremost. Second, when you look at the proposal that was on the table that we were considering—not the original proposal, which postdates the fractional interest idea that was never proposed, because of the legislation—when you look at the proposal that was on the table, when you take a very close, hard look at it, the collection is not part of the proposal.

Rubens:

That's what I heard you say.

02-00:33:42

Greene:

That's, I think, very important.

Rubens:

Pretty critical, yeah.

02-00:33:44

Greene:

It's very important. When you look at other aspects of the proposal, while we certainly would love to have funded the new wing—and the money Don had proposed to put up would fund the construction and the lion's share of the endowment to operate it—not 100 percent; he was operating on old information—not 100 percent of endowing the cost of operating it, but the lion's share. The balance, if we did the new wing, we'd find a way to get the balance of the money. If somebody said, "We'll give you the money, build a new wing," and that was it, and there was nothing else on the table, of course. You'd have to be crazy not to accept that. Nobody in our museum is crazy. That wasn't the proposal. There were other aspects to it. They become difficult. It becomes very hard for a museum to deal with restrictions that are imposed by collectors. The world has changed in that regard. It used to be that museums said, "Give us your art, we'll show your art as we see fit, but don't tell us what to do with it." The world has changed now. Some of the reasoning for that position, of course, was because museums do that job. Most likely, collectors were not as knowledgeable as they are today. There weren't a lot of collectors who had built collections like those that have been built now. I think—

Rubens:

It was costly.

02-00:35:26

Greene:

I think collectors have something, knowledge, ideas—particularly ideas from somebody like a Don Fisher—that museums should hear and consider. In the end, in my view and the view of a lot of people with our museum, and I think other museums in the country, in the end, it's the museum that is doing the shows. In the end, the museum has to do that. If you allow somebody else to do that, in my view, you compromise the integrity of the museum, and you compromise how museums operate. There are people who disagree with that. That's a legitimate disagreement. Nothing I have heard changes my view. I

am open on that, I'm happy to listen to the other side. But I think in the end, you have to have one person or one entity making the decision. I think that decision falls to the museum, because it's the museum which is putting up the show. It's the museum who's being visited by the people. It's the museum to whom people look as to what they're showing, and why. I think that's important.

Rubens: Well, you seem to indicate also—this isn't public yet—that since there was no motion, there was some unanimity amongst that executive committee.

02-00:36:53

Greene: Well, I think there was a unanimity of views. I also think that this matter's becoming talked about more and more. I think it's about time. I believe everybody agrees that we're going to take it to our board in the fall and explain to the board exactly what happened and what the views were and get the sense of the board on this. I think that's healthy. I think it's the way a board should act. We've got a great board and some very knowledgeable people. I think they have to know all the facts. I don't think you can make a decision on anything when you only hear part of it, or when something gets, quote, "garbled," unquote, in the translation. I've set out for you how I understand the last proposal on the table. That proposal, from my personal viewpoint, didn't work. We tried other ideas; they didn't work for Don. I respect that. I mean, my God, Don and Doris built this collection. It's unbelievable. It's an unbelievable collection. As collectors, all collectors want their collection shown. They don't want it sitting in a basement. That's a great fear. How do you accommodate that becomes the real skill in all this. How do you work that out within the museum world? So far—and notice I'm an eternal optimist—so far, we haven't been able to work it out.

Rubens: Well, with him.

02-00:38:32

Greene: With him. My hope is we will.

Rubens: I think you've laid this out very articulately.

02-00:38:57

Greene: I do want you to get Don's version of it.

Rubens: You're telling me it's okay to ask him, I understand.

02-00:39:04

Greene: I think absolutely. He can choose to respond or not. I would be shocked if he didn't tell you, since it's my understanding he is talking with people about this. I think it's very important that we have a discussion on it.

Rubens: There's a wholesale discussion going on, a wide discussion, about the nature of museums. There's the big Rand report that came out, there's a couple of

books about collecting the new; where do you draw the line between contemporary—how do you conserve some of these arts that are intended not to really conserve? But finally, what kind of public access is there? Do you fractionalize these museums into identities of Hispanic, Jewish, etc.? I mean, there's quite a bit of discussion. How do you pay for it?

02-00:39:54  
Greene:

Well, we have that in San Francisco, because we had MoAD [The Museum of the African Diaspora], and we have the Jewish Museum. I think we're going to have the Latin American museum. I think it's—It's hard for me to say. From my standpoint, I view SFMOMA, and I view the comparable museums through the country, as showing contemporary art from all regions of the world, from all ethnic classes, from everyone, just showing everything. I certainly can understand why various ethnic groups would like to have a show that deals directly with works by their people. I think that's the proper place for it. I think the Jewish Museum will add a great deal. I think MoAD adds a phenomenal amount to the city, in being able to talk about the African diaspora, perhaps more than a pure museum, because you can get cultural, you can get from a sociology standpoint, you can get into the aspects of that particular ethnic group, that would be well beyond what a museum might do. You have curators there who have those skills, and skills our curators might not have. So I think there's a great place for that. I'm also a great believer, the more museums we have in the area where SFMOMA is, the better. Because that means it becomes a tourist destination, and people go to all these museums. That's really what we're all about. We want people to come in.

Rubens:

One thing we didn't talk about is your role with the Koret Foundation. Seemed to me that you were maybe not the only one, but someone who was really encouraging them to support SFMOMA, to finance certain exhibits. Would you mind talking about that?

02-00:41:55  
Greene:

I've been a director of the Koret Foundation since 1981, while Mr. Koret was alive and the foundation was much smaller. We had some rather limited guidelines. The arts weren't part of the original guidelines.

Rubens:

His money was from clothing?

02-00:42:13  
Greene:

Well, started with clothing money, but came from real estate. Mr. Koret made some phenomenal real estate investments. He had a, at the time young, although older than I am, real estate adviser, Tad Taube, who was very instrumental in turning the clothing money into a substantial fortune. After Mr. Koret died and when the Koret Foundation was fully funded—It was partially funded when Mr. Koret's first wife, Stephanie Koret died, and the balance was funded in, I believe 1985, after Mr. Koret's death. I think he died in, I believe, 1981 or '82. No, pardon me, he died in 1982 or '3. I represented Mr. Koret; I was his attorney in the latter stages of his life. We expanded our

guidelines. We expanded the guidelines to include the major arts organizations.

Rubens: Who's pushing that? Are you one of the people?

02-00:43:15

Greene:

The entire board was. I certainly felt that was important. But at the time, we had a five-person board, and everybody on the board wanted the Koret Foundation to be an integral part of the life in San Francisco and in the Bay Area, and the cultural aspects of life. I mean, we have one of the great American city cultural lives. So we wanted to be a part of that. We began supporting the usual cultural institutions. I and others suggested that we expand that to include SFMOMA. We also picked up ACT [American Conservatory Theater]. As we began to support the Museum, I could see that maybe there was more that we could do there, and others felt the same way. Then our board expanded, and we had nine members on the board. From the five, we went to nine. That broadened the exposure of the whole board to views of various other members of the community, who were now on the board. That expanded our horizons a bit. We started giving more money away.

We have something called the Koret Prize, which was designed to do certain things. Elie Wiesel was the recipient this year. When you give away more money, if you start to try to give it away in small chunks, \$25,000 or \$50,000, and you want to give away several million dollars, that's virtually impossible, to be effective. So you have to start looking at larger projects. The Koret Foundation did that. Starting from a few capital projects, we've done a lot more. Very fortunately, when the new museum was being built, the Koret Foundation made a substantial grant, which was used for the Koret [Visitor] Education Center. Then when that center was moved to the second floor, to become an integral part of the flow of the museum, the Koret Foundation provided some additional money, which was used to have what we now call the Koret [Visitor] Education Center. It's one of the better designed and utilized educational centers of museums in the United States and the world. We've expanded our horizons.

Rubens: So are you being a bit modest? I mean, it's not just that you were—You found sympathetic people.

02-00:46:11

Greene:

My colleagues were sympathetic, and I pushed very hard for this. I'm not being modest, but I have a conflict because I'm on both boards. But I pushed.

Rubens: But you weren't on the board until '96—

02-00:46:23

Greene:

No, but during these grants, I was. The ed center grants, I was on the board. The most recent grant, which is a very exciting grant, was a million dollar

grant from the Koret Foundation, on a challenge basis, solely to support programs. To support the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the oral history project.

Rubens: Oh, you support us?

02-00:46:47

Greene: But primarily to support programs, on a match basis. So in the initial year, I believe it was \$400,000.

Rubens: Our part's much smaller. But anyway.

02-00:46:58

Greene: That would be given by the foundation when \$400,000 was raised by the museum. Then there's another tranche, and I think it's \$400,000 against more than \$400,000 and then another \$200,000.

Rubens: What's that word you used, *tranche*?

02-00:47:16

Greene: *Tranche*. That means installment. See, when I'm doing this for a museum, I'd say *tranche*. If I was doing this for a not-museum, if I didn't want to sound erudite, I would say installment. They're the same thing. Same thing. But we did that, and I felt very good about it.

Rubens: That education center, I was thinking about that when you were saying, "Well, MoAD has maybe capacities SFMOMA doesn't." But I'm not convinced yet.

02-00:47:47

Greene: Well, our ed center let's us do things. Then I had an idea, because of some work I was doing with a man by the name of David Ireland, who is a client of mine. He's, I guess, a conceptual artist. Don't ask me to define what conceptual artist is, but he's a conceptual artist. I went over to his house for a meeting with David. We were talking about, what do you do with a house? David can speak at all levels, and he's a wonderful man. He started taking me around. The question was, where's the hidden staircase. So we spent time looking in his house, and I tried to figure out where the hidden staircase was. He says, "The next time you come back, we'll see if we can find it." Well, I came back the next time, and I sort of thought I'd figured out, and I hadn't. He showed me where it was. That led to about a forty-five minute personal tour by David of his house and the art in his house.

Rubens: Someone from our office did that.

02-00:48:50

Greene: What he was doing was fascinating. I said to David, "Would you be willing to do an oral history of your house and talk about your house if we can get that funded and do it with the Bancroft at Berkeley? If you'd be willing to do it." He was having a retrospective at Oakland Museum, and that could be used there. "If you're willing to do it, let me see if I can get the funding." I went to

the Koret Foundation and I got the funding. I asked SFMOMA if SFMOMA would be the, say, the holder of the actual oral history and have it as part of the ed center. SFMOMA agreed to that. As you know, that's been done. I think it's great.

Rubens: It was wonderful.

02-00:49:34

Greene: It's available for people who want to hear a conceptual artist talk about what was in his mind on his house when that was done, with the video of that and the transcript. He changed it three times a year. You could hear from a conceptual artist. I thought that was fabulous.

Rubens: It was. Congratulations.

02-00:49:56

Greene: I was really pleased that we could do that. Then I'd seen some shows that needed funding at SFMOMA. I have the right, as a director of the Koret Foundation, to go to the board and make some suggestions. We became one of the sponsors of the Romare Bearden show, which was a very successful show, and opened up a lot of people's eyes.

Rubens: Such an important African American artist.

02-00:50:27

Greene: *Very* important, who many people didn't know anything about. We did some great programs. We did a Sunday brunch, which was jazz. Two brunches, and we had jazz. San Francisco Jazz Organization, and I forgot the last name. But they do the jazz festival. They provided jazz, and we sold these brunches. Many of our patrons and others in the museum would buy the entire brunch and invite people to the brunch, and you would have young people there. Then the young people would go and see the show. We were very pleased to have the Koret Foundation be a sponsor.

Rubens: You take a certain pleasure in this.

02-00:51:09

Greene: Oh, a great pleasure.

Rubens: I can see it. I love seeing it in your face.

02-00:51:11

Greene: Well, it's a great pleasure. I'm fortunate. I'm on the board, and my colleagues listen. I listen to their ideas. Also, it shows that I have interests besides athletics. I mean, it's really important to get that out. But I think it's been great, what the Koret Foundation has been able to do. I hope we can continue to do it. We're very pleased, though, with the million dollar programmatic grant. I think we're in our second year. We have one more year to go. Then

who knows what'll happen. There's no guarantees. Hopefully, the Koret Foundation will continue to be supportive.

Rubens: It looks in good shape, doesn't it?

02-00:51:51

Greene: Well, we hope. It just depends upon how the directors feel about that, but I think it's great. Other museums might say there's perhaps an unfair advantage there. I don't think so. We have supported, rather extensively, the Fine Arts Museums at Koret. We have supported other museums. I believe the Stanford University Museum. We may get a grant request from the Berkeley Art Museum, that's going through a capital campaign. Hopefully, we'll take a hard look at that. So I hope we can keep our support of the arts, and keep it at a decent level. I think that's real important.

Rubens: Well, I understand your point about concentrating, too, as opposed to—

02-00:52:42

Greene: There are a lot of philosophies of giving. That's also an incredible learning experience. How do you give effectively? It's not easy to give money away; how do you make it effective? Concentrating is one. Grant evaluations are another. Actually seeing what's done is another way, getting in and looking at the program, talking to people.

Rubens: What I want to get back to, then, is your role on the board and how you saw the board evolve with the leaving of Jack Lane. You had just come on the board when the building was—

02-00:53:28

Greene: I came on the board shortly after the building opened. My first board experience was a call from Jack Lane. He said, "I want to have lunch with you and talk to you about the board." I had spent a lot of museum time with Jack. I'd spent time with him on the fractional gifts, but never talking about the museum.

Rubens: We were right at the end when you said that, and you didn't remember the name of the restaurant, which doesn't matter.

02-00:53:56

Greene: I think it's Rickenbacker's. It's on the alley, Natoma, I think Natoma and Second [Minna and 2<sup>nd</sup>]. So that was really something. I thought it was a great idea. I thought to have the director of a museum, on a one-on-one basis, spend some time with somebody who really didn't know—I didn't know anything about museums. I knew about fractional gifts, I didn't know about museums. To talk about what it means to be a trustee of a museum.

Rubens: You knew what it was to have foundations give to the museum.

02-00:54:30

Greene:

Oh, of course. So this was a different perspective. We had an excellent lunch, a very enjoyable lunch. Jack talked a bit about the museum and a lot about how he views the trustees' roles and the support the trustees give. Not just financial, but other support, and working on committees. He talked about the various committees at the museum and how the museum operates and how he would operate it and wants it operated from an ideal standpoint. So that was my introduction to SFMOMA. I came on the board. Again, as I said, I came on the board to be Elaine's attorney and to be on the executive committee with Elaine. Jack, of course, would be in executive committee meetings. More of my time was spent with Elaine and working on matters from her perspective, and less from the museum director's perspective. Then Jack decides that he's going to leave and go on.

Rubens:

I was going to ask you literally if you were at that executive committee meeting at—I can't think of it—the golf club up in—

02-00:55:41

Greene:

No, I was not. I mentioned to you before we left that I was asked to go on the board, I was asked to go on the executive committee. The first invitation I get is to a board meeting and not to an executive committee meeting. So I go to the board meeting, and I write Elaine a note. I said, "I thought you wanted me to go to an executive committee meeting, and I'm not sure I can go to both. Let me know." She said, "Terrible mistake. You will be invited to the next executive committee meeting. The next, actually, it's a retreat, and there's no point in inviting you, because you wouldn't have the background." I said, "That's fine with me." That was a strategic planning retreat at, I think, Silverado.

Rubens:

Silverado, right.

02-00:56:23

Greene:

I did not go to that meeting, but I did go to every executive committee meeting thereafter.

Rubens:

Jack says very clearly and has signed off on saying that it was a tough meeting. It just was clear that he wasn't going to continue.

02-00:56:40

Greene:

Jack Lane had taken the museum and the trustees of the museum to a new level, a new plateau. He had increased the awareness of people—

Rubens:

He had multiplied the committees. There were many more.

02-00:56:52

Greene:

He's increased everybody's awareness of SFMOMA and of art collecting and museums and use of art. He had taken everybody to another plateau. Now, also, the building's built. He's one of the guys. He's the museum. When people look at the museum, he's the museum. Brooks, Gerson, Fishers,

Schwabs, Phyllis Wattis, Haas, they're helping, but the person the community knows is Jack Lane. He's taken everybody to that level. In my experience, I've found people get organizations to a level. It's very hard for that same person to take it to the next level. They're identified with the level they've created. New ideas sometimes are hard. Maybe in San Francisco, they're harder to get on the table and accepted than elsewhere. I think that Jack realized that he couldn't go to the next level, which was build the collection. Jack started it, but now we had to go to a higher level.

Rubens: That's why I was wondering, are you meeting with him before this meeting? It must have been when he meets with you.

02-00:58:09

Greene: My lunch was before that meeting.

Rubens: So he's at least thinking about how to bring you in. Is he—

02-00:58:15

Greene: To the best of my recollection, Jack and I did not talk about plateaus and levels and what the museum needs to do to improve as a museum, it was—

Rubens: He wasn't asking you to—

02-00:58:28

Greene: No, he knew I didn't know anything about a museum, what—

Rubens: Well, it was an educational overview.

02-00:58:32

Greene: What do you expect a trustee to do? What commitment is there? Again, not just financial. What commitment. What do you want a trustee to do? How does a museum operate for the trustees? How does the museum operate for the public. We were talking about that. We never got into these things.

Then the Silverado meeting takes place. I wasn't part of that. Then I'm part of the discussions. You could see that Jack has realized that he's not going to be able to do the next step, and the trustees have realized it. So you come to a mutual consensus, you come to a mutual understanding. The museum is going to have to move on. Jack's going to move on, and he's going to do whatever he wants to do. He's going to retire, he's not going to retire. I did some legal work for Jack also, so I have these wonderful conflicts of interest. We chatted about it, and he wanted to stay. He and Inge-Lise are part of the museum world. Then our museum moves on. It moves on to, how do we find a new director to take us to what we think is the next plateau? But more importantly, we need someone to give us a vision. We want our director to give our board a vision. The board can outline ideas. Things that maybe we can do, maybe we can't do. But we look to a director to give us the vision. What is our museum going to be? What are we going to look like? What do we want to be? Are we

going to be a regional museum? Are we going to be a worldwide museum? Are we going to be recognized for certain aspects of our collection? Are we going to be recognized for our entire collection? Are we going to have an eclectic collection? Those types of things. Directors tell you what they think a museum should do and why. They discuss it with you, you being trustees. Then trustees say, “Well, yeah, great idea. We’re going to help you. We’re going to go forward.” That’s what we had to do. Jack’s not—

Rubens: You had Resnicow, who helped get a master plan?

02-00:60:49

Greene: David Resnicow was hired to help with the master plan.

Rubens: Did you like him?

02-00:60:54

Greene: I liked him a lot. Nice man. Easy to talk to.

Rubens: I would’ve liked to interview him, but there’s a conflict of interest, he can’t do it.

02-00:61:01

Greene: Easy to reach. Very easy to reach. You could call him, and he took the call or he called you back. Worked long hours. But David gives us help on the strategic plan. Which we worked on, the original strategic plan. But now we’re looking for a new director.

[Begin Audio File 3 07-25-2007.wav]

03-00:00:46

Greene: We learned. It was a bad experience. All of us are colored by bad experiences.

[The next paragraph is sealed by SFMOMA]

We were just talking about the director vision. I just wanted to add one comment, if I could. What you need, what a museum needs, and I think other organizations, is you need a person in charge, a director who has a vision and is excited enough about it that they can create, that person can create excitement among those people who are patrons of our museum. Or trustees, so that they *all* want to make sure that happens. We have some incredible trustees. You want somebody who can be excited about what they’re doing, and convey the excitement to others.

Rubens: You talked about Wattis last time.

03-00:02:14

Greene: Phyllis Wattis, of course, she not only had that, but she wrote the checks. She was a beacon. She was somebody who said, “Look, I want to make a difference. I’m going to make a difference. In art, I’m going to learn about art,

and I'm going to get this museum to have a great collection." So what we need now, now that Jack's not going to be there, we need to have a director who will create that type of excitement.

Rubens: This is clear. Resnicow has laid out a plan.

03-00:02:46

Greene:

Resnicow has. We have the strategic plan, and now we're going to search for people. You go to certain people. I think there's a lady, whose name I can not remember, at Hedrick and Struggles, who is the premiere person—or was the premiere person; I don't know if she's still working. She has a Rolodex of museum people. So you get these people and you start a process. The executive committee makes a decision, I think at Elaine's insistence, so that you can have something—we didn't use the term then, transparency. So you have a lot of people involved. The executive committee would be a search committee. A committee of the whole, as a search committee. So we begin a process, after serious candidates are identified, of narrowing those candidates and getting them to come out and be interviewed by the entire executive committee. I attended the interviews and those meetings. I learned a lot more about the museum and how museums operate from those meetings. I think I may have said this before. When people attend large meetings, whether they're a board or a committee of the whole, an executive committee, everybody sits in the same seat. If the meeting starts at noon, same seat then. The seat you're in then, you're going to sit there. Ninety-nine times out of a hundred, you'll sit in that same seat for every meeting that occurs after the initial meeting. I had the great pleasure of sitting next to Lori Fogarty, who was one of our senior people at the museum, was as close to the job of senior deputy director of the museum—

Rubens: Moved from development, you must've known her then.

03-00:04:38

Greene:

She moved from development. She's an incredible person. Now the director of the Oakland Museum. A great friend of everybody's. I sat next to Lori for these meetings. We sat in the same seats for every meeting. I would hear Lori's perspective, staff perspective, on director candidates. It was different from trustee perspective. I learned what it was that was important to the staff. So going through the interviews, it was very interesting, because in the interviews, the two interviews that I attended—and they were very long, two very, very nice, qualified people, I thought. Again, I don't have that much experience at this point. I thought very qualified, and very interesting people. I would hear what she had to say, and then I'd hear the comments around the room. Neither of those two were selected. Then the process became a bit unwieldy because—Think about it. You have an executive committee of the whole. So you want everybody to participate. So how are you going to schedule thirteen, fourteen people to always be available when somebody can come in to be interviewed. So from a scheduling standpoint, it becomes a

problem. Also, there were other problems in that process, and it wasn't working properly. So my understanding is that Elaine and some of the other—Brooks and some of the other trustees decided to narrow the committee and narrow the search. The next thing I know, we are in a process where we're going to have a new director. His name is David Ross. I had heard that he was the director of the Whitney [Museum of American Art]. I had heard that he had done a very fine job there. I had heard he was controversial. I never really asked, why is he controversial? But he was controversial. I finally met him. At the time—

Rubens: But you're saying he's hired before—

03-00:07:07

Greene: He was hired and approved by the executive committee, and hired.

Rubens: By the whole executive committee.

03-00:07:11

Greene: The whole executive committee approved David's appointment. A smaller group had said, "David Ross is available." David Resnicow, who is a close friend of David Ross's disclosed that, by the way. But pushed very hard. You know, "If you can get David Ross, you're going to get someone who can take this museum to the next level. You're getting a dynamic, creative, brilliant leader, with a vision, hard worker. He would be a *real*, real coup for the museum." So David becomes the candidate, the only candidate, and David is hired.

Rubens: Are you impressed when he makes his presentation?

03-00:08:05

Greene: When I met David, I was *not* very impressed with him. I was impressed with his knowledge. Hard not to be. But I was not overly impressed with him, because I saw a guy who knows the right people he should be addressing, and he was doing it. That's something that sometimes a guy like me might have a problem with that. But so be it. But I was impressed with his knowledge. I was impressed with his ability to answer questions. I was impressed—You looked at David, and you listened to him, and you felt he knew absolutely everything about the subject.

Rubens: When you say, "a guy like me might not be impressed," is that because he's kissing up? I can't think of another way to say—ingratiating himself?

03-00:09:04

Greene: No, no, no. My comment there is that I'm not going to be one of the persons to whom he's going to be addressing his comments. I'm not part of an in-group or whatever, that has real great power. I'm one of the "people" there. I'm one of the peons, one of the workers. But you know, you asked my initial impression. That was my initial impression of David. My impression changed

over time and changed very favorably over time. Then I was asked by Elaine and Brooks to become president, and the board elected me president [1999], just as David was about to start his term as director of our museum.

I can sum up David's term in our museum as follows. David was the right person in the right place at the right time for SFMOMA. No one was better at doing what he did than David Ross at that time. David was able to get excitement going, get patrons building collections, get patrons wanting to have the museum build its collection, get patrons to buy art for the museum, or for their collections and the museum. He was able to generate a level of excitement, during a period of time when there was a lot of money around because of what was happening in the equities market. There was a lot of money around, and he was able to get people to want to open up their checkbooks, their money, and do great things for our museum, to build its collection and get its collection to the next level. So I can't be an expert in this area, because I don't know all directors. But I can't conceive of anybody being a better person at that time to do that.

Rubens: Were meetings generally—?

03-00:11:06

Greene: Lively.

Rubens: Harmonious?

03-00:11:09

Greene: Here's a man who is excited about what he's doing, he knows what he's talking about.

Rubens: Is he taking people on trips, as Lane and—

03-00:11:19

Greene: Well, he went on a Directors Circle trip. My wife and I have never gone on that one. He's gone on that one. He would be with various trustees.

Rubens: You did say one thing that I saw in my notes. You said, "He could also get people on the phone." Something about his ability to get people on the phone.

03-00:11:36

Greene: Well, David Ross was known. Everybody knows David. David was a very important figure in New York, and he comes out here. So he could pick up the phone and call someone to find out about a piece of art being available. On the other hand, because of David's reputation, and because we're in San Francisco, and we have the stock market boom, and our patrons are willing to put money up, David would get calls of all the great pieces of art that were being offered. My wife says I'm overstating it; I don't think so. I don't *know*, but I don't think so. Every piece of art, major piece of art, in the world, David would get a call. David would think about, how would that fit with

SFMOMA? If it would fit, how do I get somebody on our board interested, or many people on our board interested? David was able to do that.

We did all those huge acquisitions of art. Well over, I think it was, \$150 million of art, during a period of time when \$150 million worth of art was worth a lot. That was a lot of art. A lot of great art. There was art we didn't buy that was offered to David. David could talk to people, call people, find out about art. One of the acquisitions—I think it was the Fukuoka Bank acquisition—one of the pieces, David read about it, and I think David and a couple of others—I didn't make this trip, but David and a couple of others flew to Fukuoka, Japan, went to the bank, looked at the pieces. David saw a piece, and he was concerned. He saw the provenance, but he was concerned about it. He wasn't certain this piece was really what it was represented. He came back to San Francisco, expressed a concern about it, had some people in the museum working on it. Then he started working on it. He made some phone calls. He called people very well known in the art world and asked about the piece. Then he recommended we not buy it.

Rubens: That you not buy it.

03-00:13:52

Greene:

Not buy it. Because he couldn't get comfortable. So he could do that. Everybody knew David. David was brilliant. He was, for me, a very, very interesting person. A challenging person, because he had a great depth of knowledge, in an area that my depth of knowledge was growing. I finally asked David, "Could I come over one time? Let's have lunch and just spend some time talking." He said fine. He said, "How about this? Why don't you get over about a quarter to twelve? I'll walk you through the Richter works that are up, and then we'll go have lunch." I said, "Boy, this'll be interesting." So I go home and I'm really excited. I tell my wife, and Lori said, "David Ross. I mean, this guy knows all this stuff. This might be a little bit of a challenge for you. He knows Richter works and what they're about and all this stuff." That's something I don't know, and I've never known. So I meet with David and we walk through the galleries.

Rubens: Is she concerned you're going to feel insecure or—?

03-00:15:07

Greene:

No, no, it just would be something that she'd say, "I'm not sure you're going to really enjoy this."

Rubens: Oh, I see.

03-00:15:13

Greene:

So I noticed two things that were quite impressive. I met him in his office, we went out. He would say hello to the guards, by name. He knew the people in the museum. It's his museum. That's impressive. That's the way it's supposed

to be done. He took me through that show and explained everything on a level that I could—

Rubens: That was that huge Richter show?

03-00:15:38

Greene: Yes. That I could understand.

Rubens: Oh, I would love that.

03-00:15:40

Greene: What one piece was, and this monochromatic piece, and why that was the in-between stages for Richter, and what he was doing. It was like cleaning his palette, he was cleaning his mind. Did these pieces and then onto this. It was fantastic. It was one of the best meetings I had had. Then we had a delightful lunch.

Rubens: He was not pushing you to buy?

03-00:16:07

Greene: I'm not someone who could. But he was explaining to me. I was president of the board. He was explaining it to me. He was explaining it to me so I could understand it. That just completely, to my view, changed the relationship that I had with him. I saw several things. I saw that here was a guy who really cared. He had a wonderful rapport with the people in the museum. He had the respect of the people in the museum, he had the respect of the trustees. I also learned he didn't know everything about everything. Not at all! But he sure could talk like he did. He could be right or wrong, but he could talk. It was a fascinating thing. I remember after that, speaking a bit with Elaine about this, and how I thought that was a great thing and I was glad David did it, and I learned a lot, and I really learned a lot about David, and ideas and everything else. Elaine said, "Yes, Dick, but that's a minus." Because David has a lot of ideas. He has ideas, he takes them to his staff. He has his staff working on the ideas, and he's on to the next thing. The staff's trying to figure out how to do the ideas, and he's doing something else. We're running a museum, and guess what's happening? The economy is starting to go a little bit south and the stock market's going a little bit south, and the economics are starting to change. 9/11 happens. We're in a situation where David is no longer the right person in the right place at the right time. Some staff leaving. We're not able to do everything.

Rubens: But he's still buying.

03-00:18:05

Greene: Well, he's still got a million ideas. So we have meetings. We have a very small meeting at Elaine's house. David is there, and we're talking through, trying to figure out how to make David more effective as a manager of a

museum, because that's a role. Building a collection, vision, is a role, but management is also a role. How do we make David more effective?

We talk with David. Most people like a David Ross would listen because of the people at the meeting. They're where they are because they have absolute self-confidence. They *know* what they're doing is right. So out of this meeting, we had a hokey idea. It started in a discussion—I was part of the discussion—where I explained my conversation with Joel Ehrenkrantz at the Whitney, and what he did and how he met once a week with the director and whatever about this. We're talking about David and getting David to understand, "Look, David, you cannot come into the office on Monday and have ten ideas and call ten staff people in and have all ten of them working on the idea; then on Tuesday have five more, and Wednesday. It just doesn't work. I mean, we've got a museum to run. It's not an effective management tool." I suggested, "David, what about this? Why don't we meet every morning, once a week, my office?" He said, "I'll bring the fruit." I said, "What's your favorite cereal?" I think it was Smart Bran. I said, "I'll supply the cereal, and we'll have a meeting."

Rubens: Was this a working group, or was this the executive—

03-00:19:57

Greene:

Two of us. The idea of the meeting was: Don't take the ten ideas to your senior staff. Bring them to Dick, and I'll talk with you about it. We'll go through them. We started that, and every Wednesday morning that both of us were in the Bay Area, David came over and we had these incredible meetings. I, of course, learned a great deal more about art, but I also learned a great deal about the management issue.

Rubens: But you knew something about management.

03-00:20:27

Greene:

Well, I knew, but I learned about the issue with David running it. Some of these ideas, some, I would say, "David, let me see what I can do."

Interestingly enough, the David Ireland house was a David Ross idea. But he mentioned it to me at the meeting, and then I took it to the next level—something we never completed. But that came out of the meeting. That was one idea.

There were others I said, "Don't do them," and we didn't do them. There were some others we did do. We always discussed, continued to discuss, the art purchases. In fact, went on, did one that we never did, although I had negotiated the deal to buy this particular group of art. Then the patron, for excellent reasons, decided not to do it. But we had these wonderful discussions, we developed a very, I think, good not only professional relationship, but a friendship. David's a friend of mine. He was a friend of mine then, he's a friend of mine now. Continues to be a friend of mine. We

worked on things. It was a learning experience for me. I think to a limited extent, David learned from it, also. One of the great things I got out of it was the BlackBerry. David showed me the BlackBerry, told me how he got his free BlackBerry, and I got my free BlackBerry. That's my computer. So I always thank David for that. But as things progressed, economics, we have some economic issues now facing the museum. We're losing staff. We are no longer flush with money. We're facing deficits. The deficits are going to come every year. We're worrying about how to fund those. David has still got all these ideas. His forte is not the management. At Whitney—

Rubens: Had Lori Fogarty been there, she might have picked up the gap?

03-00:22:33

Greene:

Well, somebody can only do so much. At Whitney, he had Willard Holmes and Willard did it. Here, we don't have a Willard Holmes, and things were starting to become really more and more serious. David and I are having our meetings. He knows this, but every meeting, he's got several ideas. For me, the catalyst of my thinking, he came in and he had an idea on media and parlaying what we're doing at SFMOMA. We were on the forefront of what we were doing on our website and everything else.

Rubens: Podcasting and—

03-00:23:08

Greene:

It was before podcasting. Putting something together. He'd had this idea, and there would be this acquisition, and there was this other entity. He had the financial statements, he had information that David Resnicow had given him. I said, "Let me look at them." So we're there and I'm looking at this stuff. Again, this is in an area I don't know. Media art's not my area. I'm looking at this. But I can read financial statements, and this thing is going to require an incredible amount of cash. So I look at it, I point this out to David, and he says, "Well, we'll get it from this source and we'll get it from that source, and we'll do this and—" I say, "David, we can't count on that. We can't do it."

I think what happened was, the meeting's still going on, and he changes. We go to something else. We come back to this. I said, "David, I want to just tell you—This is what I'm telling you. Let's not pursue it. It doesn't work. I've given you my reasons. You want me to talk with the people, have them call me, or give me their numbers and I'll call them." He said, "Well, I'm going to have so-and-so call you." I said, "That's fine." I never hear from so-and-so, and then we have our next meeting. It was two weeks later. I said during this, "You know, I never heard from him." "Oh, don't worry, he's going to do it." I said, "What ever happened on this? I mean, we can't do it." He said, "Oh, it's being tabled."

I learned that what he had done is he began pursuing it. He had gone directly to one of our trustees, one of our patrons and trustees, to try to get this thing

funded and try to sell him on it. I learned it because the guy called me and said, “Dick, I understand you’re behind this.” I said, “No. Stop. You’re going to put up this kind of money?” That troubled me. Now, he has a perfect right to do that. I’m not criticizing him for it. I’m saying it’s troubling me, and it’s sort of a catalyst in my thinking.

I’m now, along with others, saying, “Hey, we’ve got a real management problem.” In the end, that’s what happened. We talked with David and we explained to David the issue, that this is not his forte and that we think it’s going to be a very serious problem for him to be able to maintain the museum. We can’t continue to run at deficits. The trustees don’t give him a blank check, won’t give anybody a blank check. This is a situation that doesn’t look like it can work. We discussed with him, and David said, “Given all these comments, I can’t continue.” That’s an amalgamation of a lot.

Rubens: Was that a meeting of the whole board at that point? Or the executive?

03-00:26:11

Greene: On the executive committee.

Rubens: Because I didn’t hear from him. I actually don’t even know who I heard it from, but he said, “Then I shouldn’t continue.” It was right there.

03-00:26:18

Greene: That’s correct. He can’t. Because through these discussions, David—David’s a brilliant guy! He’s not a manager. He understands that. So we know we have to come to a parting of the ways. We do. What we try to do—

Rubens: I don’t think he tried to get as much money as he could. He could’ve called somebody or—

03-00:26:53

Greene: Well, we had a contract, and we honored the contract. We tried to be as fair as possible with David.

Rubens: Well, but he had a couple years to go, I think.

03-00:27:02

Greene: We were fair. We made our arrangements with David, and David left. Now we have an absolute nightmare on our hands because we have a museum that is losing money, we have trustees who are saying, “Stop the bleeding. We’re not going to continue to fund this. We’re starting to erode those assets we can use.” We need to get special permission from a couple of major donors to invade the money that they had put in. Under the endowment law in California, if you have an endowment, you can’t spend the principal unless the donor gives permission. Fortunately, two or three, I think maybe three donors were alive and competent and they gave permission. But we’ve got a serious problem on our hands. We have no leader. Now we have to try to find a

leader, which means a search process. We have to find a leader, we've got to go down that path.

Rubens: Had David brought new people on to the board?

03-00:28:28

Greene: I don't think there was a significant change in board composition. That wouldn't have been something David did, because David was spending time with very important trustees. He's also in the community. But there's only twenty-fours in a day. He didn't sleep very long.

So we had this situation. We have a museum that is losing money, and we've got to do something about it. Elaine, of course, is chair. She steps up immediately to be the take-charge person and to help. She asked for Brooks to help. Of course, Brooks would help with his financial acumen. She asked me. I'm the lowest of these three. But the three of us are basically making the decisions on running SFMOMA. We're making decisions on spending, which means we're making decisions on personnel, on how many personnel we have to cut. We're making decisions on how many shows we can have.

Rubens: Must have been some in the pipeline coming.

03-00:29:39

Greene: We have stuff already set, but we have to take a look. Can we handle them? When you think about it, that was a little scary.

Rubens: Boy, and how do you have the time to do this?

03-00:30:06

Greene: Well, you take the time. This is when I called Joel Ehrenkrantz and said, "What do you mean, one hour, two hours extra a week? How about a day?" I was spending a tremendous amount of time.

Rubens: I bet you were.

03-00:30:20

Greene: I talked to Elaine every day, more than once a day. Talked with Brooks.

Rubens: She's not working; Brooks is retired.

03-00:30:26

Greene: Brooks stepped up and spent as much time as required. But we're making these decisions. That's scary. You cannot have trustees making decisions that impact, and could impact the future of a museum. We don't have the background to do it. We don't have the vision.

Remember, we're looking at trying to cut our expenses. We look at the big items. Of course, the biggest item is personnel. Exhibitions, but we're not going to deal with that. But personnel. You cut it. You can either do a few

people at a time, or you can just take and do a lot. We talked about it, we exchanged our thoughts, and we all felt the same way. So we made a large personnel cut.

Rubens: Now, you don't have a Fogarty from the staff, who you trust, who's advising you. Is there anyone from the staff that you're talking to?

03-00:31:30

Greene: Ruth Berson is there, and Ruth is helping us. Sanchie Fernandez is helping us. Sanchie is our HR person. We're getting input from senior people there. We made the decision that we have to do the large cut. We're also in the process of interviewing potential new directors and soliciting a few ideas from them. All of them, just taking a quick look at it, say, "You have to do this." But no person would take that job unless that was done first. They didn't want to inherit that problem. So we decide we have to do this, and we decide we have to be as humanitarian as possible. So Sanchie Fernandez did a fabulous job in talking with people. Then we made a joint decision—I think that certainly is the way you have to handle this. There's no good way to terminate any relationship, whether it's an employment relationship or a personal relationship. There's no good way. There are ways to do it, but there is no good way. It's always going to hurt. We decided that we would have the three of us at a meeting of the entire museum staff and explain what we did. If people who were terminated, had been terminated that day, wanted to attend, they were welcome to attend. So Elaine, Brooks, and I, in the Wattis Auditorium, had this meeting. Elaine was the primary speaker; Brooks and I also talked.

We stood there and we said, "Look, we're not happy. We're sorry. This is the only way, we believe, the museum can continue and survive." We said, "We will take questions." We had a slight disagreement on whether we should do that, but the consensus was we would take questions, and we did. The first comment—the first comment—it was not a question, it was a statement, from a guy who'd just been terminated. He said how much he appreciated what we were doing. He understood. It's a great institution, and he knows it'll continue, and he was just fortunate and happy, happy and fortunate, that he was able to work at the museum. It set a great tone. I was very pleased, the three of us were. But now we know even more we've got to have a new director. At this time, we didn't have a committee of the whole, we had a smaller committee as our search committee. I was one of the people on that committee. We had the Hedrick and Struggles lady advising us.

Rubens: Are they in New York?

03-00:34:20

Greene: She was in New York, and she flew out. She had a list of, let's say, fifteen people she went through with the search committee. We saw their resumes, she culled it down to a few people, and then we decided to have people in for

an interview. We had a small group do the interviewing. Again, I can't remember her name and that's really too bad because she gave a brilliant piece of advice. She said, "Once the interview process is done, most likely you will have made a decision on who you want to hire. I suggest you take the top three and you go visit them in their museums and see how they operate there, see how their museums look. Just walk around." Initially, we thought about that and you have enough confidence to say, "Look, I can interview people. We can all interview people. We can make a decision." But it made some sense, so we decided we would do it.

Rubens: Is Fisher a part of all this, by the way?

03-00:35:40

Greene: Who?

Rubens: Don Fisher.

03-00:35:42

Greene: Don was always consulted, but Don wasn't going to do—He'd met some of the people. I think he was in the interviews with the people. But Don is not going to spend the time on that one. So we finally thought, well, maybe there's some merit to this. So we had three people, and we had one person—there was more than a consensus on one person. We decided we follow this advice. So we tried to work it out where people could do it. If you don't mind yet another one of my personal stories, I'm trying to continue my premiere executive status on United Airlines. I look at one of the candidates, and that candidate's in the Midwest. If I run a trip through Chicago, and I do the miles, I end up with a little bit more than 50,000 total miles, and I'm going to become a premiere exec. So I called Elaine and I said, "I'll tell you what, Elaine. Though I really don't have a lot of time, I'm happy if you go with me, let's go to Chicago on this day, and we will then fly to this other city and do this interview, because I think it's important. Then we'll fly back. It's a rather rigorous schedule, but I know how energetic you are." She said, "Okay, fine, Dick. I'm in on that." So I'm starting to schedule this, and I get an email from Helen Schwab. The email is, "My plane has wheels up at ten minutes to eight on such-and-such a day. We'll go to this town, we will have this meeting, we will return and be back on the ground at seven-thirty that evening. Anybody on the search committee is invited to go." Well, first of all, there goes my premiere executive status.

Rubens: Well, it was a free ride.

03-00:37:56

Greene: I hate small airplanes. I hate small planes. Now, somebody might say, "You're being less than honest, Dick. You're afraid to fly in a small airplane." So I said, "You take it any way you want to." But I don't have any choice now. I said, "I'll be there." So I go to SFO, to where the private airport is, and I park my car and I'm looking around for a small airplane. I see a rather large jet

sitting over there. It turns out it's not a small plane. It's the Falcon 900. On that flight, Elaine McKeon, Helen Schwab, Mimi Haas, and I went back there. It was an eye-opening trip. The advice we got was absolutely correct. We saw a completely different person and a completely different situation. It made it very easy for us to move on and take a look and say, "Well, maybe these candidates who we thought were finalists, maybe we should be expanding our horizons." That was very fortunate, because that led us to the executive committee interviewing, at Elaine's house, a man by the name of Neal Benezra. We hired Neal.

[The next paragraph is sealed by SFMOMA]

03-00:39:28

Greene: He was known. He had worked for the Andersons. His education was here. He had been at the Hirshhorn. He'd been at the Chicago Art Institute, where he received rave reviews.

Rubens: San Diego, is that where he was when—

03-00:39:45

Greene: No, he was at Chicago Art Institute.

Rubens: When he came here? Did you go to Chicago?

03-00:39:53

Greene: Well, I'll tell you about that. So this time, nobody had to go to the Chicago Art Institute because everybody'd been to the Chicago Art Institute. We knew what that looked like. The executive committee made the decision, and we hired him. Again, had the Hedrick and Struggles person not given us that advice, I'm not sure whether we would have done that. I thought it was a great idea. So we hire him. He was excited. He's coming back home. All of us were very excited. My wife and I, we have three daughters. One of our daughters was doing a program in Chicago, and we decided to go to Chicago. I said, "Well, I don't have anything to lose by it." So I called Neal and I said, "Neal, Lori and I will be in Chicago. We'd love to take you and Maria to dinner, and maybe we can come by the Art Institute for an hour." He said, "Terrific." What's he going to say? He can't say no. I learn afterwards that he was being inundated with visitors.

Rubens: From?

03-00:41:02

Greene: From San Francisco. It really was a little much. But I'd already done it, so we went, we had a delightful dinner.

Rubens: You got your miles?

03-00:41:11

Greene:

I got my miles. This is a different year, see? I got premiere executive that year. To end the story, by the way, I'm a lifetime premiere executive guy; flew a million miles on United. But my wife's 1-K, which is more important. That's for another day. So we go back and we have a really nice dinner with Neal and Maria. I was, again, impressed with not only his knowledge but his warmth. He's completely different from David. Neal's not a salesman. Not a salesperson. I'm not saying that in a bad way about David, really. No, I'm not. Neal knows art, he was a curator. A manager. He understands. He got the message—balance the budget.

So the next day, Lori and I go to the Chicago Art Institute, and Neal very nicely met us and took us around. We had a lunch in the cafeteria. Here's somebody showing us around his museum. Again, now, Neal can talk to someone in Neal's language, because Lori and Neal can converse about art and artists and periods of time and everything else. But I was fascinated by it. We go to lunch, and we didn't want to take a lot of his time, but it was fun. You could see that he's glancing at his watch. He says, "Look, I'm sorry, but I have my first order of business as the new director of SFMOMA. I've got a conference call with Ruth Berson. We're going to talk about the possibility of doing a show at SFMOMA. I don't know if you've heard about this." I said no. He says, "Well, through a strange set of circumstances, we have the ability to do a Chagall show at SFMOMA." So what do I know? When Lori and I took one of our first trips after we were married, we were in New Orleans. We almost bought these signed lithos, the Chagall Bible. I had seen a Chagall that I liked in Paris, three years later. As far as I'm concerned, Chagall's one of the greatest artists of all time because I knew his name, I knew his work.

So I say to Neal, "That's fabulous. That's great, we've got to do it." Neal says, "You know, he's not a contemporary artist, he's modern. I don't know whether to do it." Lori was more encouraging. She says, "I understand what you're saying." I'm saying to Neal, "You really have to do this. If I've heard of this guy, he's got to be great." Very fortunately, we did the Chagall show.

That was really my first introduction to Neal. Now I've had the great pleasure of working with Neal. He has a vision, he's announced his vision. We're now looking at modifications to that vision for the next several years. We have had balanced budgets every year, the past four years. That's an incredible achievement. Absolutely incredible. He has spent a lot of time and a lot of his personal capital to make certain that's done. We've had some great exhibitions at the museum. I believe Neal has the respect of all the trustees, which is so very important. Completely different way of management from David.

Rubens:

McKeon was—

03-00:44:57

Greene: Elaine was still chair.

Rubens: But became confident enough that she was then willing to step down?

03-00:45:02

Greene: Absolutely.

Rubens: Is that why she stepped down?

03-00:45:05

Greene: Well, I'll get to that.

Rubens: Oh, I'm sorry.

03-00:45:07

Greene: So we're all very happy. Neal's onboard, and the museum is starting to move along. He's really spending a lot of time working on balancing the budget and keeping everybody happy. That has to involve Elaine. Elaine's chair. Elaine is 24/7, twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. That's all she does. She loves it. So you wonder what happens. I kidded with her that what happens is—Two things have happened. One, she can never retire. Two, she can't die. Because nobody can replace her. You cannot duplicate what she did. You can't replicate it. Nobody can. Nobody's going to have enough time. But she wasn't really sharing a lot of it with me, but she began sharing with me that at some point, two things also happen. One, you have to get younger leadership on the board and running the board. Two, she has to step down. She has a family, she has grandchildren. She has other interests. She began talking about that. Finally, she says, "Look, I'm going to retire at the end of a year." People prevailed upon her to stay for another year. An effort was made to find somebody to take her place that first time. A "sort of" effort. My definition of that is, I think some people said, "You know anybody around who can replace Elaine?" "No, I don't think so." "Yeah, you're right." So we prevail upon Elaine to stay another year. She did, but she said, "This is it. Personally, that's it. I don't want to do it anymore. I've done everything I can—"

Rubens: She did get her daughter on the board.

03-00:47:04

Greene: Eileen's on the board. I joke with Eileen, who I've known for years. I knew Eileen before I knew Elaine. In fact, I still believe this is true, that I'd never met Elaine McKeon, that when she called and said, "Dick, this is Elaine McKeon. It's nice to talk with you again," I don't believe we'd ever talked before. But Eileen and I had worked together.

Rubens: Eileen's an attorney.

03-00:47:23

Greene:

At another law firm. She was at the Bronson firm. A different firm. She's a litigator.

Elaine now says, "I'm serious." Now she leads the effort, along with others, to find somebody to take her place as chair. Talked to some people. Really, the only one willing to consider it was Steve Oliver. Because following Elaine—You know the old story about following in somebody else's footsteps. I mean, how do you do that? My coaching analogy is when Johnny Wooden retired at UCLA, after winning his last national championship, but won eleven, twelve national championships. How do you follow him? How can the next coach ever approach him? The answer is, he can't. He didn't. He was very unhappy. We have to make some changes. Steve was prepared to make some changes. He became chair [2004], he asked me to stay as president. He basically said, "Dick, I want to make some changes. My idea is, from a governance standpoint, the way to do this is to have candidates who are in a top leadership role to be the next chair. I think we should vice-chairs. You have said, and it's obvious, you're not a candidate to be the chair of the board. You don't have the time." I say, "Let's stop with that, because that's flattery that says I might have the other attributes. I'm not going to be chair." So he said, "So we're going to need somebody. I've got an idea to have vice-chairs. But really they supplant the role of president. But you have a different function, as president. So as long as you want to do it, you can do it. We'll go forward with the vice-chair idea." We did. It hasn't worked yet, but it will work. I think Chuck Schwab, our new chair, is going to follow through with vice-chairs. We're going to get as vice-chairs, hopefully, people who do want—

Rubens:

So Oliver did step down?

03-00:49:39

Greene:

Chuck Schwab is the new chair of the board, effective July 1 [2007]. Steve said the following. "I'll do it for three years, but I will not stay a day longer than three years. So you're on notice to find my successor. I will help you with my vice-chair idea." It didn't work. Steve's way of being chair was, of course, completely different from Elaine's. Steve and I talked on occasion. I did what I do as president. We would talk on some things; on, let's say, significant policy issues, he and I would talk. But I basically did the things I was always doing, which were more of an operating nature and blend my law background along with operating issues for the museum. New major projects, I would be involved. Steve would do his thing. But Steve couldn't devote 24/7. It works for Elaine. He can't do that.

Rubens:

Well, he's also got this other passion.

03-00:50:53

Greene:

He has a little passion up there with the ranch, which is fantastic, as I understand it. My wife's been there several times. I have not done it, I've been

invited, and I said to Lori, “The next invitation I get, we go, but don’t cause the invitation.” Because Saturday’s are tennis and whatever.

In any event, Steve got us now to the point where the next chair, Chuck Schwab, is not stepping into the shoes of Elaine McKeon. Now we have a person who is known throughout the world. Known for what he has done, but also known as a patron of the arts. His prestige in the area now lends to the prestige of SFMOMA. Chuck will have his own agenda that he wants to accomplish, because he too has said, “I will do it for three years.” He is busy getting input. We’ve had one set of meetings; there’s another one tomorrow; there are some smaller meetings. Chuck is busy putting together what it is he would like to do as chair of the museum during the next three years. We have a lot of ideas on the table, and there will be a lot of excitement at SFMOMA. We have the sculpture garden, which we’ve now got funded, and that’s going to be very exciting. We’re looking at a bunch of other things. We just acquired—Pardon me. We have agreed to acquire the Heald building, I think on Howard Street, but it’s actually on, I think, Turner Alley. It hasn’t closed yet. It was supposed to close August 1. I just saw an email that now the closing is August 10. We’ll acquire that building. We no longer own the garage. We have some things we’re thinking about doing. So from a real estate standpoint, we have a lot of excitement there. The Fisher proposal doesn’t mean there aren’t others who might make a proposal. It doesn’t mean we can’t do something with Don to build the new wing. So we have a real estate committee that Chuck appointed, the first committee he has appointed, that will be considering ideas on the real estate for the museum. That should be a very interesting and exciting committee. I’m very pleased to have been asked to be on that committee.

Rubens: Is Gerson Bakar on it?

03-00:53:31

Greene: Of course, Gerson is on it. Art Gensler chairs it. Dennis Wong, I believe, is on it. It goes without saying, if you’re going to do anything involving real estate anywhere—particularly in San Francisco—anywhere, get Gerson Bakar. Get Gerson to be on that committee, and to give his ideas.

Rubens: So you’re feeling very positive.

03-00:54:02

Greene: This is a very positive development. Dennis Wong brings another dimension. Dennis is younger. He’s a real estate entrepreneur. He works very well with Gers. He’s a doer. Dennis is a doer. He headed up the trustee side of buying the Heald building. He did a magnificent job. He’s an executive, he’s decisive. Just like Chuck. Preston Butcher is on that committee. He has a company called Legacy Partners. He’s a real estate entrepreneur. There are others on it. I don’t mean to insult anybody. I saw this when I was in London, and I immediately accepted, and then I don’t know what I did with the email. But I

know when the next meeting is, which is right after our board meeting on September 6. So I think we're going to have a lot of excitement there.

I think Chuck will have some other ideas that will be very exciting for the board. Chuck brings the dimension to our board of being a corporate executive who has conceived of, built, sold, bought back, let somebody else run, is now back running one of the most successful companies around. So he's going to bring that dimension to the running of our museum. It will be very interesting to see how that works, because there are a lot of things that are done by an executive—particularly a decisiveness—from a museum standpoint, you may need to do some more. More talking and discussion. So it'll be interesting to see how Chuck melds it. He said he wants to do it. He and Helen have an outstanding collection. The only drawback of all this has been—although I think it's more perception than otherwise—Helen felt very strongly that she could not continue to be a member of the board if her husband was the chair. She honestly believes there should not be a husband/wife on the board. So we've lost Helen as a director. However, both Helen and Chuck have assured us that they do talk to each other. They spend time talking about art. So I think we're entering a very exciting time now.

With our 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary coming up, I look for us to both build our collection; have our sculpture garden open, which is going to lead to increases in our collection; make some exciting things happen from a real estate standpoint. My great view, and people know it—Chuck and I haven't really had a long talk about this—I believe collaborative efforts with other museums, not only throughout the world, but here—witness the Sack Photographic Trust—I really think those are what is happening in the future. I think there're a lot of opportunities there. I'm very hopeful that our staff, and our trustees, and Chuck, and our executive committee are open to those types of ideas. When I say staff, obviously, senior staff, of course, I mean Neal and Ruth and Jill [Sterrett] and Tina [Garfinkel] and the curators. We need them to buy into this concept.

Rubens: Just explain very quickly the Sack agreement between—

03-00:58:08

Greene:

Paul Sack had made a gift of a thousand photographs to what's called a supporting organization—that is, an organization controlled by SFMOMA—to the Sack Photographic Trust, which is a trust, not a corporation. He and his wife Prentice, who's no longer alive, continued to collect photographs. They had assembled another eleven- or twelve hundred photographs. The first thousand are outstanding, and the next eleven or twelve hundred are also outstanding. Paul wanted his photographs seen. So he conceived of the idea of taking the new eleven hundred photographs he had collected and transferring them to the Sack Photographic Trust and making it a supporting organization to both SFMOMA and the Fine Arts Museums. We had problems with that. Not because we were losing something, but you need

one person in charge. That had to be our museum because we're the one who has the photography curators, we have the conservation department. So we went to Paul and said, "Let us work out an access agreement, where Fine Arts will have access to the entire collection. They can use, I think, up to 250 photographs a year, if they want them. We'll keep control of it." I said to Paul, "But Paul, don't just put '1,100' in it. Why don't you agree to put in it every photograph you acquire, until you no longer acquire." Paul said fine. So with Paul's help, with incredible input from Corey Keller, our photography curator, Ruth Berson, and with the absolute support of Sandra Phillips, our senior photography curator, Neal's blessing, we were able to craft an agreement that does this. The photographs are still stored with Paul because he has a state-of-the-art storage facility. When something happens to him, we'll move it. But the photographs are at SFMOMA and are at Fine Arts. I commend Fine Arts for accepting this. We're told there is no similar agreement among museums in the same locality anywhere in the United States. So it was great to do it. It was not easy; it took almost a year to do it.

By the way, my initial education on that was David Ross. That was a David thought. We discussed it. I really embraced it and have tried to take it to another level.

Rubens: When David left, when that meeting, and he had to go, you kept seeing him?

03-00:61:37  
Greene:

I went to New York over Labor Day weekend, as I try to do every year because they play a tennis tournament called the U. S. Open. I had tickets in an outdoor box. My wife didn't want to go. I knew David loved crowds, loved being seen. I called David Ross, I said, "David, how would you like to go to the U. S. Open with me?" Told him the day. He thought about it, he said fine. So we went out on the subway. It was funny because he lives in New York and he got us on the wrong subway, which is another story. But we made it out. We got there. He saw people walking in. He saw a lot of people that he knew. They were kind of surprised to see David there. We go and sit down, we had seats. He was enjoying it. We're there. The box held eight people. David and I were in the first row of the box, along with two other people who were very close friends to the person who gave me the tickets to the box. He said, "Make a special point to talk to them." I did. David and I did. Nice people. Nice people. We're were sitting there. There are eight people in the box; we're sitting there. I never turned around. I never looked who was sitting behind me. My friend came down. Said, "I hope you enjoy it." I introduce him, and his friends, and we're talking, and he said, "Spent any time talking to Judy Siebel?" Ken Siebel's on our board; Judy's sitting behind us with her daughter, who is about to start her freshman year at Princeton and had been on the tennis team. My friend knew her. There were two other people, who I didn't know. I said, "I haven't even turned around. Judy, do you know David Ross?" "Oh, yes, I know David." Talked for a minute. Talked with Judy's daughter. Not the daughter who is dating the mayor—assuming they're still

dating; I don't know. So my friend leaves. David has to go to the men's room. He gets up and leaves. Judy looks at me and she says, "Dick," she says, "I can not believe this. That is the most *amazing* coincidence in the world! How in the world could it ever happen that you are in the same box as David Ross, she laughs, at the U. S. Open?" I said, "I invited him as my guest." She said, "I didn't know you were friends, after what happened." We've talked periodically, and I've tried to help David. I did help him on a personal matter, by the way. I got him an incredible result on a personal matter. He's a brilliant man. He's in the right place now.

[End of Interview]

**Lisa Rubens** is an historian with the Regional Oral History Office. She directs projects on California Culture and the Arts, Architecture and Land Use development, University History and the History of Social Movements.

Dr. Rubens earned her Ph.D in History, as well as a Masters in City Planning, at UC Berkeley. She has published monographs on women in California and on international exhibitions and is currently completing a book on San Francisco's 1939 Worlds Fair. Dr. Rubens created and directs ROHO's Advanced Oral History Summer Institute.