Oral history interview with Edward and Joy Schweizer, August 20, 2013

Schweizer, Edward and Joy
Arts patrons

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MARGARET: Okay, there we go. So I’m just going to put a timestamp on it. This is Margaret Winslow, Associate Curator for Contemporary Art interviewing Edward and Joy Schweizer, that’s S-c-h-w-e-i-z-e-r, on Tuesday, August 20, 2013, in their home in Newark, Delaware.

And now, we can just ignore that. I should say if you need to tell me anything in confidence just let me know and I can pause it.

JOY: Okay, I’ll just make a sign or something.

MARGARET: Just make a sign, yes. And otherwise, it’s a fairly informal conversation so we can just ignore it.

JOY: Okay good, ‘cause you’ll edit it anyway [laughing].

MARGARET: Oh, yes. I wanted to actually start by just getting a little kind of biographical background information on the two of you, when you moved to Newark. Tell me a bit about your interest in the arts.

JOY: Well, you got here first do you want to start?

EDWARD: I moved to Newark in 1961.
MARGARET: Okay, and what brought you to Newark?

EDWARD: I was teaching at the University of Delaware. I started there. I was an assistant professor. I retired in 1995.

MARGARET: What were you teaching?

EDWARD: Organic chemistry.

MARGARET: I didn’t know that, okay. 1995, organic chemistry.

JOY: It was Roland and Ruth and Bernie that got you into the arts.

EDWARD: Well, I was interested in the arts anyway.

JOY: Yeah, but I mean here.

EDWARD: I met Ruth Elzea at—

JOY: Her daughter went to the same school as you.

EDWARD: Yeah.

JOY: And then Roland and then Bernie Felch. He was living with them.

EDWARD: We were all living together sort of out in Landenberg.

JOY: I moved at the end of 1966, early 1967 and so I met these people through Edward. In fact, Ruth Elzea had introduced us, I think I told you, at the airport in Mexico so I had a connection. He had a connection; I had a connection with her. I wouldn’t have known Edward if it hadn’t been for Ruth. So it was just really fantastic. So we get here and then there’s this huge community of artists who are in Landenberg and West Chester and some of those other little towns. There was Bill Freeland, Peggy Openheimer; who was a poet, and a bunch of other people.

MARGARET: Did you know Margo Allman?

JOY: Oh, yeah. So we knew Margo Allman.

MARGARET: Joe Moss?

EDWARD: Yeah.

JOY: Joe Moss.

MARGARET: So these are artists who are living out in—and it is really a kind of community of them out in Landenberg, West Grove, that kind of area.
JOY: Yeah, well Moss lives actually in Newark.

MARGARET: But also then artists in Newark, some who are teaching at the university, some who aren’t necessarily part of the faculty.

JOY: Yeah, so it was a big art scene which I was just thrilled with because I came from being part of one in California. So here, this was built in for me all these fabulous people and lots and lots of shows, which doesn’t happen anymore. There aren’t many galleries. But it was a huge art scene and also at the university; huge art scene; shows that the faculty had, graduate students, undergraduates. I mean they hardly do anything anymore.

MARGARET: Right.

JOY: They’re not really interested, which is a drag.

EDWARD: Rosemary Lane Hooper.

JOY: Rosemary Lane Hooper. Rosemary Bernatti.

EDWARD: Yeah.

JOY: Steve Tanis and that guy who was the chairman. What’s his name?

EDWARD: Dan Teis.

JOY: No—well, Dan Teis and then the other guy. You know, the guy who was the chairman just—not Roy. I mean you can think. We have his piece upstairs; that little funny thing. You can think of the chairman can’t you? Maybe I can. Anyway, but we knew all these people. We went to all the shows and we started—because so much of this we bought at a faculty show or directly from those artists.

The first painting I bought, *The Collage*, was Ruth’s, which I bought in a—there was a farmhouse out in the country having a show. I’d just moved to Newark and I fell in love with that piece and said to Edward, “I’ve got to have it.” And a Bill Freeland I bought then too. So you had some art at home and I only bought one piece from California.

So, those were our first two and then we just started collecting from everybody.

EDWARD: And then we ran out of space [laughing].

JOY: If we ran out of space then we would give it away.

MARGARET: [Laughing] That happens sometimes and then you give it away so you make space for some new purchases.
JOY: We just visited our son, who lives in Princeton now, and in his living room he has two beautiful Roland pieces. Beautiful Roland pieces. So you know we go to visit them and there are some very special treasures there.

MARGARET: And then you can visit them in other people’s houses, which is perfect.

JOY: That’s right. It is really, really fun.

MARGARET: So, at that time—I’m interested in some of the exhibition venues. Obviously, galleries at the University of Delaware, you just mentioned a farmhouse show?

JOY: Well, it was—I’m not sure who it was. It might have been someone from part of Star Rose or something, somebody way out there and I don’t know the details. Somebody had a show in their farmhouse. They had taken all the pieces that they had off the wall and had all these local people; these West Chester, Kennett, Landenberg, all these people were there.

We were close friends with all these people, which is really—so we had dinner parties and—

MARGARET: So truly artists gathering together exhibiting their work sometimes in artists’ studios and these spaces, so areas outside of Newark as well.

JOY: Yeah, not too much happened in their studio though.

EDWARD: No.

JOY: Usually it was someplace else; a gallery. I’m trying to think. Marty and Bill Gruhl had a gallery in West Chester, which was a big thing and then Bill got a job here teaching English at the University of Delaware. But that was the first time that this local group of artists had a real gallery, and that was in West Chester, which Bill and Marty Gruhl ran and then they moved to Newark.

EDWARD: What about the potter?

JOY: Spinski?

EDWARD: No, not him. We’ve got the little thing in our bathroom.

JOY: Oh, Mitch Lyons.

EDWARD: Mitch Lyons.

MARGARET: He started having annual pottery shows in his studio quite early.

EDWARD: Well, not only that but mostly now not pottery but prints.

MARGARET: And his clay prints, right.
JOY: We knew him before he got into the clay prints and he was married, had four kids and was trying to support everybody on his ceramics. We’d go to these craft shows in that place in Maryland. What’s it called? Not Havre de Grace but the next town up from that they have a big craft show in their state fairgrounds. Remember that town we go through all the time? I can’t think of anything.

But anyway, they all did the craft shows and we were groupies. We’d go to the craft shows and we’d help them or we’d buy stuff and stay overnight. So, it was all very fun and social.

MARGARET: Yes. And a lot of energy and activity.

JOY: Yes, yes, yeah, a lot of energy and we were all into music and dancing and we’d have great parties. Great parties.

MARGARET: Now, would you—so I know Mitch Lyons is—at least Mitch, lots of other artists as well are starting to participate in the activities that would lead to the foundation of the DCCA. Where you going—

JOY: That’s Rick Rothrock really.

MARGARET: And Rick Rothrock, certainly.

JOY: I mean he’s the guy.

MARGARET: He is the—yes.

JOY: Because we bought a building, did we tell you, across the street from the old firehouse, which was the Delaware Theatre Company and Edward was on the board. I would make food and sell it on the street and fundraise and all that kind of stuff. We were very involved with that group of people; Cleveland Morris, Peter and Ceal and so we went to a show once and were standing outside and someone said, ‘You know, that building across the street is for sale for $14,000.’ And we said, “My goodness. You can’t even buy a car for that.” And so we bought it and the idea was to house the tech people for the Delaware Theatre Company because they always had a problem. These people come from New York and other places to do the shows and where to stay? I mean they’d have them bunk with a family if they could but you know to have a place.

We charged hardly any rent, we’ll renovate this. It took us about what? Six months or a year to renovate it?

EDWARD: It took two years.

JOY: It was four apartments which were really terrible. I mean that’s—what’s the name of the street down there?

MARGARET: On French?
JOY: On French, thank you, and Third.

EDWARD: The city insisted we only have two apartments.

JOY: So, that changed the ballgame and when we thought well, these could be very elegant apartments. There was a bathroom on each floor and we had to go up and [inaudible] building was suddenly just two apartments. I think we charged them like $250 a month or something.

MARGARET: Right, charged the Theatre Company?

JOY: No, no, the individuals.

MARGARET: The individuals?

JOY: Yeah, they had to rent something so they were happy to pay that. It would have been three times that anywhere else and it was right across the street from the thing. Then, the city used—I mean that was going to be the art section of Wilmington, the DCCA right down the street and this place had a little garden and it looked like a little storefront had been there at one time and we thought we could retire and have a wonderful gallery here if this is going to be the arts thing.

And then, the city decided they wanted banking. So they used eminent domain, forced us to sell and all the other young people who had bought houses around us on our recommendation. So they gave us a fraction of what it would be worth now. You can imagine.

MARGARET: Right.

JOY: I told their realtor guy, I said, “You have taken away my husband’s golden years,” in cracking my last shot at him you know [laughing].

EDWARD: [Laughing]

JOY: So that’s when we built our addition back here. We did make a little money, enough money to build an addition in those years.

MARGARET: So those buildings would have been demolished to build—I’ll have to look at the map.

JOY: Yeah, they were making way for the bank.

MARGARET: For MBN—yeah, for all of those kind of complexes that are now on French Street.

JOY: Yeah. So the whole idea of having people around, beyond 5:00, fell apart and they’ve been suffering ever since.

MARGARET: Right. So this would have been in ’77, ’78?
EDWARD: No.

JOY: Maybe a little sooner than that, I think.

EDWARD: Wait, we built this house in ’77.

JOY: Oh yeah, you’re right.

EDWARD: So it was five years later.

JOY: Yeah, we did live in this house.

MARGARET: Oh, so it would be early 80s?

EDWARD: ’82.

JOY: All right, something like that.

EDWARD: Around there.

MARGARET: Around ’82.

JOY: So then the Theatre Company did some fundraising and they were able to build their theater and everything.

MARGARET: And then DCCA moved to the Waterworks?

EDWARD: Yeah.

JOY: Yeah, and they had studios there for artists and everything. ‘cause we met Ken Mabrey, we just saw him last week. Do you know him?

MARGARET: Yes, I’ll actually be interviewing him this afternoon at his studio. I’m looking forward to that.

JOY: Oh, yeah? Oh, he’s one of my favorite people. We’ve bought several pieces which are in the hands of grandchildren right now.

MARGARET: Oh yes, I didn’t think I saw any—you don’t have any of Ken’s work in your house now?

JOY: No. We bought at a wonderful show here in Newark in one of the tech buildings. Our friend Debra Stelling; she organized the show for SYNE. So it was a Sine show and we bought a Ken Mabrey which was a black and white drawing, which we really loved; kind of a sunflower and a girl and all this stuff. We have a granddaughter who came to visit once and she looked around and said, “I want everything in black and white.” So we sent her the Ken Mabrey.

EDWARD: [Laughing]
JOY: And our other granddaughter has two pieces of his of an ice skater that we bought at Blue Streak. So I mean it’s one thing you have a lot of grandchildren and that’s what you get them for Christmas and birthdays.

MARGARET: Those are fabulous gifts.

JOY: Yes, yes, that’s right.

MARGARET: So you were just, it sounds like, just as actively involved in what was happening in downtown Wilmington as you were in Newark?

JOY: At that time, yeah with the Theatre and everything else. So we kind of—Wilmington started to change for us when Cleveland Morris decided he didn’t want Peter and Ceal part of that Theatre.

MARGARET: I don’t know that history.

EDWARD: Wow [laughing].

JOY: It was like, it’s all over for us baby. Peter and Ceal’s idea was to have a resident [inaudible] both Theatre company and they had people who moved here to be part of that. Cleveland’s idea, at that time, was to be more open where you could just audition and not have a resident thing. So Peter and Ceal were out and that was a big shock to a lot of people and it took us years before we forgave them for that. Cleveland isn’t there anymore.

And we were mad when—they had something about the history of the—a 10 year anniversary or 20 or something.

EDWARD: And they didn’t even mention Peter and Ceal, which was crazy.

JOY: They had all started it together. So, that kind of people were elephants with the memory.

MARGARET: Tell me again, Peter and? Spell the—

EDWARD: Peter Delaurier and Ceal Phelan. He works for—I mean he’s with the—

JOY: People’s Light Theatre, both of them are.

EDWARD: Both of them were, but she died.

JOY: She just died recently, yeah.

EDWARD: Within the—

JOY: I mean they lived with us about three weeks. They didn’t know what to do and I kept saying, “I thought you said you had friends at People’s Light?” So I finally said, “Why don’t you go back out—” so they did.
They were all students of Cleveland’s at the University of Missouri years ago.

MARGARET: Okay, so that was their connection? The University of Missouri?

JOY: Yeah, they came here to start a Theatre company, got that firehouse, renovated it. Edward was on the board, Jerry Pheifer was on the board so they put in the seats.

EDWARD: We both resigned.

JOY: They resigned when they moved because then they just wanted people with gobs of money. I mean they had to have—I mean boards have to have people with contacts and we said, “We know artists. We don’t know anybody with a lot of money.”

MARGARET: Right. And Cleveland Morris was the?

JOY: Director.

MARGARET: Artistic Director? Just Director? Same thing?

JOY: Well, probably artistic. I mean it was his Theatre.

MARGARET: It was his Theatre, okay.

JOY: It was his idea and all that stuff.

EDWARD: I mean Roland Elzea and his wife also grew up at—went to the University of Missouri.

MARGARET: I don’t think I knew that.

JOY: Yeah, they met as students and then they went to New York and he came down here to be at the Museum and she came to teach at Tatnall or Tower Hill.

EDWARD: I forget.

JOY: Tattnall School has a big art thing. And Bernie taught at Tatnall. That was the connection.

EDWARD: That’s why they met, yeah.

MARGARET: Helen Mason was at Tatnall.

JOY: Yeah, so she knows all these people too and she knows about Gallery 20 because she was a director before I was.

MARGARET: Ah, I don’t think she told me that when we—

JOY: Oh, maybe after me ‘cause I was a volunteer.
MARGARET: She was after you, okay.

JOY: She was paid a little bit; like $25 a week or something.

MARGARET: This is good to know because I don’t think she mentioned that in the interview that we had. So, let’s actually move to Gallery 20. So what I’ve been able to find is that it was a program of the United Campus Ministry located at 20 Orchard Road.

EDWARD: Where the business school is now.

JOY: Yeah, so it was removed unfortunately. It lasted for maybe 20 years or so. We were umbrella-ed by the United Campus Ministries. In other words, they gave us a space, didn’t charge us rent. So we did the renovation of a large room in the back—

EDWARD: On the top floor.

JOY: Well, it wasn’t the top floor. It was on the ground floor. There wasn’t a top floor.

EDWARD: Well, it just—

JOY: But the beauty of it was when you have a volunteer organization and that is that the secretary, Doris Bolt, did all of our things for the paper, she did all the paperwork, all the office work.

MARGARET: So she was the secretary? Okay, ‘cause I’ve seen her name on press releases. She was the secretary for the United Campus Ministry.

JOY: But she also did all that stuff for us.

EDWARD: But she would—you should interview her.

MARGARET: Is she still in Newark?

JOY: Well, they—

EDWARD: No, I think she’s in Wilmington.

JOY: Well, they live in a—I forget which retirement home it is, one of the nice ones. I don’t know. You could track them down. Bob Bolt.

EDWARD: Bob Bolt, he’s a minister.

JOY: He came as a minister to Wilmington. So she was there all the time and it made it so easy to get volunteers who didn’t have to do that kind of work.

MARGARET: Right. Now, tell me how was Gallery 20 founded? What was the motivation behind that?
JOY: It was founded as an offshoot organization that we became part of which was called Youth Incorporated and it was started by young people who had this idea—yeah, Debbie Daws and Lou Riggler had this idea that there should be a helpline telephone available because this is a time when the stakes were high for young people, in terms of being picked up by the police, sent to jail, abused. It was really terrible and they were just—young people were going bananas about everything.

They thought let’s—I mean it was Lou’s idea. We became members of the board, but the idea was to find young people who were really talented, give them training with psychologists and sociologists and doctors and this and that so they know how to handle a call. I mean at that time if someone was having a drug event there would be no doctor who would know what the fix is. You go to the hospital they could give you, and they did several times, they’d give them a drug that did not work and they died.

These kids knew about drugs. These people had gone to Yale and dropped out because it was—a lot of young people were dropping out of everything to do something for society. So it was one of those organizations we were very excited about.

So, they lived in our house when we lived at the other end of town for a couple years, in our basement; various people. I sort of shamed a local church, which I wasn’t even a member of, to give us a space behind their church on Main Street so that we could have the helpline telephone. It had a telephone number under Joe Banana.

EDWARD: [Laughing]

JOY: It was fully staffed all day and early evening. And that was also a time when abortion was illegal and we were able to arrange people to take them to New York. One of the things that was asked of women who wanted to be part of this organization was have you ever had an abortion and if they had you’re in, we want you, you can counsel these people.

MARGARET: Do you remember the approximate year when Youth Incorporated was founded?

JOY: See I threw away all that stuff but it’s got to be early 70s.

MARGARET: And it would be before—let’s see, the first—before Gallery 20, so before 1973?

EDWARD: Yeah, right in the beginning of 1970 probably.

JOY: Yeah, I think. ‘cause we took the kids to Spain and we came back in 1969–70. We came back in ’69 then.

EDWARD: Yeah.

JOY: And I think it was the next year we met Lou and we decided we had to help out. And also another offshoot of Youth Incorporated was to start a food co-op, which we became part of and they—
EDWARD: It ran out of our house [laughing].

JOY: Well, first of all, they convinced the Unitarian Church up here to—’cause it was a buying club. They’d go to an Amish farm and get bags of flour and rice and all that stuff and people would come and wait.

EDWARD: We had a Volkswagen bus then.

JOY: So, that’s how that started and then the woman who started that, Matilda Thompson, it was her idea to start the gallery right at that time.

EDWARD: There was another gal.

JOY: Well, Abigail, but she left. It was Matilda Thompson, whose parents still live in Hockessin. She had been a student here. She was a pottery student under Victor. She somehow made the arrangements for Gallery 20, so I succeeded her. And then the food co-op kind of ran out of our house because we had the deliveries made to our house and we had seven kids, so we bagged everything and then took it down to this little place, which I convinced the church to give us more space so we could have the co-op there [laughing].

MARGARET: That’s crazy; you had the helpline and the co-op.

JOY: You could shame people because of civic responsibility. It’s not the same thing anymore.

EDWARD: Joy can shame anybody.

JOY: Well, I don’t have a cause but I had a cause.

MARGARET: We’ll give you a cause. Let’s find a cause [laughing].

JOY: Really, it was so much fun.

MARGARET: So this would have been before the Newark co-op?

JOY: Oh, yeah that’s an offshoot—it’s the same thing.

MARGARET: This is the foundation of the Newark co-op, okay.

JOY: Yeah, that’s it. All volunteer. I mean I was into volunteering because nobody had any money. I think the first person I hired to run that when I got tired of all the bagging, we paid them $25 a week. We had to bag because we realized that when the public comes in to buy things no one knows how to weigh it and figure out how much they owed. So, rather than hiring more people to do that for we thought let’s just bag it at home. So, our kids got to bag and some of the other people on the board would. Now and then we’d have a party and have food and everybody would bag. All very social.

MARGARET: Okay, so Matilda Thompson, Gallery 20, space from—
EDWARD: Youth Incorporated.

MARGARET: Gallery 20, space from the United Campus Ministry—

JOY: Stries.

MARGARET: Campus Ministries.

JOY: Yeah, because it was a consortium of all the faiths.

MARGARET: It seems like United Campus Ministries no longer exists.

JOY: That’s right.

EDWARD: No.

JOY: That’s right, yeah. They lost their space and they lost their guiding light, who was a very controversial character. I mean SDS used to run out of the basement of United Campus Ministries. That was the Students for Democratic things. It was not a violent group. These were people who were just anti-war so there was a lot of anti-war activity going on through all of this period. So that place is exactly where we are; the Vietnam War. So there were marches and—

EDWARD: The SDS announced that they were going to destroy the ROTC building.

JOY: Which is one of the buildings that’s sort of behind the art building.

MARGARET: And why the ROTC Building?

EDWARD: Well, ROTC [laughing].

MARGARET: Oh, right. ROTC, okay.

JOY: They had a parade up the street.

EDWARD: I mean I was on the University Senate and we were ordered to be observers so that we could tell who started which fight. Anyway, so they marched out there with drums rolling and they had two small coffins. I mean they were little coffins and they marched out with their flags and marched down the mall and went to the ROTC building—lots of tension. They put the little coffins down and opened them up and out poured termites. They had filled them with termites and 10 years later they had to rebuild the building.

JOY: No, 20. It was just recently.

EDWARD: They won. They did demolish it. That was their—

MARGARET: Subtlety. So there were student demonstrations in Newark.
JOY: Yeah, so all these groups knew about each other. The co-op group, the art gallery group, the political-minded kids, there was just a lot going on in a lot of places in the country; more on the West coast but I mean this was a little pocket. It wasn’t like this in Wilmington so we were just surrounded by a whole different group of people, which was very exciting and lots of fun.

MARGARET: The exhibition history that I’ve been able to find basically, as I said, based on artist’s resumes for Gallery 20 starts with, I believe and I’m guessing, 1973 when Clayton Pond was invited for the first—as the first artist in residence?

EDWARD: [Laughing] Well, who was invited was—

JOY: Oh, I’ve got a letter from them, Adja Yunkers.

EDWARD: Adja Yunkers? Do you know Adja Yunkers?

MARGARET: No.

JOY: He was a famous printmaker. I got a grant from—

MARGARET: So he was invited?

EDWARD: Yes, and he’s in his 80s.

MARGARET: At the time?

EDWARD: Yeah, and he turned up sick so we somehow got Clayton Pond.

JOY: Rosemary knew him.

EDWARD: Oh yeah, that’s right.

JOY: Because he was a famous printmaker. We have his two little pieces that he gave us as a thank you, I think I told you this before.

MARGARET: Yes.

JOY: Because you had told him the story of the t-shirts that were made—

MARGARET: Yes, but you could tell me again actually. So tell me about Clayton Pond exhibition.

EDWARD: I was going to introduce him so I dressed up in a two-piece suit with a tie and the whole thing and I started. He sat in the row with a whole bunch of graduate students, was sitting facing me and we made these t-shirts with a—we don’t have any. But the t-shirts were imprinted with a picture of one of his works.

JOY: One of his prints, yeah.
EDWARD: And as I introduced him I took my tie off, I took the coat off, I took everything you know, and then I got to the punch line, Clayton Pond and I opened up and here I was wearing the t-shirt. Lots of laughter. He got up and walked up and turned around and saw these students and they all had the t-shirt on [laughing].

JOY: So then, we walked over to the gallery and had an opening of the student prints and a bunch of his prints and he sold quite a few of them from the gallery.

EDWARD: Yeah, Roz DuPont has one of them, a very big one of—

JOY: We had a big one, which we gave to our daughter in California. I love that one.

MARGARET: So the Museum purchased the first Clayton Pond print that we own in 1973 as well and we purchased it with funds from the NEA; this was kind of a fundraising program that the NEA gave those kinds of funds. So this is my guess, that perhaps, possibly, that would have been from that exhibition.

JOY: It probably was.

MARGARET: Or that exhibition as right around the same time. Because the later two prints we have were gifts from Helen Farr Sloan and those were in the late 70s, so she was probably acquiring them in New York. Were there other artists in residence that you remember?

JOY: Oh, I told her about him. That was much later. That was much later. I can’t think of who else. I can’t think of it. That may have been the only one who got enough money for, which was like $1,500 because we were paying for ADJA Yunkers presumably.

EDWARD: Yeah.

JOY: But we continued to meet up with Clayton Pond and went to a show of his in Baltimore. He was doing sort of three-dimensional things using glass that was very interesting.

MARGARET: Yes. I know I’ve never seen any of that work in person but I’m so curious. I’m just slightly like fascinated by Clayton Pond. I need to connect. He had his contact information online, I need to connect with him.

JOY: I wonder if he has a place in Baltimore anymore. I thought he had a connection with a Baltimore thing on Charles Street.

MARGARET: Was he showing with Grimaldis?

JOY: Oh, I don’t know who it was. We weren’t in a position to buy his stuff at that time. I was selling his stuff [laughing]. And we went to visit him once because we went up with our daughter who wanted to see a Broadway show and then she calls and says, “Well, I’ve met up with all these people,” University of Delaware friends of hers, “and nobody wants to leave so I want to stay.” And I said, “Well great, but we don’t have any money. Where are we going to stay?”
So we thought Clayton Pond, he owes me, I'll call him up. So we called up Clayton Pond, who lived on Greene Street, and we met the guy who did all his printing. He actually had a guy who was a master printer. So it's a huge operation in this loft on Greene Street. We told him that we were sorry, but we were going to have to stay and his face dropped. Well, it's not too convenient; he had a lady friend that was going to visit later and we said, "Well, too bad." We had no money and at that time nobody took credit cards so we couldn't go out to dinner, couldn't do anything.

We had a little money so we thought okay, let's just go to the market around the corner and we'd get some food and we'd cook it and just hang around and don't worry, we'll just go to bed early or something so we're not in your way because we've got to hear from this daughter and find out where she is. We had no idea, we were worried about her, blah, blah, blah. So we've got cold and rainy and he was sick and we could hear him outside arguing with this young woman and I thought oh, boy [laughing] he's never going to speak to us again.

EDWARD: We ruined his date.

JOY: We ruined it. We haven't seen him since, have we?

EDWARD: No [laughing].

MARGARET: Oh, no [laughing].

JOY: He's done with us.

MARGARET: I'll be sure to mention your names when I connect with him.

JOY: He would remember us, I know.

MARGARET: So that exhibition, I'm thinking right around 1973. The other exhibitions that I was able to find mention of online; 1976 Christine Neal Recent Paintings, 1977 Rob Cemensky it seems like he was doing Raku work at the time, but a potter.

JOY: Yeah, he was another Victor. Victor's student.

MARGARET: 1980 Women Artists and the Miniature: The Intimate Gesture. That exhibition included Constance "Connie" Cone; photographer now in Philadelphia. She used to be in the Wilmington area and was involved with DCCA quite a bit. Women Laughing, 1982, this included Wendy Hatch. 1983, 20/20 included Rosemary Bernardi.

EDWARD: That's that piece. We just saw her.

JOY: There's a big print connection.

MARGARET: The only student exhibition I was able to find was Lisa Bartolozzi's BFA Thesis exhibition in 1984.

JOY: We have a piece from that.
EDWARD: That was in Gallery 20.

MARGARET: And then also at Gallery 20 in 1984, *Romberger’s Choice* included art sculpture by Charles Adams.

JOY: So this might have been either Helen or Sally. Two other people succeeded me.

MARGARET: Okay, and tell me who those two people were that succeeded you.

JOY: Helen Mason was one. Do you know her?

MARGARET: Yes.

JOY: She might have a better memory of some of this. Sally Cohen was the other one.

MARGARET: Helen Mason first, directly succeeded you?

EDWARD: Yes.

JOY: Yeah, and then Sally Cohen. She sort of decided to go big time and spend a lot of money, which we didn’t have, but to make it so that a mailing was—

MARGARET: Okay, so she’s doing mailings.

JOY: So suddenly, we’re bankrupt and so kind of things started to slow down then after that.

MARGARET: Kind of mid 1980s or even later?

JOY: Yeah, probably. But there were shows. Bernie Felch had a big show. Dan Teis had a big show. Larry Holmes was the other guy.

MARGARET: And there were other student exhibitions as well.

JOY: Oh yeah, all the time.

EDWARD: All the time, yeah. Every year.

JOY: The difference was with our idea—’cause we had a board, which Mitch Lyons was on and Helen and a whole bunch of people were on it. Everything was juried, which was different for a volunteer organization like this. So this group of people, this group of artists juried everything so the quality of the exhibitions were superb.

EDWARD: Yeah.

JOY: That made the difference. ’cause there were a lot of student things going on.

EDWARD: Do you know about the Rehoboth Art League?
MARGARET: I know a bit about Rehoboth Art League, but not any sort of specific details and I don’t have a sense of their chronology.

JOY: We met the head of that, Charles Palmer, through our photographer friend who died, Byron Shurtleff. Shurtleff started the photography department at the University of Delaware; wonderful, wonderful teacher. He told me one day that he met this wonderful artist, Charles Palmer, who was the head of the Rehoboth Art League and we said—

EDWARD: We have a small piece of his, which was shown at the Museum in that—

JOY: That show; That Six. I also have a little book he made. Crazy about him. So Shurtleff had all these pieces in his trunk to show me and said, “I want to have a show with this guy and I want to meet him.” So, he had a show and then we met him and he came up here and visited us and we had parties for him and stuff and then he decided he liked our collection and they would like to have our collection, which pretty much was—

EDWARD: No, no, the way that was he asked the two of us to be the judges for the yearly show at the Rehoboth Art League.

JOY: They have a juried show.

EDWARD: And I said, “Okay, on the condition that you have a show of our pieces,” and he agreed. They had this great house—

JOY: Yeah, they had several places to show art.

EDWARD: Apart from the gallery they also had this house and these pieces looked great in this old house [laughing].

MARGARET: Oh, I bet.

JOY: Yeah, they looked good. That’s the last time we will ever do jurying. That’s a very difficult task because they have a lot of the best beach drawing, the best beach painting, and so many categories and so much work. The artists who had been part of the Rehoboth Art League for so many years they just hated us, they hated all our decisions.

EDWARD: [Laughing]

JOY: One person threatened to leave the Art League because we chose something to get an award and it was claimed that that was based on a magazine image.

MARGARET: So Charles Palmer had a show at Gallery 20, do you remember when? Would that have been when you were a director?

JOY: Yeah, oh yeah.

MARGARET: So, in the early 80s?
JOY: We haven’t contacted him for years. I might have him in that little book. Excuse me.

EDWARD: Bring the piece. It should be shown [laughing].

JOY: Oh, this is 1990.

EDWARD: Right.

MARGARET: I’m going to pause this.

JOY: Yeah, I’m just looking through here to see what else I can find in here.

EDWARD: You wouldn’t like one of these?

MARGARET: I think I’m going to wait just a little bit longer. Thank you though.

JOY: This might be Clayton Pond.

MARGARET: Oh, that is Clayton Pond, yes. And so was this from his show, And talk, at the university?

JOY: Maybe. Here, we’ve got the group.

MARGARET: Oh, wow.

JOY: Edward, after he met Ruth Elzea, he began painting. So here’s a picture of Edward and his picture of me and he painted a bunch of those up there. It’s kind of interesting, went through his painting phase and we moved here and that was the end.

MARGARET: Edward, what are you holding? Is this a—oh, I’m not good with science things. Is that a model?

EDWARD: Yeah. The chemistry one.

MARGARET: I won’t even embarrass myself by trying to identify that.

EDWARD: It’s just acetylene.

JOY: Oh, I know. Here is from the artist in residence series I raised money for. Barbara Tesow from Wayne State, I don’t even remember her anymore, but that’s her.

MARGARET: Oh, okay.

JOY: I think I raised $3,000 or something to pay everybody $1,500.

MARGARET: This is the second, so this would have been after Clayton was Barbara Tesow.

JOY: I don’t even remember who she is anymore.
MARGARET: Okay, this is the second artist in residence. Oh, this is great. Oh, MFA from Cranbrook.

JOY: Yeah, that’s right. There were a lot of Cranbrook people; like Steve and Larry.

MARGARET: And Julio.

JOY: Oh, here it is. Ceramics sculptor and painter. This is her thing, this news release. See there’s not a date on this. Is that the same thing I just gave you or no?

MARGARET: It is, yes. I know unfortunately the press releases do not have dates. Well, they don’t have the year. Actually, that one doesn’t even have a day.

JOY: But Helen may know. She may remember.

MARGARET: But it would have been probably somewhere ’74 or ’75.

JOY: Okay, now this may be—I hope this has a date. Darn it, it doesn’t. Because I organized an art auction for Richard Aumiller, who was in the Theatre department at the University of Delaware in the late 80s or something—it just says Thursday, May 26th. That’s no help.

MARGARET: So this was an art auction for—

EDWARD: Well, you can find out from the university.

JOY: Oh, I don’t even know if they know about that.

EDWARD: Sure they do.

JOY: Richard Aumiller, this was the first time that a group of gay students wanted to organize and to have a club of any kind. You have to have a faculty advisor so they asked Richard Aumiller, who happened to be gay. At that time nobody knew who was. It wasn’t talked about or anything. So he agreed to do that and before anyone knew it he was fired. The president fired him. So, I raised money for his defense.

EDWARD: Trabant was president and there was somebody who lived down state who said if they didn’t fire Aumiller he wouldn’t give his $200,000 or whatever it was. So they fired him.

MARGARET: So it says here that all proceeds go to the Aumiller Defense Fund and that financial support will cover court costs in his defense of his rights and—

JOY: Right, so everybody you can think of gave and we were all New York people.

EDWARD: In fact, the judge [laughing] fined Trabant personally, not the university, I mean fined Trabant ‘cause he fired Aumiller. I forget what he fined him but the Board of Trustees paid it.
MARGARET: That’s interesting.

JOY: 1975 to ‘76.

MARGARET: ’75 to ’76.

EDWARD: What’s that?

JOY: That’s when I did the application from the Delaware State Arts Council.

EDWARD: Yeah, but for what?

JOY: Well, we brought Clayton Pond and Barbara Tavow and all those people.

EDWARD: Oh, okay.

MARGARET: So this was the Delaware State Arts Council, this was a grant application.

JOY: Yes, for artists in residence.

MARGARET: For the Artists in Residence program?

JOY: Series, yeah.

MARGARET: You wouldn’t happen to list artists by name in there would you? In your grant application? Probably not.

JOY: No. We planned to have a weaver, a potter and a jeweler. It didn’t turn out like that.

MARGARET: Oh, that’s interesting; the weaver, potter and jeweler.

JOY: So the potter was Barbara. Oh, and then we had a gal from New York, still no date. But that’s kind of the basic thing. We had something every month.

MARGARET: They were monthly?

JOY: Yeah.

MARGARET: Except for the summer?

JOY: Mm-hmm.

MARGARET: So summer being June, July, August?

JOY: Yeah. So this was that application. Or did I show that to you?

MARGARET: Oh no, not yet. So you had an annual arts and crafts exhibition.
EDWARD: Mostly art.

JOY: This is 1976. Claire Hartunian. She came from Syracuse, New York.

MARGARET: Yes, this is wonderful.

JOY: So here was kind of interesting, just to give you a little glimpse of how the gallery operated. This was kind of the worksheet of who’s supposed to do what.

MARGARET: The description of Claire’s work is really quite interesting. “Assemblages of found materials using saw blades, refrigerator legs, brake linings and other finds.”

Oh, and this is your meeting with Christine Neal. Her exhibition was also in ’76. These meeting notes are from January 7, 1976. Paintings will be hung January 31st or February 1st. The exhibition will open on February 2nd. The reception being held on Saturday, February 7th, in the evening.

JOY: Here’s ’84, Sally saying she can’t come to a meeting. So obviously, she was heading up the gallery in 1984.

MARGARET: Okay.

JOY: Here’s Bernie Felch, Bricks in Space.

MARGARET: Oh, this is wonderful.

JOY: This was Roger Perkins, the guy I told you about there. That guy that—

MARGARET: Oh, right. So these are wonderful. These are all exhibition announcements.

JOY: Here’s a Delaware Art Museum thing for their contemporary crafts exhibition in 1985.

MARGARET: Oh okay, yes and we would have that in the archives.

JOY: Here’s Rosemary Lane Hooper. Do you know her? Rosemary Lane?

MARGARET: Yes.

JOY: Here’s ideas for the gallery, financial statements.

MARGARET: You said Ann Oldach was in the Friends of Gallery 20 group as well?

JOY: Yeah. Here’s somebody, I forget her. This is 1984. I never even heard of her. I might have been away, Pamela Shyman. I have no idea what that is.

MARGARET: 1984, Pamela Shyman Diagrams.

JOY: Here’s my member identification for Delaware Museum, 1985 [laughing].
MARGARET: So this is also ’76 was Rosemary Lane’s.

JOY: This is student center, Sara Steel. Oh, she might be the one that made that paddle that we bought that we told you the story.

MARGARET: Oh, yes.

JOY: This is the second exhibition series of Romberg’s Choice will be held in 1984. Guest speakers Frankel from the Delaware Art Museum, Robert Straight. The location was Gallery 20.

MARGARET: Okay, and that’s when Bob Frankel was director. Okay, so this is—oh, that’s interesting. Actually it was listed—the title of the exhibition was listed incorrectly in the artist’s resume.

JOY: 1984 from Sally who was the director then, Sally Cohen. These are individual artist fellowship winners from the Delaware State Arts Council. Are you interested in that?

MARGARET: Yes, please.

JOY: Here’s another show in 1984. James Turrell at the university, did you know that?

MARGARET: Really?

JOY: It was my first James Turrell I ever saw.

MARGARET: I didn’t know that.

JOY: Yep.

MARGARET: Ha. Flounder Graphics printed—

JOY: Oh yes, that’s Laura.

MARGARET: Yes, Laura Spencer.

JOY: Do you know her? I haven’t seen her for a couple years.

MARGARET: The intern who was helping me work on the project interviewed her.

JOY: Oh, she was wild. She was great. I have a little piece of hers. It’s a little fish that you press and it has musical and lights flashing.

MARGARET: Oh, really?

JOY: I wonder if it still works. Yeah, she had her own little gallery kind of right downtown, two of them. She was a fish lady. I don’t know what’s happened to her. I used to see her. She disappeared. She was part of our group too.
EDWARD: Her husband is Robert Dodge.

JOY: Yeah, and I introduced them to each other.

MARGARET: I didn’t ask you all about the Deluxe Luncheonette either and their spoon themed art exhibition.

JOY: Yeah, that was Laura.

MARGARET: She was in that as well?

JOY: Yeah, it wasn’t a continuing thing actually.

MARGARET: Okay. Sorry it’s taking me a bit. I just want to write down all the artists who are included in this exhibition.

JOY: Well that tells you 1975 to ’76 is when we had the artist grant. That’s when we started that whole thing.

MARGARET: Okay. Well these are wonderful materials. You didn’t get rid of everything. This is wonderful. This is great.

JOY: Did you ever meet a woman by the name of Susan Rosenberg?

MARGARET: I have not spoken with her. Caitlin did an interview with her and we do have her film, a copy of it, Pulse of Desire.

JOY: She’s wild and wonderful.

MARGARET: Yes, so I’m hoping to include that in the exhibition.

JOY: We had a Valentine’s Day party once at the gallery. I mean it was just right up from our house, it was so easy to do things, and John Suther was going to perform and it was a fundraiser for the—it was a Valentine’s party. She came to perform. It was really great. This was Valentine’s Day so it was the 14th of February, I don’t know what year. But there was a huge snowstorm and we were all kind of trapped in that place. I think we didn’t leave till 4:00 in the morning or something. By that time we’d drank all the wine and I don’t know how we got home.

MARGARET: Oh, that’s wonderful.

JOY: The Aumiller auction we should follow-up on that and that is that after a couple of—he did get a job, I think, in a university down south or something. He was waiting for this whole case to be settled and the judge in Delaware fined the president personally.

MARGARET: Yes.
JOY: I mean they paid all the expenses in addition to the money he had lost with his two years of not teaching. They fined the president $5,000 personally.

EDWARD: Was it $5,000?

JOY: Yeah, slapping his wrist. Isn’t that something?

MARGARET: That’s incredible. Well, I think just the one last question and I can’t remember if I asked you last time but this way we have it on record. Remind me if you went to Fifth Street Gallery in downtown Wilmington for any of the exhibitions, which would have been between ’73—

JOY: Was Susan doing that?

MARGARET: Not Susan Isaac’s gallery.

EDWARD: Where’d we get that?

JOY: We got it at Susan Isaac’s gallery.

MARGARET: The Philly was at Susan Isaac’s.

JOY: Yeah, but the Fifth Street we used to go to but I can’t—well, of course we did. It was on the corner—what was the guy’s name?

MARGARET: Rob Jones.

JOY: Yes, Rob Jones.

MARGARET: So Rob Jones Fifth Street Gallery would have been Market and Fifth Street, second floor.

JOY: I’m trying to think of the weaver now. Edward, help me. What’s her name? She started the weaving program here.

MARGARET: Was it Vera Kaminski?

JOY: I remember she, at that time, really thought that she was going to hit the big time as a young artist. She had a show there and there’s a word for it when you think you’ve reached the top but everything—had great, grandiose ideas and it was a wonderful show.

MARGARET: I’ve seen images from that exhibition and Vera—I haven’t conducted an interview with her yet, but she is fairly certain that she has video from the exhibition at Fifth Street as well, which is pretty incredible.

JOY: One reason why I stopped being a weaver, I probably told you, was because of Vera Kaminski.
MARGARET: No, I didn’t know that. I did you see you listed on the 20/20 postcard.

JOY: I knew it very well but there was just as you go around the corner from Main Street go to Elkton Road on the corner is a house and there was a yarn store upstairs and a friend of mine had it. And so because I was doing enough weaving that I needed to order everything wholesale, but a lot of them had a limit. You had to order 300 pounds of something and so because of the little business we made a deal that I would just buy it through them at the wholesale price.

That was working out beautifully and then Vera discovered computerized looms so her students started doing these little pieces like that. What kind of business in yarn do you think you can—I mean this woman started thinking that all these weaving students at the University. No, no, age of computer they were making things—cause Vera wanted things for the wall, something arty so she went out of business and then I had to search around and say, “How am I going to do this? I’m not that big time a weaver to be ordering that much stuff.” So, it just kind of dwindled away.

MARGARET: So you just stopped weaving?

JOY: I thought, “Damn, that’s not fair.” So then the program, it disappeared almost immediately then. I mean Joan Shurtleff and I had a show and I took her on as an apprentice because a lot of these people wanted to learn how to weave. They wanted to make something. They didn’t want to do something like this for the wall.

MARGARET: They wanted to be able to use it.

JOY: Right, so I had three looms at the time anyway so we had a great time doing that and we had a show at Gallery 20. It was really, really fun.

MARGARET: Oh, that’s wonderful. So you did go to Fifth Street Gallery, you remember some of those exhibitions.

JOY: Yeah, I think we went to all of them.

MARGARET: It seems like, based on what other people have said, that Rob was certainly avant-garde and certainly pushing the envelope in terms of the kind of contemporary work that he was showing.

JOY: Yes, but see when he came in there he already had an audience of buyers. He was purchasing in New York for local people, wealthy people. I don’t know what their names were. But, he was in business already.

MARGARET: That’s interesting.

JOY: So, he moved the operation down here thinking that there must be other people and get the university involved and all that kind of stuff and so it didn’t generate enough money for him so he had to live there.

MARGARET: Live in the space, right.
JOY: And then the city, which in New York they did this too, they threw him out. They said, “No, you can’t do that,” which was most unfortunate ‘cause that was the end of it. And at that time nobody could it together to figure out what could save that. It was so incredible, so professional, it was beautiful, everybody you knew was involved.

So again, in the arts very often there just aren’t enough money people, certainly not the artists. Who’s going to—

MARGARET: Right, but the artists are going in and paving the way, bringing all of the energy.

JOY: Yeah, I mean Wilmington had this great opportunity.

MARGARET: I know, right there in the mid to late 1970s with all of those activities.

JOY: That’s right because the Theatre was just a couple blocks behind it. We were all there together.

MARGARET: Right and that’s when they would have changed Market Street as well with the Market Street Mall, so making it pedestrian-friendly.

JOY: Yeah.

MARGARET: Well, this is wonderful. I’m going to stop this.

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Duration: 68 minutes