Shelby White and Leon Levy Archives Center
Institute for Advanced Study

Oral History Project
Interview Transcript

Gerda Panofsky
Interviewed by Linda Arntzenius
April 9, 2010

Permission to use this material for anything beyond personal research must be requested from the Institute's Archives. Please contact archives@ias.edu with questions.

Institute for Advanced Study
The Shelby White and Leon Levy Archives Center

Oral History Project Release Form

In exchange for good and valuable consideration, the receipt and sufficiency of which are hereby acknowledged, I (the "Releasor") hereby irrevocably give, donate, assign, transfer and grant to the Institute for Advanced Study (the "Institute") all of my right, title and interest in and to all audio and/or video recordings of the oral history interviews in which I participated, together with all transcripts thereof (collectively, the "Materials"). My gift, donation, assignment, transfer and grant to the Institute includes: (i) title to the Materials, free and clear of all liens, encumbrances and interests of others; (ii) the right to all present and future copyrights, including but not limited to, the exclusive right to make, reproduce, publish (in print, on video and in all other formats) and to otherwise exploit the Materials, excerpts of the Materials and works derived from the Materials; and (iii) the right to use my name and likeness as required by the Institute in connection with its use of the Materials. For the avoidance of doubt, I hereby authorize the Institute to use the Materials (excerpts and derivative works) for any and all ~~commercial~~, educational, research ~~or other purposes~~.

Public access to the Materials is subject to the following conditions (please check one):

- ☐ None.
- ☐ Closed for 10 years from the date of the interview*; full public access thereafter.
- ☑ Closed under other conditions as stated below*; otherwise full public access:

Close the audio file permanently.
Close the transcript for 10 (ten) years.

*I understand that prior to the date of public access, access to the Materials may be given by the Institute to its staff and to others for the purposes of preserving and cataloguing the Materials.

I acknowledge and agree that this is the entire agreement between the Institute and me respecting the Materials and shall be binding upon my heirs, representatives and assigns. It may be modified only by a writing signed by all parties. This agreement shall be governed by the laws of the State of New Jersey and the federal and state courts situated in the State of New Jersey shall have exclusive jurisdictions over disputes between the Institute and me.

Witness: L. G. Arntzenius

Name of Witness: Linda G. Arntzenius

[signature]
Signature of Releasor

Name of Releasor: Gerda Panofsky

Date: June 22, 2010

SL1 951591v1/096710.00006

Corrected and approved version by Gerda Panofsky, 21 June 2010

Linda Arntzenius This is Friday, April the 9th [2010], and I'm at the home of Gerda Panofsky to interview her for the oral history project at the Institute for Advanced Study. And as you know, Gerda, the focus is on the Institute, but I thought that we might start with something of your background and your education before coming to the Institute, where you were born and where you grew up and something about your family.

Gerda Panofsky: Okay. I was born in Wiesbaden in Germany, but I was only four weeks old when we moved Königsberg, which at that time was like moving to Siberia. Also, there were no planes and it was very, very far away for my parents. And that's where I grew up and which is now Kaliningrad and belongs to Russia.

Linda Arntzenius: Really?

Gerda Panofsky: It [the city] used to be in East Prussia, which was completely isolated from Germany by the Polish Corridor and now it's similarly isolated from Russia by Poland and Lithuania. And so traveling from Königsberg to Berlin where my grandparents lived meant going on a sleeping car overnight. And at the border, all the [railroad] cars were locked, not just locked but as we say "plombiert," which means you put a "plombe" [lead seal] on it so you can't touch it. And then the personnel changed, all the German trainmen left, and there was only Polish personnel until we came to the German border, and then this was reversed.

Linda Arntzenius: That's fascinating.

Gerda Panofsky: I remember some of those trips. I remember very clearly one of these trips across the Vistula (I think you say in English) past Marienburg, which is called Malbork now, which is a huge castle of the Teutonic Knights [of the early 14th century]. The bridge was very close to it and you could see it very well. I still have this picture in my brain. In one of the first documentaries in the movie theater when the Second World War started, you saw this bridge in ruins.

Linda Arntzenius: Oh.

Gerda Panofsky: Yes.
Linda Arntzenius: It had been blown up?

Gerda Panofsky: It had been blown up. And also this castle was very heavily damaged, but they have restored it now. I haven't been there [in

Königsberg since the 1930s]. I went to school there. I was maybe eight or nine years old when we left, and so I still remember very well the apartments and the streets where we lived.

Linda Arntzenius: Did you move back to Berlin from Königsberg?

Gerda Panofsky: No. We moved to Stettin [now Szczecin], which is maybe an hour from Berlin, but belongs to Poland now.

Linda Arntzenius: And that would be when the war began you moved back?

Gerda Panofsky: Before the war. But there [in Stettin] we stayed only about two years and then we moved to Western Germany. So when the Second World War started, we were in Western Germany. We didn't flee from the Red Army, but we had all the bombings day and night for five years. This got so bad that we never had any sleep.

The schools were all closed and all the children were sort of forcefully evacuated to Eastern Europe, sometimes as far as, I don't know, Slovakia or Hungary or Bulgaria. My parents didn't want this. They wanted to keep the family together, so we took a kind of temporary apartment east of – we were in Düsseldorf - east of Cologne where my father could still commute from Düsseldorf, but where the schools were still open beyond this [evacuation] line. The first four weeks were beautifully peaceful, and then the same thing started over there too, also they [the English planes] came during the day with these "Tieffliegers", single planes with machine guns, which would just come down whenever they saw anybody moving. They would mow these people down.

So we spent most of the time in the basement. And afterwards, that wasn't safe anymore], and so we went before dawn to the other end of this little town to a kind of cave which they had used to store, I don't know, beer or wine or something. But it was natural rock and so it was very safe unless a bomb would drop exactly in front of the entrance.

And then we moved back to – finally back to Düsseldorf, when the war was over, in 1948. But it was difficult because our apartment had been on the left bank of the Rhine and all the bridges were blown up. There was just one pontoon bridge and you needed a very special permit [after proving] why you needed to cross this bridge. Meanwhile, in this apartment had lived all kinds of people who had been homeless or bombed out or whatever. But – no,

actually, we did not live in this apartment any more. I don't know, somehow we abandoned this plan.

We looked for another apartment, which was in the center of town, and I finished the last year of high school there in 1949 – [with] what we call the Abitur, the baccalaureate. And then I went to the university. I was not immediately admitted because the buildings were destroyed and then men came back from [Siberia] – they had been prisoners of war but had had already studied before the war, had a family, so they got precedence.

If a young girl would just come from school, they would say she can wait. But finally, I started in 1950 in Cologne, studying Art History and Classical Archeology and German Literature, because in Germany you need a major field and two minors. And then I spent three years in Munich and came back for the doctoral exam to Cologne.

Linda Arntzenius: Did you have any siblings?

Gerda Panofsky: I have a younger sister and a younger brother.

Linda Arntzenius: So it was quite a feat for your parents to keep you all together.

Gerda Panofsky: Yes. That's what they tried and I think they were very wise because many of these children that had been evacuated got lost in this chaos which happened at the end of the war. Some were never found again. The teachers left and sort of abandoned them, and some on their own climbed on some coal trains or whatever. For years, I remember there were posters, - for instance, inside the churches on the doors - with photographs of young girls and boys and, "Does anybody know where s/he is?" Some might have been adopted by Polish [or Hungarian] families and so given a different name. [Earlier during the war] I was very angry with my parents because I envied those – *[Laughs]*

Linda Arntzenius: Oh, you thought it might be an adventure?

Gerda Panofsky: My classmates were living in these beautiful mountains and woods and having fun together, and we were not allowed to go there. So I resented this, but I think they [my parents] were very wise.

Linda Arntzenius: What did your father do during the war?

Gerda Panofsky: He was a civil servant. And actually during the war he was responsible for the – what is it – kind of provisions for the civil population – I mean, coal and clothing – not food, but everything else.

Linda Arntzenius: Right. So he had an important job.

Gerda Panofsky: So it was for the whole Rhineland and it was very difficult, because every night some other factory was destroyed or some other railroad station and constantly they had to change the planning. Yes.

Linda Arntzenius: Difficult times.

Gerda Panofsky: Yes. It was crazy, Yes, crazy times.

Linda Arntzenius: But [then] you were in Cologne for your studies. Is this where you [met] – you mentioned the German Jewish scholar, Richard Krautheimer?

Gerda Panofsky: No, later.

Linda Arntzenius: Oh, that was later.

Gerda Panofsky: Then I got a fellowship in Rome, in Italy, with the Max Planck Gesellschaft.

Linda Arntzenius: Oh, wonderful.

Gerda Panofsky: And there's a wonderful research institute, the Bibliotheca Hertziana, which is in a 16th century palace right above the Spanish Steps, and that was for two and a half years – but I stayed actually four years until I had spent my last lira. I never wanted to leave Rome.

And there, during those years and later also, I spent many, many times for my research, always every vacation. Afterwards, I was employed in Bonn. [In Rome] I happened to meet the Krautheimers, who came from New York for their research and had been Jewish [immigrants] from Germany. So this was my happiest time I should say, my years in Rome.

Linda Arntzenius: What was it that made you go into art history?

Gerda Panofsky: I guess my father, very early as a child, he took me always to exhibitions, and showed me all the [old] churches. And I think that's why I got interested in this [field].

Linda Arntzenius: Did you come from a religious family?

Gerda Panofsky: No. Well, actually, I mean, way back my ancestors were all Protestant ministers *[Laughs]* for generations, but we were not particularly church-going. No. It was just the history of these monuments that attracted me.

Linda Arntzenius: Yes. Tell me about your job in – was it Bonn?

Gerda Panofsky: And then I went to Bonn because this [Rome] fellowship, of course, was finished, and I needed to find a job. And one day there was a lecture at the Bibliotheca Hertziana by the Landeskonservator [Rheinland], the head of this official institution in Bonn. And I liked him very much as a person. I thought he was someone I could trust. And so I approached him afterwards and asked, would he by any chance have a position for me?

Linda Arntzenius: Very good.

Gerda Panofsky: And he said, "Yes. Why don't you write me, right now I don't have a permanent position, but you could already start on a work contract." But then very soon, after a few months, he gave me a permanent position. And as art historians, we had to inventorize the monuments of the Rhineland. He put me in front of a huge map on the wall – it went by administrative districts - and he said, "This and this and this and this is still available. So you can choose."

Linda Arntzenius: So did you have to get on your bike or walk around?

Gerda Panofsky: Car.

Linda Arntzenius: Car. Good. *[Laughs]*

Gerda Panofsky: That's when I learned to drive because one of his [my boss's] questions was, "Do you drive?" and I said, "No." He said, "Then how are you going to do this?" So I took driving lessons already at advanced age, and got my first car, a Volkswagen. Then I would just one or two days a week drive around from town to town or village to village and take notes and –

Linda Arntzenius: Did you take pictures, too?

Gerda Panofsky: No. We had a professional photographer. And then when I knew what was important in this area, we scheduled a trip with the professional photographer. She had all the equipment and cameras and lamps and what not. So we went a whole day.

And then [for these photo campaigns] we got the official car of the office with a driver.

Linda Arntzenius: And what were you looking at?

Gerda Panofsky: Architecture. Churches, of course, medieval churches. But we went all the way up through the 19th century. Or it could be secular architecture, there were some castles in my area, and also old private houses in towns, like some nice Baroque houses, or even old farmhouses. We would then photograph and document them.

Unfortunately, there was no law in Germany to prevent people from tearing these historic buildings down, to modernize them, put ugly windows into them. Of course, they [were] allowed to change the interior and put in modern bathrooms or whatever. But leave the facades so that the whole picture of such a village or small town wouldn't be changed. And for that they would even get money. But sometimes they didn't care and when you came back a few weeks later, it was gone.

I went once with my boss, the Landeskonservator, in his Mercedes. There were some borderline cases where I was not sure should I include them or not [in my inventory], and what would he think. And quite often, I said, "No. Wait a minute. It was here." *[Laughs]* And I couldn't find it any more.

And then in the interior of the churches there were, let's say, tombs or altar pieces, sculptures or paintings. Then I would talk to the priest – it was mainly Catholic that area - and say, "What else do you have in your sacristy?" And they sometimes would say, "Oh, we have a Romanesque chalice."

I'd say, "My goodness. May I see it?" And then, of course, it was modern. They had no idea. But sometimes they had very precious objects. Actually, I discovered one with translucent enamels which was made in Paris in the early 14th century, and even had the name of the goldsmith and the stamp of Paris. It was a wonderful

discovery. But it was only when I went with the photographer and she put her big lamps on it that I saw these tiny stamps and the fleur-de-lys. What else?

Then, for instance, in the cemeteries, the old tombstones. I copied so many inscriptions. And what they also have in this area are "Wegekreuze". On the roads, they have little stone monuments with a crucifix [or the Madonna or the figure of a Saint] and inscriptions for you to pray when you pass it.

Linda Arntzenius: Interesting.

Gerda Panofsky: And they had lots of them which you had to find by chance and [through] the local people. They would be sometimes in the middle of the fields.

Linda Arntzenius: And people would observe this custom?

Gerda Panofsky: Yes, yes, or put flowers on it. So then the rest of the week, I would sit at my desk in the office and follow up my notes with literature or for instance with the goldsmiths' stamps, - they stem from the goldsmiths or the town where the objects were made, - usually [in the] 17th or 18th century. And we used a paste which actually the dentists used for making impressions. It was very precise and dried very fast. And then you could take it home like –

Linda Arntzenius: a specimen?

Gerda Panofsky: - like rubber and then [decipher it] with a mirror, because it was in reverse, and then [go to] the reference books where you can look them [the stamps] up and you could see, "Okay. This was made in Augsburg in 1720," or something [else].

Linda Arntzenius: You enjoyed doing that work, I take it.

Gerda Panofsky: Yes. It was – well, it was tiring because of all of these trips to the countryside and the weather was often bad. Then it was very isolated. We started at 8:00 in the morning [and worked] until 5:00 p.m. We even worked on Saturday mornings then. Now they have such reduced work hours everywhere. I think we had 48 hours a week, and now I think it's 35 or so. I couldn't go anywhere. The university was maybe ten minutes away, but I had no contact with it. We couldn't go there. About this, I was rather unhappy, and this was when in 1964 took place the International Art History Congress in Bonn. There was this Professor [Richard]

Krautheimer again and he said to me, you know Millard Meiss (he was professor at the Institute). Well, I had seen him from afar –

Linda Arntzenius: Did you know who he was? Did you know anything about him?

Gerda Panofsky: He opened the congress with the big opening lecture, so I saw him from afar among a thousand people. But I had an idea how he looked like. And he [Krautheimer] said, "Well, he wants to ask you something, and when you see him, please introduce yourself."

And so one day I saw him walking through the cafeteria and I ran after him and said, "Hello. I'm –" - my name wasn't Panofsky yet - "I'm Gerda Soergel." He said, "Oh, yes. And would you have a moment?" And I said, "Yes." "I'm looking for an assistant because I have to write this volume for the *Pelican History of Art* on Quattrocento painting[1] and would you be interested to come to Princeton?".

And I should say that when I was still in Rome, I had friends and these were Egon and Hanne Verheyen who had been Visiting Members at the Institute. And we went together to the beach and so on and they always said, "Ah , the Institute, the Institute . . .". I finally said, "What Institute are you talking about?" *[Laughs]* And I said, "Oh, my." And they said, "There is one position, but you will never get it!" And this was the one [that Meiss was offering to me].

Linda Arntzenius: Oh, wonderful. So things came together from different angles. It was your fate.

Gerda Panofsky: So Millard Meiss said, "Well, think it over and we can discuss it further in about three weeks. We will be in Venice. Why don't you come to Venice for a weekend?" So I mean, I was taken aback because that was not my lifestyle, just jet setting, at that time. Imagine, it was in the 1960s and I worked all week, so I could only come on a weekend. Just to get on a plane to Venice for having a conversation! But I did it and it went very badly.

Linda Arntzenius: Really?

Gerda Panofsky: Meiss was very unfriendly. His wife was hostile. I had no idea what had changed their mood suddenly. I had gone to all these expenses for this trip and I felt humiliated. I left practically in

---

[1] Italian painting of the 15th century.

tears, and I was very depressed. Then he tried to smooth it out and he said, "Well, we can have another conversation in Florence."

Linda Arntzenius: *[Laughs]*

Gerda Panofsky: "Why don't you come to Florence for another weekend?" I mean, all at my own expense, of course. They were at the Villa I Tatti. What Meiss could not understand - this was in the fall of 1964 - he thought I would come right away. I said, "No. I'm under contract, that's impossible, at the earliest, I can come next year, in 1965." And he was very angry about it. He didn't understand.

But I had a tenured position. I couldn't say, "I am leaving next week." So finally, we agreed that I would come in [the summer of 1965]. The Institute sent then the papers for an exchange visa, and I only needed to go to the American consulate in Bad Godesberg, which is just a tram ride from Bonn, very close. And that was it.

And then Meiss said, "Why don't you come under the Quota. Maybe you'll like it in America."

Linda Arntzenius: What does that mean?

Gerda Panofsky: That meant that you – they called it the Quota - that you would be admitted as a permanent resident. You would get the Green Card right away.

Linda Arntzenius: Right away.

Gerda Panofsky: And in the 1960s, it was very easy because anyone with an academic degree from Europe was received with open arms in America and got a job. A little later, they found out that the young Americans couldn't find a job and they didn't want any more intellectuals from Europe. They wanted just illiterate workers from Sicily or so to work in the harbor, but not intellectuals.

But this meant for me much more documentation I had to supply. It was much more expensive and time consuming. Among other things, I needed from every town where I had lived longer a certificate from the police that I hadn't committed any crime.

Linda Arntzenius: This was a requirement from the Americans?

Gerda Panofsky: Yes. And if you had lived more than six months abroad, you also needed it from there. I had lived four years in Rome. And to write

to the Questura in Rome, forget it. I would never ever get it [the certificate]. I was hopeless. So finally, I asked the German embassy in Rome to help me. And through them, I got this piece of paper from the police in Rome.

Linda Arntzenius: That must have taken a good deal of time.

Gerda Panofsky: I was so annoyed finally. I said, "Why am I doing this? I only want to go for one year."

Linda Arntzenius: Do you think that was Millard Meiss's plan? Perhaps he didn't want you for one year, he wanted you perhaps for a longer period?

Gerda Panofsky: No. He said one year, maybe two. I think that he just thought I myself might wanted to stay or so. And I remember in the middle of it, I thought, "Well, I'm crazy that I'm doing this." I just get this exchange visa and *basta*. I had a long, long telephone conversation with my sister and she said, "But now you have already gone so far. So why don't you pull it through?"

Linda Arntzenius: Yes.

Gerda Panofsky: And the last requirement was a whole day at the American Consulate General in Frankfurt am Main where you had to appear at 8 o'clock in the morning, which meant, of course, you had to stay overnight before. And then they did all kinds of medical tests that you didn't have tuberculosis and I don't know what. AIDS had not been invented yet, so, but everything else.

At the end of the day, I remember that you had an audience with the Consul and under oath you had to answer various questions. And there was this famous [questionnaire] – I mean, there were not any Xerox machines yet at the time, so I wish I had Xeroxed it - I think there were four pages of questions and they were famous. For instance, you had to sign under oath that you never had epilepsy or schizophrenia or tuberculosis, you never had committed a crime, you were not a prostitute, you didn't intend to murder the American president, and so on and so on.

So then I drove home with my Volkswagen to Bonn which is about a two and a half-hours drive. And I had a very bad car accident on my way because from a truck in front of me suddenly a big object [a brake-block] fell out right in front of my car. I was about to pass the truck and I tried to avoid it [the brake-block], but then the car started to, at this speed, to spin, you know.

And I was thrown back. I thought, "This is the end." In those few seconds, I lived through my entire funeral and I heard people saying, "Oh, and she just was looking forward to going to America." Miraculously, I emerged unharmed.

Linda Arntzenius: Oh, wonderful.

Gerda Panofsky: And when the police came, they said, "You have been very lucky." The car already was supposed to be shipped by freighter to America, and I already paid the freight, so it had to be repaired. It was about three weeks before I left. And, oh, I had all this hassle. I didn't have my own car. I needed to do all this paperwork for the insurance because it hadn't been my fault. Anyway, and so finally, I drove the car myself to Bremerhaven, where the ship was leaving. At the time, there were still many boats going. You could choose which line, and the first time coming to America I wanted to see the skyline of New York from the sea. So my ship was the old "Bremen", the flagship of the German fleet.

In the middle of the ocean – it [the voyage] took about eight days - in the middle of the ocean, the captain got a fatal heart attack and fell backward into the arms of his first officer. And so we were in this fog on the water with a dead captain on ice. *[Laughs]*

Linda Arntzenius: Gerda. *[Laughs]*

Gerda Panofsky: It was quite weird. The passengers dressed in black because after all he was our head of state on the boat. And there was no dancing any more. They played only serious music. And we arrived in New York with our flag on half-mast. And we were told that the captain would be cremated in New York. And then on the way back, the ashes would be dumped into the sea in German waters. They couldn't dump them in someone else's waters, there is a law.

An amusing episode: since I was alone, they seated me at a table for four and we had two elderly ladies and a nice young man from Romania and we made small talk at meals. And at the end of the whole trip, I suddenly realized that these ladies always had assumed the young man was my husband. And I said, "How did you ever get this idea?" And they said, "Because we never saw you talking to each other."

Linda Arntzenius: *[Laughs]* Charming. *[Laughs]*

Gerda Panofsky: But the skyline I did not see because it was on the 6th of August and it was very hot and hazy and we didn't even see the Verrazano Bridge when we were under it. Some people, who knew it, [when] there was a shade overhead, they said, "This is the Verrazano Bridge."

So forget the skyline. And then, of course, I got very scared. I was about the last one who left the boat.

Linda Arntzenius: Was there someone from the Institute meeting you?

Gerda Panofsky: Nobody. Nobody. It was something which I was a little surprised about that they [the Meisses] didn't make any arrangements or anything. I was just totally on my own. First time in America. My English was very bad. But then I was very impressed and overwhelmed by the kindness of the Americans, I must say. This was my first impression and it has been confirmed every day again.

And they helped me to get from [the pier] to the [Port Authority] bus terminal with all my luggage. At first I was horrified when I saw all the swamps of New Jersey, when you go on the Turnpike.

Linda Arntzenius: The swamps? Yes.

Gerda Panofsky: Swamps and all the stinking chemical industry. I thought, "How can people say this is so beautiful?" And then soon New Brunswick! New Brunswick was one of the worst slums at the time, until much later Johnson & Johnson bought up all these properties and cleaned up [the city in the 1970s]. But before, it was unbelievable. How can people live like this, in all this trash and – so just shortly before Princeton, the landscape became better and I said [to myself], "Oh, this is obviously an oasis in the desert."

Linda Arntzenius: *[Laughs]*

Gerda Panofsky: And I took a taxi from Palmer Square to the Institute, and I told the taxi driver that this was my first day ever on American soil, on the 6th of August in 1965. He asked, "Are you married?" I said, "No." He said, "Oh, you will soon get married here."

Linda Arntzenius: *[Laughs]*

Gerda Panofsky: And then in the evening, the Meisses took me out for dinner and we went to the "Princeton Inn", which is now the Forbes College, a

dormitory of the University. But at that time, it was the most elegant hotel in Princeton where all the wedding parties took place. And they knew about the dead captain because it had been in *The New York Times*, and they laughed about the remark of the taxi driver.

Linda Arntzenius: *[Laughs]*

Gerda Panofsky: And I was very charmed by my little apartment on Olden Lane, my bachelor's apartment, and the view from my balcony across a little wooden bridge, - which they have removed last year or two years ago, unfortunately, - towards Fuld Hall. But it was extremely hot in the beginning of August, and Princeton was deserted. There was almost nobody here.

Maybe you ask a new question.

Linda Arntzenius: Well, you came to work with Millard Meiss as his Research Associate.

Gerda Panofsky: Yes.

Linda Arntzenius: How did you contribute to his work, and what did you learn from him?

Gerda Panofsky: Well, you see, he had asked me to come for this Pelican volume on Quattrocento painting. Although I'm not a painting specialist, I had always been in Italy and I knew Italian and so on. But when I arrived, he said, "I have first to finish this other book," which was *French Painting in the Time of Jean de Berry*, which is French art of the late 14th/early 15th century. And that book was in its last stages. And as I didn't know what it was about, it was difficult for me because he now was working on the footnotes. He always gave me the footnotes, but not the text they belonged to. So from this kind of [frog] perspective, I couldn't tell what it was about. And as I said, my English was still very poor. Then he told me to check this or that in the library. And often, I wasn't sure whether I understood him right. And I thought, "Well, maybe when I go to the library, I will see what it is about." It sometimes worked, sometimes not. But he [Meiss] had a very nice secretary, Edith Kirsch [now deceased], who afterwards became an art history professor herself in Colorado.

Linda Arntzenius: Edith Kirsch? Who did you work with in the library? Who was working there at the time?

Gerda Panofsky: Judith Sachs was the Director of the [IAS] library, but Edith was sort of my, how you say, lifeline. She was very, very kind and helped me.

Linda Arntzenius: That was in 1965.

Gerda Panofsky: Sixty-five. But I also want to say that it became very difficult with Millard Meiss. For one thing, he had promised me, - and that had lured me also to Princeton, - he [had] said, "You only need to work for me half the day and the rest of the day you can do your own research." And that sounded ideal after I had been in this government employment from nine to five.

But he didn't keep his promise. I mean, I slaved from nine until dinnertime. When I was home, no sooner I was home [in the evening], he would ring me up and would keep me at eight o'clock or nine o'clock for another hour or more on the phone. And his wife would always interfere. She was very unpleasant. So very soon, we had confrontations and one day - that was his last triumph - very condescendingly he said, "Did you ever have a job where you were so well paid?" And I said, "Well, if you want to know, I had a much higher salary when I was in Germany and much better conditions, that was not why I came to America."

But Edith Kirsch also did something else for me. She took me to the swimming pool, the Nassau Swim Club in the woods, right away. And actually when I was still in Germany, Millard Meiss, - he sometimes had these generous moments, and then again, he was difficult, - one day he wrote me, "I already got you a membership for the swim club." And this was something that a German professor would never, ever do. Unthinkable. And all my friends they teased me and said, "Oh, you are already a member of a club in America?"

Linda Arntzenius: *[Laughs]*

Gerda Panofsky: And another funny thing happened, – well, at first, I was surprised that nobody was wearing a bikini. I had lived in Italy for so long, and I thought that this was very old-fashioned here. But the bathing suit I had from Germany was orange and black. And they could not believe it that I bought this in Germany, because these are the Princeton colors. *[Laughs]* They couldn't get over it. They said, "Did you really buy that in Germany?" I said, "Yes, I had no idea."

Linda Arntzenius: *[Laughs]* That's funny. But it wasn't a bikini.

Gerda Panofsky: It was not a bikini. Yes, I did have a bikini also but I didn't dare to wear it at the Nassau Swim Club. Now there are many young people who have a bikini.

But I must be now one of the longest members of this Nassau Swim Club, since 1965. And I love it every time in the summer, it's so close to the house and idyllic and especially in July, when you can swim at seven in the morning and the water is still cool and clear and there are maybe three or four people [only] (the Habichts [Christian and Freia] always come at seven sharp). It feels like it's your private pool and you're a millionaire.

Linda Arntzenius: Lovely.

Gerda Panofsky: Yes. It's lovely.

Linda Arntzenius: Oppenheimer was the Director then. Tell me about him and your work.

Gerda Panofsky: The Institute was still so small in numbers of members and buildings, even I as a young Research Associate had an audience with him for an hour, talking with him. He always smoked his pipe. I guess that's why he eventually got his cancer of the throat. I cannot remember whether he talked in German or in English [with me]. Maybe in German because he was fluent in eight different languages and he could read your thoughts. He could read sentences that you didn't say, and answer to them. *[Laughs]* It was strange.

Linda Arntzenius: Interesting. Did you find him intimidating?

Gerda Panofsky: Not intimidating. That's not the right word. I don't know. a bit scary maybe.

Linda Arntzenius: And what was your feeling – I mean, here you're meeting the man who had headed Los Alamos and the atomic bomb. Did you have any feelings about that?

Gerda Panofsky: Yes.

Linda Arntzenius: Presumably the subject did not come up at your meeting.

Gerda Panofsky: It did come up because he read my thoughts. *[Laughs]*

I would have never mentioned it, of course, tactfully. But actually, I knew very well Otto Hahn in Germany. He was the chemist who had [first] split the atom in 1938 and gotten the Nobel Prize for it. And I knew him personally very well. And he said when I was going to America, I should give my regards to Oppenheimer, so I said, "I have regards for you" [but left out the second part of the message].

I don't remember it precisely, but he [Oppenheimer] immediately sensed that these were not very friendly regards because Hahn [had] stopped with all his research once he realized what the consequences could be. And, of course, we were all horrified still by what happened in Hiroshima [and Nagasaki]. And I couldn't believe that when I came to America nobody talked about the atomic bomb or had any guilt feelings about it.

The other thing, of course, when I came in the '60s was that the Vietnam War was raging. I was very much against the Vietnam War, with all my heart. But everywhere I sort of ran against a wall. Even with my husband I had these discussions and they all had no moral qualms about it. This only changed for me when I started teaching in 1971, and I discovered that all the young students were thinking the same way as I did, all the young Americans students.

Linda Arntzenius: Before we leave Oppenheimer, though, did he say anything to you about the bomb in your conversation?

Gerda Panofsky: I don't remember the exact wording any more. But as I said, he read my thoughts and he knew that Otto Hahn did not approve [of] it and so he said something to this effect, but I don't remember it any more.

Linda Arntzenius: Have your feelings changed in that regard in any way over the years? Have your feelings about it changed?

Gerda Panofsky: No. Rather have gotten stronger, I should say. I should say. I was at a trustees dinner [of the Institute] last year, and one lady, - she was the wife of I think a mathematician who had a kind of semi-permanent appointment, - said, "That was a good thing with the atomic bomb". I said, "What?? What are you saying?" Although she was sitting next to me, I didn't speak one word to her any more.

Linda Arntzenius: People have made the argument that it put an end to the war and saved American lives because

Gerda Panofsky: Yes. Saved American lives! Of course, Japanese lives are not so precious. You don't need to save [250.000] Japanese lives. And the war was practically ended and it was all wrong because they thought the Germans had the atomic bomb. But it wasn't true. We didn't have it.

Linda Arntzenius: But it was non-issue, clearly, if people weren't speaking about it.

Gerda Panofsky: No. They repressed it, I think.

Linda Arntzenius: You think perhaps? But it came out with the younger generation?

Gerda Panofsky: But the younger generation and particularly the American students were all against the Vietnam War and so they sort of redeemed America for me.

Linda Arntzenius: Were the faculty here supportive of the students – of the younger generation, I should say, as a whole?

Gerda Panofsky: My colleagues - I was teaching at NYU, Washington Square College, three years, three and a half years, and then at Temple University in Philadelphia. I don't know. But I happened to be in Washington in [the spring of] 1971. There was a big Dürer exhibition at the National Gallery because it was the 500th Anniversary of Dürer's birth in 1471. And actually, I was there on a day when the National Gallery was closed. We were just very few people who were allowed to see the exhibition.

And on Constitution Avenue, there was a huge demonstration, anti-war demonstration. Tens of thousands of people, completely silent, they marched for hours and hours and hours. And whenever we looked out of the window in between the exhibition, they were still moving past on Constitution Avenue. And I think that really put an end to it [the Vietnam war a year and a half later].

I remember going back then by train, the trains were overcrowded. People were lying in these luggage racks. But it was very uplifting to be with all these people who were going home after the demonstration.

Linda Arntzenius: I wanted to go back to the Institute a little bit, when you were living in the member housing. And I want to know if you participated in any of the social life at the Institute at that time. Were there weekly dances perhaps, or any clubs? Of course, you've mentioned the swim club. But what kind of social events were there for –?

Gerda Panofsky: Well, the swim club actually belongs to the university and the Institute got memberships for it. Now they have opened it for the entire town because they need the money.

At the Institute, there were not so many – not so much entertainment, if I may say. Now there are ballroom dancings and tennis lessons and concerts. Well, then in the '70s, after the Dining Hall and the West Building were constructed, they would sometimes show movies in the Dining Hall, which meant they had to remove all the tables and you still couldn't see very well.

Linda Arntzenius: *[Laughs]*

Gerda Panofsky: This was improved when Wolfensohn Hall was built for these events. Otherwise, I don't remember – there were sometimes dinners in the evening one could go to like now. There were various cooks at the time. There was one who always served a huge steak which was – at this dinner - completely bloody. A friend [the late Elizabeth H. Beatson], who succeeded me as Millard Meiss's assistant or associate, - she was like you from Scotland, she was Scottish, - and we sometimes had dinner together. She would say, "I always feel like a dog having this bloody meat." This cook was so bad, he just opened some cans and most people returned the trays uneaten. And there was a lady at the cashier who spoke German for some reason. One night, she called me at home and she said in German, "heute haben's den Koch 'gefeuert'!" ("today they have fired the cook", which was *[Laughs]* her translation from the English). At first I didn't understand what she was talking about.

Linda Arntzenius: Was he fired?

Gerda Panofsky: He was fired. His food was inedible. And then for many years, we had Franz [Moehn], who was from the Mosel in Germany. And he was a very good cook and many people still are in touch with him. He retired and built himself a house in Provence. So I said [to him], "Well, then may I come and spend my vacations there?" and he said, no, no, he wouldn't work for any guests anymore."

I think there was a lady in-between and then came Michel [Reymond]. Yes. There were not so many social events, maybe lectures sometimes.

Linda Arntzenius: I thought there were quite a few dances that took place.

Gerda Panofsky: I can't remember any. No.

Linda Arntzenius: I think when you arrived, Oppenheimer was probably quite ill –

Gerda Panofsky: Yes, at least very soon he became very ill.

Linda Arntzenius: Did you know Kitty Oppenheimer?

Gerda Panofsky: Oh, yes, very well because – well, after my official visit in his office, taking this job at the Institute, – I have still the appointment letter with his signature, – then after I got married to Erwin Panofsky, we visited the Oppenheimers personally. And then I got to know Kitty at [her] home two or three times and also after Oppenheimer died, we paid a condolence visit to Kitty.

Linda Arntzenius: Tell me about the family. They moved out of the house -

Gerda Panofsky: They had to move out of Olden Farm because his term was finished and the new director, [Carl] Kaysen came. And obviously, the house had to be renovated first.

They [the Oppenheimers] had planned to build a house of their own on Maxwell Lane, the house that the Parets [:Peter and Isabel] are living in now. But it wasn't finished, it was barely started. They had started it before they knew about Oppenheimer's fatal illness. And so they were sitting there with all their belongings packed in big cases. And I remember that they lived for a while in a house on Mercer Street. I don't remember which house it was, but we visited them there.

They were waiting for the house being built (Kitty still lived in it afterwards), but also, how long he would still live with his cancer. I don't know which year it was, but I remember the way Kitty Oppenheimer died. She was sailing in the Caribbean with a boyfriend. And her daughter, Toni, was married to a Finn, who also was sailing all the time in Caribbean. And they planned in two boats [to] sail across the Pacific, and halfway they would meet on some islands, whose name I have forgotten.

And Toni with her Finnish husband sailed first and reached these islands. Oh, I should say first, before Kitty left [Princeton], our neighbor Ruth Cherniss, the wife of the classicist [Harold Cherniss], went one morning to Kitty's house to see her. And the seamstress came and Kitty was trying on a glorious dress in yellow silk. And Ruth said, "Oh, my God, what do you need this for on the boat?" And she said, "Well, I have an invitation by the Japanese emperor when we are in Japan."

Linda Arntzenius: Oh, my goodness.

Gerda Panofsky: And so they sailed towards Japan, but while they [Kitty and her boyfriend] were still going through the Panama Canal, Kitty got violently ill. I don't know what it was but she was rushed to a hospital and there she died two days later.

Linda Arntzenius: How awful.

Gerda Panofsky: So they had to reach somehow Toni on the other sailboat in the Pacific Ocean to come back. And then Toni maneuvered this [second] boat back [to the Caribbean] with Kitty's urn and the yellow silk dress [on board].

Linda Arntzenius: Oh, my goodness. What a tragedy. You've said they were cursed.

Gerda Panofsky: They were cursed somehow. Yes. Toni herself, the daughter, had also a gruesome fate.

Linda Arntzenius: Can you tell me about what happened to Toni and to Oppenheimer's son?

Gerda Panofsky: Yes. Oppenheimer's son, I barely met. I don't remember [him]. But I think he was a school dropout. And he was still a teenager, when he was taken care of by Ulli Steltzer. She was German and had a photographic studio in Princeton on Tulane Street. And she tried to teach him photography. But then Ulli Steltzer left Princeton and moved to the West coast for personal reasons. And I don't know what has become of the son.

Toni was brilliant, very beautiful and brilliant. She received all the guests, for instance, after her father died and people came and paid these condolence visits. Kitty was hysterical and alcoholic and so on. But Toni did this all very gracefully. She was studying at Columbia University. Like her father, she spoke several

languages. She went all the time to Russia. She was fluent in Russian. And then she had married this [much older] Finnish man who wanted to sail all the time, which after a while became boring for her.

She divorced him but remained in the Caribbean on an island [St.John] and opened a boutique and fell in love with a young boy who was delivering the goods from the ship that arrived once a week or so to bring provisions, and got married the second time on the lawn in Central Park.

Linda Arntzenius: Oh, my. That must have been a big wedding.

Gerda Panofsky: No. I wasn't there, but by chance, I met the Chernisses on the train coming back from New York from this ceremony. And then apparently she [Toni] wasn't happy either, and one day she hanged herself.

Linda Arntzenius: That is so tragic.

Gerda Panofsky: Yes. She was beautiful and very gifted and there was really no reason for her to end her life.

Linda Arntzenius: Horrible story.

Gerda Panofsky: Yes.

Linda Arntzenius: Very sad. Well, can you tell me something of some of the other people, the Chernisses you mentioned?

Gerda Panofsky: Cherniss.

Linda Arntzenius: Who were the people who became your friends?

Gerda Panofsky: Well, it's – hmm. *[Laughs]* I have to think. The Chernisses just lived across the street and they were very close friends of the Panofskys, so they [had] introduced me [to them]. And also afterwards when I was alone, Harold Cherniss was really like a father or uncle taking care of me when I had problems, advising me how to proceed with certain matters.

When I came [to the Institute] there was still [Elias A.] Lowe, the epigrapher. There was [Benjamin D.] Meritt. There was –

Linda Arntzenius: Setton?

Gerda Panofsky: [Kenneth] Setton came later, I think. Homer Thompson was already there. He would excavate every summer the Agora [in Athens]. Then there was still Hetty Goldman.

Linda Arntzenius: Tell me about her.

Gerda Panofsky: She was retired and she was in her 90s. She lived on Newlin Road. After my marriage, we [my husband and I] visited her at her house. I have just a vague recollection of her. She had already excavated I think in 1900 or so, long before I was born. *[Laughs]* But she was the only female faculty member for a long, long time at the School of Historical Studies.

And I would always bring up the subject when I was, for instance, invited for dinner at the Habichts or elsewhere, "Why does the Historical School not have any female faculty member?" And Mr. Habicht would always say, "Well, we would be delighted, but there aren't any [female scholars]." I said, "Come on. There must be."

Linda Arntzenius: *[Laughs]* Did you ever speak to Hetty about this subject?

Gerda Panofsky: No, I think it was just small talk. She was very frail at the time and being 94 or something and having someone attend to her all the time. But I still got a glimpse of her.

George Kennan was there, of course. Yes. And I must say [one of] the nicest people was George Kennan - he was so humble, he was so famous and still he was almost timid, and he would often eat alone [in the Institute's Dining Hall] and he would really enjoy [it], if you would join him and I had wonderful conversations with him about Russian history or Russian opera.

And actually, he knew me because when I worked for Meiss the first year, - Meiss's office was the one in Fuld Hall, which is now occupied by Irving Lavin, - and right next to it was George Kennan's office. My desk was in this anteroom before you came to these two offices, at the window. So Kennan always passed my desk when he went in and out, and then talked a little bit with me. My father was very interested in Russia and he [had] travelled in Russia, and so Kennan gave me a book [of his] with a lovely dedication for my father. So he was very, very nice.

Homer Thompson also was a great exception. For instance when I

ever would eat lunch in the cafeteria and would sit by myself, Homer would always come over and say, "Gerda, would you please join us?" And then he would introduce me to all these interesting visiting scholars from Greece and so on. Always he would do this. None of the others ever up to this day. I can sit at the table next to them, alone, and it never, ever occurs to them to say, "Why don't you join us?" Never.

It was quite surprising for me. When I came first, the cafeteria was still on the third flood of Fuld Hall. There were maybe – I don't know how many - maybe six or eight round tables. I thought I was in the Orient. There was a complete segregation between men and women. The faculty, the scholars were all men because Hetty Goldman had long retired. .

They were all men that were sitting together. And the staff were all women, and they were sitting together. And I thought, "Well, I'm a scholar. I had academic training. I have published and so on. I don't belong with the secretaries." But these men would never invite me to join them.

Linda Arntzenius: So you sat alone.

Gerda Panofsky: So I sat alone. Up to this day. And I'm not used to this from Europe. [As colleagues] we would all mix and mingle and have a good time together.

Linda Arntzenius: Interesting.

Gerda Panofsky: Very strange.

Linda Arntzenius: Did you see any other – that's a gender divide. But did you see any racial divisions?

Gerda Panofsky: Well, at the beginning, there were no black people at the Institute. Now they have a few [in the staff and] in the administration. [As permanent faculty] they have Danielle Allen.

Gerda Panofsky: And there were no – oh, I should hark back - when I came in 1965, Millard Meiss in these various meetings in Florence and Venice, had explained to me that Princeton was an all-male university.

Linda Arntzenius: Ah, yes.

Gerda Panofsky: And when I reported this back to my family and friends [in Germany], they laughed. They said, "Oh, your English is still so bad. You must have misunderstood him. There doesn't exist a university with only men. No. You've misunderstood him." But it was true. And when I came to Princeton, there were no women studying on the campus, and definitely no blacks.

The first PhD in art history [to a woman] was awarded [by Princeton University] to Doula Mouriki [in 1970]. She was Greek and she was still a [graduate] student of my husband. And after she got her PhD, she went straight back to Greece. It was only in the late '60s that women were admitted[2] –

Linda Arntzenius: What did you think of this?

Gerda Panofsky: It was very strange. I couldn't believe that there was a university only for men, unless it was a seminary for priests. That's something different. And there were no blacks at all. The only black people on the campus were the janitors. Even the painting jobs were only given to whites.

Linda Arntzenius: That was at the university?

Gerda Panofsky: At the university.

Linda Arntzenius: Was it the same at the Institute?

Gerda Panofsky: The same at the Institute. [At the University] only in the late '60s, they admitted girls and they admitted blacks. Many of the alumni protested and thought the quality of Princeton would go way down because of the women. But still, I can feel the difference because when I was teaching all these years at Temple in Philadelphia, - Temple University is a state university so it has open undergraduate admission, and the student body is much more mixed.

We have predominantly black students in Philadelphia. That was actually the purpose why the university was founded in a black urban area. A lot of Asian students from Japan, Taiwan, India, and a lot of Hispanic students. Then of course, there is a constituent of Jewish students. Then white American students with European background, usually from Ireland or Italy. But it [the Temple University campus in Philadelphia] is much more colorful than the

[2] Women undergraduates were first admitted to Princeton University in 1969.

campus at Princeton, [which] even now feels a bit like an elite white campus.

Linda Arntzenius: Yes. Interesting. I would like you to answer some questions now about your late husband, Erwin Panofsky. He came from Germany, but 30 years before you arrived in '65, he was appointed in 1935.

Gerda Panofsky: Right.

Linda Arntzenius: What did you know of him before you came to the United States?

Gerda Panofsky: His books, of course.

Gerda Panofsky: Had you studied his books?

Gerda Panofsky: Yes. I knew his books, but I didn't know him personally.

Linda Arntzenius: When you came – presumably when you met him, he and his wife, Dora, she was very ill I understand.

Gerda Panofsky: Yes.

Linda Arntzenius: And they had two grown-up sons. Perhaps you could tell me a little bit about their family before you were married, - sort of as an outsider.

Gerda Panofsky: Well, when I came to Princeton, of course, I knew that Panofsky was also here and I knew his books because I'm an art historian and admired his books very much. And someone gave me the good advice, a professor in Germany. He said, "When you go to Princeton, if I were you, I would pay Panofsky a visit." And I planned to do this anyway.

But as I arrived in early August, Princeton was deserted. I thought, of course, I took it for granted that Meiss would introduce me because, first of all, I was an art historian, I was from Germany and so he would introduce his new research associate. But he never said anything. And so I thought the Panofskys must also be on vacation. And one day, we were leaving the Institute and Meiss said, "Oh, by the way, this is Panofsky's car." I said, "Oh, they are here?" And then I thought about paying him a visit.

One day, I discussed it with Edith Kirsch, whom I mentioned [before], my friend, when we were at the swimming pool. She

said, "Oh, I would never, ever bother Panofsky, never, ever. He works all the time, no, no, no, no. You must not do this." So for a while I dropped this plan. But then I thought, "No. I'll do it the German way."

Gerda Panofsky: And so one Sunday morning, I just walked to their door and rang the bell and said who I was. And [the Panofskys], "Oh, you are German, then we can speak German." And I said, "Well, I wasn't sure would you like to speak it, - of course [we can]." And so we talked and after half an hour, I thought I should leave and say goodbye. And I waited for a good moment in the conversation to break it up, and then they said, "Well, what are you eating on Sundays?" It wasn't much. "Why don't you come with us because on Sundays we don't have our cook and we always eat at the Nassau Club, and why don't you join us?"

So I was thrilled because we had many topics to talk about. So much later when *[Laughs]* I got married to Panofsky, Edith Kirsch would always laugh and say, "That was the best advice I ever gave you not to ever bother Panofsky." *[Laughs]* And we laughed about it.

Linda Arntzenius: Oh, that's funny.

Gerda Panofsky: Yes.

Linda Arntzenius: Now tell me about Dora. Oh, there's another person I wanted to ask you about, but we can get to him – I'll make a note. I wanted to ask you if you knew Kurt Gödel and his wife.

Gerda Panofsky: No.

Linda Arntzenius: You didn't?

Gerda Panofsky: Well, no. Not his wife at all. But I remember him vaguely, and I don't know [in] which years. He was like a ghost. He was going through the library in the summer when it was 90 degrees in the shade, dressed in his winter coat and a shawl. It was weird. Yes. I saw him like this maybe two or three times, but I did not know him, no.

Linda Arntzenius: And you didn't meet this wife?

Gerda Panofsky: No.

Linda Arntzenius: No. Interesting. Allright. Panofsky. Dora, because when we were at dinner [at Gaby Borel's house], I think it was Lily [Harish-Chandra] who described her as a feminist and wearing mannish clothing.

Gerda Panofsky: Yes. It was sort of from the 1920s.

Linda Arntzenius: That's right. Yes. So tell me about this.

Gerda Panofsky: I have seen photographs of her as a young girl, and she had long braids, long hair. She was beautiful. And one day she must have cut it short completely. Her husband must have been so shocked. And she dressed like a man and she despised to do any work in the house or cooking. I think she couldn't even fry an egg. But this was the idea of the 1920s to be independent now. She went to the library all the time.

They [Erwin and Dora Panofsky] had met in a seminar at Berlin University in art history. She never took a degree. But late in life, she started also to publish some articles.

Linda Arntzenius: How was she?

Gerda Panofsky: She was eight years older than her husband. And then for a long time she was ill and she was almost blind when I met her. So they depended completely on Emma Epps. We come to Emma [Greene] Epps, the cook who I think was with them since they came to Princeton. In the beginning she stayed in the house, I mean, after it was built in 1938. And then when she got married, she lived –

Linda Arntzenius: So Emma lived with them in this house [on Battle Road] for a time?

Gerda Panofsky: In the beginning.

Linda Arntzenius: Until she got married.

Gerda Panofsky: Because when they came to Princeton, the two sons were already in college. They never lived in this house. That was a house for two people.

Linda Arntzenius: So Emma didn't raise the sons.

Gerda Panofsky: That's what she said [that she raised them], but they were already college students. She taught them some American behavior or specialties. No, they graduated from Princeton [University] in 1938, exactly when this house was being built, and went off to graduate school. And Emma stayed with their parents in the house. But then – I don't know when, but sometime she got married [to Douglas Epps]. And then she lived in what was very much a black ghetto in Princeton, on Birch Avenue, in her [own] house.

And then she only came during the day, or in my time, she came just four times a week, and on two other days she had a replacement.

Linda Arntzenius: And what was her job?

Gerda Panofsky: She was a fabulous cook and it was very good because we had a lot of guests who came all the time for lunch or dinner. But she always said, of course, that [she hated cooking, because] originally she had wanted to become a nurse and she was not allowed as being black to become a nurse. Now most of the nurses are black. So that's when she became a cook.

But she was very active [in community life]. She worked as, I think, they are called the "Pink Ladies" in the hospital, right? They volunteer. I don't know whether they still exist. At the time they had striped pink uniforms, and they helped the nurses, for instance, serve the meals or put the flowers into fresh water so that the nurses were free to do –

Linda Arntzenius: Did Emma have any children of her own?

Gerda Panofsky: No. She didn't have any children at all.

Linda Arntzenius: Presumably when she worked for Dora Panofsky, she pretty much ran the house.

Gerda Panofsky: She ran the house because they [the Panofskys] were completely – completely dependent on her. Dora wouldn't do anything in the house or refused to do anything in the house. So Emma ruled the house.

Linda Arntzenius: How did she react when you came in as a young [bride]?

Gerda Panofsky: Of course, that was difficult for both us because I wouldn't submit to this *[Laughs]* tyranny. Of course, I could do many things myself, you know. I was not supposed to put the flowers there, I was supposed to put them here, [etc., etc.] . . . ! *[Laughs]* It was difficult.

[As I mentioned], she had a replacement for the two days she couldn't come. And [as] I said, on Sundays we would eat out, although it would have been easy to cook something. The replacement was Alice, and Alice was totally helpless. She would stand in the kitchen and when I would come, she would say, "So what can we have for lunch today?" I said, "Alice, did you open the refrigerator? Why don't you look?"

Linda Arntzenius: *[Laughs]* What was Alice's last name? Do you remember?

Gerda Panofsky: I think Wright. She died very soon after my husband died and I was at her funeral. But when Emma died, I must have been abroad because I spent many years in Italy, so I wasn't here.

Linda Arntzenius: Tell me about the buzzer under the table.

Gerda Panofsky: Yes. And there was a buzzer under the table under the carpet. So I had to slip my foot – I mean, just at the edge under the table and discretely push it when we had guests. Maybe it made sense to let her know that the guests had finished the soup and she could bring the second course. But she was just sitting around the corner and I found this ridiculous for instance when I had just breakfast with my husband and she was sitting at the kitchen table having her breakfast, to ring the bell and say, "There is a spoon missing." *[Laughs]*

Linda Arntzenius: So what did she think?

Gerda Panofsky: She was used to this but I thought it was humiliating. But then it became totally absurd when I was alone afterwards. And, of course, I could not end this relationship. I had no money whatsoever to pay her, but she would serve me this elaborate breakfast. My God, it takes me ten minutes to have breakfast and have a coffee, and [she would make] roasted pigeons for lunch and all these fancy things.

And then she would – she wouldn't sit down at the table - but she would stand with her arms akimbo and lecture to me about civil rights and so on forever. But she wouldn't clean anything. She

hadn't cleaned before, neither. The house was very much run down. Dora first of all didn't care, and also she was half-blind and she couldn't see it. So I had to clean the floors, and she [Emma] just made this fancy breakfast [and lunch].

And then I had to pay [her], I don't know forty dollars or so, which I didn't have. It was absolutely absurd. She had been in the house for so long.

Linda Arntzenius: That must have been very difficult.

Gerda Panofsky: I didn't know how to tell her that I would like to end this. But one day she herself – I mean, she had a very noble spirit - she came one day and said, "Here are the keys, I don't think you need me." And I was relieved. Yes, because that was out of proportion then to have this servant in the kitchen.

Linda Arntzenius: And this was long after Panofsky had died?

Gerda Panofsky: I don't remember how long, but she stayed quite a while. Yes. I think it was several months or so. Yes.

Linda Arntzenius: Was your husband ill for a long period?

Gerda Panofsky: No.

Linda Arntzenius: You weren't married very long.

Gerda Panofsky: He got a very serious heart attack. He was always teaching one semester at Princeton University, - he was teaching a graduate seminar, - and then one semester at NYU he was teaching a graduate seminar.

Linda Arntzenius: And he was 74 by this time.

Gerda Panofsky: Yes. But he always liked to have the contact with the students. With some other professors at the Institute, they just write their own books and get totally out of touch with the real world. In the spring, he [my husband] would teach in Princeton, and in the fall at NYU. So once a week, we would go to New York by train. I would drive the car to the Princeton Junction and we'd take the train. And we would often have a lunch appointment with someone, like for instance the Krautheimers. And then he would teach his seminar.

He would not allow me to participate in it. And I would then do some shopping or go to an exhibition. And then we would meet again in the evening. And this one day in December [of 1967], they had a very long session, I think four hours trying to make up for some time. And after that, we had a dinner invitation downtown in Manhattan. That was all a bit too much. So on our way home, he fell very sick. Yes.

And then we had to rush him to the hospital, and it turned out it was a very serious heart attack and he barely survived. But he did survive. Eventually from intensive care, he got into a private room and then he was at home, but he never recovered for about three months and it got worse and worse. Yes, it was a heart attack.

Linda Arntzenius: Now we've got to the point where your husband has died and you were here. Did you contemplate going back to Germany, going home? Because you hadn't been here for very long.

Gerda Panofsky: I wanted to. Yes. I wanted to immediately, but it was impossible because first of all, I didn't have my apartment anymore. First, I had sublet it only, but after I got married, I [had] dissolved it.

Linda Arntzenius: Uh-huh, right.

Gerda Panofsky: I left it for a colleague and it was a charming apartment in Bonn. So after my marriage, I said, "Look. Now I won't come back for a long time and I'm going to take my furniture out." So he *[Laughs]* was very disappointed because he thought he already lived so nicely there. But I said, "I can't do it forever." And my job was gone. But also, here I was so overwhelmed with work still because there were all these [papers] – well, there was the last book by my husband that had to be finished, the proofs and the index of the Titian book [*Problems in Titian, Mostly Iconographic*].

And then there were piles and piles of manuscripts in his study and his office, and the office had to be cleared. The Institute then built a cage for me on the lower floor of the library.

Linda Arntzenius: You'll have to explain that because that sounds very strange. *[Laughs]* Yes.

Gerda Panofsky: It wasn't a cage [for animals]. *[Laughs]* Where now are the periodicals on these movable shelves, they built a cage because they needed the office. And all the filing cabinets and piles and piles of books - there were [shelves and] lots of old chairs [in the

office] and on each chair was [also] a pile of books – were moved into this cage because I had not space for them in my house. And also there it was safer. It was fireproof. And they [the Institute] said maybe for one year. I eventually had the cage for ten years. And for hours and hours and hours I worked in this cage. There was a project to publish the correspondence [of my husband], and after he died, Carl Kaysen, who was the director at the time, wrote me a letter three weeks later.

[He wrote, "I regret that I must intrude on your grief with business, but there is a matter of some importance . . . The Institute would like to arrange for and sponsor the publication of a selection of your husband's letters to historians of art and scholars in related disciplines all over the world . . . the editor should have at his disposal the complete set of your husband's reprints . . . I would hope that after this use the reprints could be left in the library as a memorial to him"].[3]

Apparently Kaysen assumed I would immediately make a bonfire and destroy all these records. I don't know what he thought, but so I started to put this correspondence into order. Very soon also I got many requests from people who were interested in this correspondence, in this particular correspondence and that one. And it was all [filed] by years, the secretary always had each year [by itself]. And there were orders for railroad tickets and restaurant bills. Everything was mixed up with the academic correspondence. If I got such a request, I had to go through all these files to find one letter here and one letter there. So I thought it makes much more sense to have the correspondence sorted by names. And then you know you have 10 letters or you have 100 letters and they range over such and such years. But the Institute never went ahead with this [editorial] project.

The Princeton University Press was very eager to publish it and they kept asking me all the time and writing and telephoning and asking what's going on, "We would like to plan this project." But nothing happened.

Then there came the new director, Harry Woolf. And one day I asked for an appointment and I said, "Look. I have this letter here from Kaysen and he said he would find the best editor in the world and the Institute would publish it". And he said, "I'm a hundred percent behind this commitment by my predecessor, and of course,

[3] Text added in transcript review by Gerda Panofsky.

we are going to do it." And nothing happened, nothing. For [thirteen] more years.

So finally, and at the same time, they said the cage, eventually the library needs this space. The books I sorted. There were many books that my husband himself wouldn't have read or want to keep because every day he received three or four from publishers or people – I divided them. I made dozens of trips with my Volkswagen between the Institute and the house.

I took books from here which I didn't want to keep to the Institute, I took books from the cage to the house. Eventually I had three piles in our study. There was one pile which I said those I'm going to donate to the Institute's library. These [others] I want to keep because they have some personal connections or I need them for my own work or they are valuable for some other reason. And in the middle was the biggest pile where I couldn't make up my mind.

And so eventually, I gave a lot of books [over 500] to the Institute. It happens quite often when I'm looking for some strange publication, I say, "Oh, the Institute has this book, fantastic." And then I open it and it says "The gift of Gerda Panofsky", and I had totally forgotten I once owned this book.

Linda Arntzenius: At least you know where it is.

Gerda Panofsky: Five minutes from here and I can always use it as long as I live here. So these letters –

Linda Arntzenius: Were they ever published?

Gerda Panofsky: Nothing came out of it with the Institute. So eventually [in 1979], I donated them to the Archives of American Art in Washington, DC. They are part of the Smithsonian Institution. They had approached me and everybody said that's the best you can do because they have trained archivists and it's all kept in acid-free paper and they microfilm the entire material, so even if their place burns down, they have microfilms elsewhere in the world. They also got papers from other well-known art historians. So that was a positive end.

To publish it [the correspondence], I finally found a scholar in Germany, [Professor] Dieter Wuttke. He is in Bamberg [Germany]. German literature of the Renaissance is his field, but

he also dabbled in art history. And he had edited some correspondence of Aby Warburg. The problem was that we needed a scholar who was at home in both worlds, America and Germany, - because all the early years were from Germany, - and [who was] fluent in both languages. If it was an older person, for instance there was this close friend [William S.] Heckscher here, but he was close to 90 and you couldn't burden him with such a task.

If it was a very young person, he would not know about this [German] background and it would ruin his future because he would have to make a teaching career. Dieter Wuttke was just in the middle. At the time he was sort of in his 50s and he was a very conscientious scholar. He has published so far four huge volumes [of the *Erwin Panofsky Correspondence*]. The fifth – and supposedly last one - he's still working on. But he makes the selection and the editing.

Linda Arntzenius: Going back to the Institute again for a moment, some people have described the Institute as a stressful event. That's not something that you have found?

Gerda Panofsky: I don't know what they find stressful *[Laughs]* and what they compare it to.

Linda Arntzenius: Well, I'm thinking of members, perhaps, who come for a year and feel that this visit, what they do during this period, is going to make or break their career.

Gerda Panofsky: Yes.

Linda Arntzenius: Have you seen anything of that?

Gerda Panofsky: We had some cases in the past where they actually came from a very stressful situation, teaching or administration or whatever, and [finding themselves] suddenly here in this relaxed environment, they collapsed. Some got a heart attack and so forth. It happened a few times. I must say personally, for me, it was very stressful to commute to Philadelphia all these years, three or four times a week. In the beginning, I did it by train. I mean, three trains. You have to take the Dinky. You have to go to Trenton and change in Trenton again. And these are local trains, they take forever. And then you have to take a city bus in Philadelphia.

Linda Arntzenius: You never thought of driving?

Gerda Panofsky: Yes. But at first my car wasn't good enough. Later I had a better car, a heavier car because here the wind can often be very strong on the highway. And then I would drive. But it would take me – in the morning I would leave between seven to eight [o' clock], it was rush hour, - it would take me an hour and a half to go and an hour and a half to come back. And then within Philadelphia, we had to teach on two different campuses, which were far distant from [one] another. Even by car, it was half an hour.

But first of all, there was the stress on the highway. As you came closer to Philadelphia, there was a total traffic jam. And then you drove through slums. I mean, they were – every second house was boarded or had totally collapsed, the street was strewn with broken glass and garbage.

And it was even dangerous. Among our faculty and students we had rapes where people were raped with a knife at their throat. Students were shot at. Some were dead. Some were paralyzed for the rest of their life. Everything was stolen in our department. They stole the telephones. They stole the electric clocks from the wall. If you stepped out of your office for a moment, someone had gone through your purse and taken the money out. So we never had any evening classes, everybody tried to get home before it got dark.

Linda Arntzenius: So *that's* a stressful environment.

Gerda Panofsky: That was certainly stressful. And then when I came to the Institute, I relaxed. Everything was clean and beautiful and peaceful and I just looked at the lake and the woods and I restored myself and became a human being again. But I always thought it was very healthy to have this contrast to be conscious of the fact that there was a real world, and the Institute seemed surreal, totally isolated. It reminded me of a cruise ship where you meet interesting international passengers, you exchange addresses when you say goodbye again, and there are concerts and there are the fancy parties and movies are being shown. And there is a lot of personnel who takes care of all the practical things. I don't know why people find it stressful. Maybe they are planning to write three books and the time is not enough.

And, of course, people who have never been in America, they also want to see New York or Boston or Washington and that's too much if they just come for three months.

Linda Arntzenius: When you were describing the Institute there, it sounds very much like the Institute vision that Abraham Flexner had way back in the beginning. Did you know of that at any time? Did you become aware of that at a certain moment? Is the history of the Institute something that has been known to you?

Gerda Panofsky: This vision?

Linda Arntzenius: Its founding and the vision that Flexner had for a place somewhat removed where scholars could work.

Gerda Panofsky: Yes, Yes. In the old cafeteria in Fuld Hall, there was an adjacent room and there hung a picture on the wall which showed, I've forgotten the name, [a castle on] an island off Denmark. And at the time of Tycho Brahe, the astronomer who is buried in Prague in the Teyn Church, - it must have been the 16th or 17th century[4], - there existed already such a vision to have a place for only research and scholarship on an island.[5] And actually, the architecture is similar to Fuld Hall with a clock tower and obviously the architect who built Fuld Hall knew of this picture. This picture has disappeared. I don't know who took it.

Linda Arntzenius: Was it a photograph or a drawing?

Gerda Panofsky: I think it was a photograph of a drawing [or aquarelle], as far as I remember. It was in color under glass. I wonder what has become out of it. Nobody seems [to be] aware any more of this.

Linda Arntzenius: And it was of an island.

Gerda Panofsky: I think it is an island. I can't remember the name [right] now. But I might find out for you. But it had to do with Tycho Brahe, the astronomer. I don't know whether he founded it [the castle] or he worked [there], or what was the connection.

Linda Arntzenius: Well, I will pursue that.

Gerda Panofsky: But obviously that was the model even for the architecture [of the Institute for Advanced Studies].

---

[4] Tycho Brahe was buried in the Teynkirche in Prague in 1601.

[5] Uranienborg on the island of Hven, built circa 1576-1580, where Tycho Brahe operated an astronomical observatory. In addition to the instruments and laboratories, the castle provided space for visiting astronomers, students and Tycho's family.

Linda Arntzenius: Do you think?

Gerda Panofsky: Yes.

Linda Arntzenius: Interesting. This was in Denmark?

Gerda Panofsky: I think it's off Denmark, Yes. He [Tycho Brahe] was Danish.

Linda Arntzenius: That's fascinating.

Gerda Panofsky: I [will] try to find the name for you

Linda Arntzenius: Thank you. Now you taught at Temple for many years and you published mostly in Germany [and Italy, but also in England and the U.S.]. What would you say has been your most significant contribution to your field?

Gerda Panofsky: Well, in Bonn I did these inventory volumes, the three volumes [*Die Denkmäler des Rheinlands. Rheinisch-Bergischer Kreis*]. But when I had this fellowship in Rome before, I worked in the archives, and I wrote a very, very long article, it's practically a monograph, on a palace in Rome of the late 16th/early17th century with frescoes inside on the ceilings and sculptures in the courtyard, and a painting gallery.

Linda Arntzenius: What was the name of the palace?

Gerda Panofsky: Mattei. And that [palace] was rather important because it was by a famous architect, but the dating was all wrong when he had built it. The attributions of the ceiling frescoes were all wrong and they were by important Baroque painters. I still get correspondence about [my research].

And then I wrote a book on a statue by Michelangelo. There is a statue of a nude "Christ" in Santa Maria sopra Minerva in Rome. And I worked on the family who commissioned it and on the iconography of this statue.

I published several other articles from my archival work. For the Palazzo Mattei, I worked two summers in the private archive of the family, which was in Recanati in the Marche region, on the other side of Italy, towards the Adriatic Sea, which – I don't know whether I should take your time - but I started with the reliefs in the courtyard and I tried to find out who did them and when, and

why. In the State archives you can order the deeds of the notaries, but there were about 50 notaries working simultaneously in Rome. And each year [of each notary] means about three or four or five of these big volumes and you can order only three volumes a day.

If you don't know the year and the name of the notary, you can sit there for a hundred years and by chance you'll hit what you are looking for. So that doesn't make sense and I thought I had to come in from the other side, where I already had the family records - because the family kept one copy of the records and one was in the notary's files.

And I asked the director of our institute [the Bibliotheca Hertziana], Count Wolff Metternich to write a letter to the Principessa Antici-Mattei, and she said no, it was not possible. So I asked the director couldn't he try it one more time, and he said, "No. You can't do this. If she said no, then it's no." It was the end of the road. So I wrote myself *[Laughs]* and I explained it all and I got a very nice answer from her [the Principessa]. And she said, "Then why don't you come?"

Linda Arntzenius: Excellent. Persistence pays off.

Gerda Panofsky: They had moved all the records to their country seat in Recanati and when I arrived, I realized why she had said no. Because her husband, the Principe, - it had been his hobby to work on his family archive and he had started to unpack these cases and to put them in order, - had dropped dead one morning from a heart attack, while they were having breakfast. And this had happened very recently and it was very hard for her to see a stranger fool around there –

But she [the Principessa] was very nice and she just gave me the key, and I stayed in the local hotel, and she said you can come and go as you want. She invited me quite often for lunch or for tea. I went back a second time [the following year] because I had all these notes when I came home, and [only] then I realized what I had been missing and [therefore] went back again.

Then recently, of course, I switched to Russian literature and have already published three long articles and one book by now.

Linda Arntzenius: Wonderful. Is there any overlap with what you do and –?

Gerda Panofsky: Art history, yes.

Linda Arntzenius: No. I was going to ask with Sarah Hirschman's *People and Stories*. She does a lot of reading in Russian literature.

Gerda Panofsky: She's fluent in Russian because she grew up in Lithuania and – no, there is not, because she mostly does Spanish literature, I think. No, there is not. But she's interested in these Russian authors.

Linda Arntzenius: What I was going to ask you now is about the fact that you've been associated with the Institute for over four decades and there's been six directors.

Gerda Panofsky: *[Laughs]* Yes.

Linda Arntzenius: – only eight directors in total, so –

Gerda Panofsky: Only two before Oppenheimer?

Linda Arntzenius: Yes. Flexner and Aydelotte and then came Robert Oppenheimer, Carl Kaysen, Harry Woolf, Marvin Goldberger, Phillip Griffiths, and now Peter Goddard.

Gerda Panofsky: Yes.

Linda Arntzenius: And I wanted to ask you for your comments and opinions and perhaps you might make some remarks on what you have observed over the years of the changing administrations.

Gerda Panofsky: Well, I must say, we never had such a nice director as Peter Goddard, especially his wife, Helen. The previous directors were rather aloof from the Institute's community. They gave the obligatory parties and they were very friendly, but otherwise we had no contact.

It's the first time that we have a director who is very, very kind. Phillip Griffiths would never even say "Good morning" to you. You could meet him at the door and he would go in and you would go out, he wouldn't even say "Good morning", let alone know who you were. The Goddards know everybody. Helen knows, I think, by name even [all] the visitors, and she goes out of her way to invite them, to teach them English, to suggest excursions for them. And this little Institute newspaper [*TatI*] we never had before, where she contributes a lot, Helen. She's absolutely fabulous.

And they're so warm and so cordial. And they don't give

themselves airs. And it's really as if they were your parents. *[Laughs]* So I hope they can stay. I mean they have these policies that it's five years and then maybe five more years, and then comes the next director. Although Phillip Griffiths stayed 12 years. I hope they're going to change this [policy] unless Peter Goddard has had enough of administration.

Linda Arntzenius: Do you remember Carl Kaysen? What was he like?

Gerda Panofsky: Yes. My husband was very afraid of him. He didn't like him.

Linda Arntzenius: Why?

Gerda Panofsky: I don't know. He said, "He will probably kick me out of my office immediately as an emeritus."

Linda Arntzenius: As an emeritus. Was that an issue of needing to have space?

Gerda Panofsky: I don't know. It was his imagination. Of course, it didn't happen. But Kaysen had a lot of difficulties with the faculty, with the trustees. And there were many years again with Harry Woolf when there were constant fights between the trustees and the director and the faculty, and it even affected everybody else at the Institute.

Linda Arntzenius: How did it affect the faculty wives?

Gerda Panofsky: Well, it was just a very unpleasant atmosphere and very aggressive. Under Philip Griffiths, we all said, "Let's please have peace!" Well, there is peace now, it's wonderful. They are all prima donnas these professors. *[Laughs]* So it's really difficult to rule them. And the different schools very little talk to each other.

Linda Arntzenius: So what changes have there been over the years that have particularly affected faculty wives? I'm thinking things about housing, pensions, perhaps retirement age issues.

Gerda Panofsky: Well, they [the Institute faculty and administration] are very kind to their faculty widows or widowers. And even though you officially have no – [you] don't belong to the faculty any more, you are included in the Institute's family, so you can eat at the dining hall. I can get into the library anytime in the evening or on holidays. I have all these privileges. If you need a notary or you have to fax something or to scan or whatever, the Institute is there to help you.

Even with the house. We have a deed, because this house was built on Institute's grounds and the land had been sold at a very low price to my husband. And then he built the house [at his own expense in 1938]. So we could take the house away. But as we have a deed, we have to sell it back to the Institute.

And I remember that [after my husband's death] our lawyer one day called me and he was very, very upset and he said, "Can you find the deed? Can you find the deed?" And when I found it, he said, "There it is." I said, "What? What are you talking about?" He said, "They can cut your throat anytime they want." I said, "What??" He said, "According to this deed, they can send you a notice that in a month you have to be out." I said, "I wouldn't even rent an apartment with such a contract."

And though the Institute will probably not do it, but legally they could. And if there were an unpleasant director who said, "Well, I have a famous mathematician now and he needs a house so get out of here," they could have done it. They changed the deed and at first, it said you can stay in it as long as you like unless you move away for good. If I say, now I live in Paris or so, then I cannot –

Linda Arntzenius: Rent it out.

Gerda Panofsky: – rent it out, Yes. So then it's finished if I don't come back, or if I get remarried, or if I die. And then I told them, "Look, this is immoral, people just won't get married, they would be stupid, right?"

Linda Arntzenius: *[Laughs]*

Gerda Panofsky: I mean, anyway, nobody gets married these days. They just live together. So they dropped this [condition]. So it's only if I move away for good or if I die, and then it [the house] goes back to the Institute.

Linda Arntzenius: That seems fair enough.

Gerda Panofsky: Yes. So this was also very generous to change this deed and say please be happy as long as you like. You feel protected. But I couldn't have lived with the idea that any time I could get a notice in a month to be out. It is impossible.

Linda Arntzenius: You can't live that way.

Gerda Panofsky: No. They said, in the early years, we made some of those deeds. Later, they didn't do it anymore and they tried to recover those.

Linda Arntzenius: Tell me why you haven't become an American citizen. *[Laughs]*

Gerda Panofsky: Because I don't want to.

[Laughter]

Gerda Panofsky: No. First of all, I have a German passport, and it's now a European passport, and I will never give up [my right] belonging to the European Community. Until a few years ago, it [acquiring American citizenship] would have meant to lose the German or European citizenship. I've many friends, French friends, Italian friends, Swiss friends like the Borels, who have dual citizenship and they always said, "Why don't you get dual citizenship?" I finally asked the German Consulate General in New York, and I said, "Tell me, can I have dual citizenship?"

They said, "No. Germany does not allow it." But now, - it's not long, maybe five years or so, - it's possible. But it's very, very complicated. And you have to prove why you want to keep the one and not give up the other [passport]. I think I could prove it. I almost started to look into this [matter] when the Iraq war came and Abu Ghraib and I shuddered and I said, no, not under these circumstances. As long as Bush is there, no. And now I don't know why [I should do this red tape]. I can live here. I pay the same taxes as Americans. I can travel as I like.

In the beginning, there were more restrictions. For instance, every January you had to report your address. At any post office you like, there was a form and you had to fill out your address. But I think it became impossible to keep track of all the immigrants. Then there were the Communist countries where you were not allowed to go. You were not allowed to go to North Vietnam, not to Cuba, and not to,. I think, Albania. I said, "Well, I can live without those three countries."

[Laughter]

Gerda Panofsky: But I remember in 1971 I went to Prague, and I had been told I would need a re-entry permit because it was behind the Iron Curtain. So I called Newark to inquire and they said, "No you don't need a re-entry permit any more, not for Prague. No, no, not

for Prague anymore." I said, "Really? No? Okay, fine." So I went. When I came back, - it was still Kennedy Airport at the time, we couldn't use Newark yet for international flights, - they said, "Where have you been?" I said, "In Germany and Czechoslovakia –" "Czechoslovakia??"

And he [the official] dropped everything and ran away and then came a huge officer weighing 200 pounds or so. And he said, "What did you do in Czechoslovakia?" and "Come with me." And so I had to go to his office. He shouted at me. I said, "You know, I inquired about a re-entry permit. I was told I wouldn't need one anymore [for Czechoslovakia]." "You are lying." I said, "I never lie. Excuse me." And I said, "Can I go home, please?" And he said, "You have ten days to put this in order, and if not, you are deported," or something [to this effect]. So I had to go to Newark to the Immigration Services and they had a big file on me. It was all marked in red.

There was a very elegant young black woman and she said, "What did you do in Prague?" And I said, "I went to study Bohemian painting." "To study what??" *[Laughs]* I said to her, "That's a very beautiful city. You should go and see it. And it's very interesting." And finally, she [humbly] said, "I had a history course in college." And then she re-admitted me to this country.

But when I [had] arrived in Newark at the reception they [had] said, "Oh, there is another one. We had so many of them. We gave them the wrong information. And then we couldn't reach them anymore. We had no idea who had called." They knew precisely that they had given the wrong information.

But these were the only restrictions. And now, of course, there is no Communism anymore and you don't have to go [each January] to the post office any more. The only thing is I cannot vote. Yes. But now that we have Obama, I don't have to vote any more.

Linda Arntzenius: What do you think – this is my last question to you. I want to ask you about the BBC report that the Egyptians are asking for the return of their historical artifacts, including the famous bust of "Nefertiti" [in Berlin]. What do you think about that as an art historian?

Gerda Panofsky: Well, I think if it [the artifact] was legally acquired [, it is o.k.], - and at the time the Turks or the Greeks and so on just wouldn't mind to sell it for money. Only much, much later they had these

laws that you couldn't export artworks. So that is in a way their own fault. Of course, if it's now illegally smuggled, like the Euphronios krater[6], at the Metropolitan Museum, they had to return that and they bought it for millions of dollars.

Linda Arntzenius: What is that? What was that?

Gerda Panofsky: A huge crater. It is a big bowl for mixing wine with water from the, I think, 5th century B.C., or even late 6th century B.C. But what was unusual was that it had presentations on both sides between the handles. And what was [even more] unusual that it had the names of the potter and the painter, which you don't know always. The Italians could prove that it had been dug out at night from some of these Etruscan tombs around Rome.

There are, of course, still many undiscovered [tombs] in the countryside. And it's a real profession, the "tombaroli" go there at night and dig. And then there are some shady art dealers and it [the trade] goes through Switzerland. Apparently there are houses on the Swiss border, which when you go into the front door from Italy, you can go out the back door into Switzerland.

Linda Arntzenius: Amazing.

Gerda Panofsky: And this "tombarolo" who found it [the Euphronios krater] is still alive and he confessed that he had found it. And they also caught this art dealer in Geneva. They once raided his office and there were all the photographs [of the stolen krater] still with the dirt on it. There is a trial now and, of course, it had to be returned. The Metropolitan Museum lost millions of dollars. I showed it to my students always when we had a field trip to the Metropolitan Museum. But as for those [objects] that have been legally exported -

Linda Arntzenius: What about the Elgin marbles? *[Laughs]*

Gerda Panofsky: Yes. Again, I don't think the Greeks would get them because they were, I think at the time, they were legally exported, they [themselves] allowed them [the English] to take them. I'm not

---

[6] The terra-cotta bowl made and painted in Athens about 515 B.C. was a prized part of the Metropolitan Museum of Art's permanent collection until January 2008.

precisely informed. But the bust of "Nefertiti" as far as I know from Germany, unfortunately, apparently was not declared as Nefertiti, but just a female bust. Actually, I wonder how do they know it's Nefertiti at all? Who says it's Nefertiti?

I know from a friend who is in Cairo that there is one particular man in Egypt who is very anxious to – I mean, he works on these claims all the time. But I think it would be difficult [to succeed with this one].

But things that were recently smuggled – for instance, there was a case at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, and the director, whose daughter was my student, and the curator, who was a very good friend of ours, had been in Italy and bought what they thought was a Raphael portrait. This was in the 1970s, early 1970s. And they smuggled it out [of Italy], and they smuggled it into America. They just put it under their coat.

It probably wasn't too big, and went through customs like this. But they also would have had to declare it to the American customs. They didn't. They didn't bother. Then they made the big mistake the following year to exhibit it at the museum. "Finally," they proclaimed, "Boston has a painting by Raphael!" and the Italians said, "Wait a minute. We know this painting. How come it is in Boston?" And they found out in Italy. Also, they found out the art dealer. These two Americans had stayed at a rather cheap hotel in Florence, not being aware that this hotel was also used by prostitutes wherefore every phone call was monitored by the police.

Linda Arntzenius: *[Gasps]*

Gerda Panofsky: So all their phone conversations with this art dealer for discussions about this Raphael portrait and the price for it and so on were recorded by the police. *[Laughs]* And there was no way they could deny it.

Gerda Panofsky: They lost their jobs immediately, the director of the museum, and also the curator.

Linda Arntzenius: Which museum was it?

Gerda Panofsky: The Museum of Fine Arts –

Linda Arntzenius: In Boston.

Gerda Panofsky: And as I said, the daughter - at the time I was teaching in New York - was in my [seminar], Eliza Rathbone. She was in my class when we made an excursion to Rome over the spring break with about five girls. And there it was in the headlines of all the newspapers on every newsstand with pictures. And Eliza was crying all the time. It was terrible.

And then one of the other students said, "Oh, I didn't know that it was Eliza's father who stole the painting by Raphael." I said, "Now listen. He didn't steal it." But unfortunately, he smuggled it through the customs. It was a drama.

Linda Arntzenius: So are things like that being less and less done these days?

Gerda Panofsky: Yes. I think the laws are getting more strict and –

Linda Arntzenius: And museums are getting more strict?

Gerda Panofsky: And museums are very careful what they buy. There are also all these cases with Jewish heritages over and over and over where now some descendants, nieces or nephews, claim "This had belonged to my aunt and she was forced to sell it," - like the Klimt paintings which the Neue Galerie has now, which were re-claimed [from the Belvedere in Vienna]. Sometimes it's not quite clear, maybe – some of them [the previous owners] actually [had] sold their artworks in Switzerland, and now they say, "We were robbed and we want to be reimbursed by millions of dollars. We want to have the paintings back."

So they [the museums] have to be very careful now what they buy.

Linda Arntzenius: If you had unlimited amounts of money, what would you buy?

Gerda Panofsky: Of art?

Linda Arntzenius: Mm-mhmm.

Gerda Panofsky: If I had a big castle, enough space?

Linda Arntzenius: Yes.

Gerda Panofsky: I think I would collect porcelain.

Linda Arntzenius: From which period and which country?

Gerda Panofsky: Oh, 18th century or so, and carpets, beautiful carpets.

Linda Arntzenius: I'd like to come there for a visit.

[Laughter]

Gerda Panofsky: Yes. I will invite you, when I win in the lottery. Paintings, I would be afraid to buy. I wouldn't feel sure whether they were genuine or fake.

Linda Arntzenius: Is there a question that you had expected me to ask, which I haven't asked you?

Gerda Panofsky: You did a lot of homework. You went over my background and how I got to Princeton. My apartment, yes, [maybe] the [Institute's] housing project, we talked about the apartment a long time ago.

When I came, of course, it was still the Marcel Breuer design and there were a few houses which were two storied, but many were just bungalows.

Linda Arntzenius: Right.

Gerda Panofsky: And all houses had flat roofs. But this was a great problem because they were leaking all the time. I had friends staying in the housing project and it just rained on their beds and so they made these pitched roofs which, of course, destroyed the entire design. And now the new apartments have these dining rooms with windows all around. It's very pretty from the inside, but the Marcel Breuer design is hardly recognizable any more. And also the furniture has been replaced.

The woods. We talked about the swimming pool and the woods. But aside from the swimming pool, of course, the woods, I think, are one of the greatest assets of this Institute. You can just walk for one hour and you can go cross-country skiing. There is the old Quaker meeting-house and then come the cornfields, and then comes the Stonybrook River and the swinging bridge. It's so beautiful. But they were very much in danger some years ago. It was under Harry Woolf's tenure.

They [the trustees] wanted to build up these cornfields with 600 houses which means 1,200 cars in America plus school buses,

garbage trucks, landscapers' trucks, and so on. And I remember talking to one of the administration and being horrified when she said, "You won't see them from here." I said, "Excuse me. I take every week a walk there." And we fought about for ten years with collecting signatures.

I, myself, went into the woods and said, "Would you please sign this [petition]?"to everybody who was jogging or walking a dog. And people said, "Oh, I have signed so many things in my life. It doesn't make any difference." I said, "Well, if everybody says this, then, of course, it doesn't make a difference." But they signed. And [we had] meetings and [were] writing letters and very active was Millard Meiss's wife Margaret (Mig), in this [campaign] –

Linda Arntzenius: Really?

Linda Arntzenius: Yes. She deserves some laurels for it. And we won! And [Frank] Taplin, of course, [had been very active too], the trustee who died. Finally, they [the woods and cornfields] are protected for the next thousand years or so. There are these inscriptions in the woods where this is commemorated, thanks God, and now I'm afraid the Institute is going to build along the edge of the woods. They said seventeen houses, which would be a shame because it's all these open lands there. There are so many flowers in the woods, and birds and the deer, who would all go away if there is traffic and noise going on.

We talked about the [University] campus that there were no women and blacks.

I also remember that in the beginning [when] I was here we would take the Greyhound bus to New York because from Palmer Square it went every 20 minutes, and it was much cheaper than the train. There were maybe five trains a day and you had to look very carefully at the schedule not to miss them. So that [the bus] was more convenient. But now the train is much faster. There are many, many trains [per day], and the bus makes lots of detours to all these developments. But I remember in the beginning, the black people were always sitting in the back. It was no longer a law, but they were just used to it. So this has changed a lot, thank God. So they now behave like everybody else and sit where they like.

We talked about Emma [Epps]. I think you covered everything

that I had been thinking of. The kind of gender divisions at the Institute, which that strike me as very Oriental.

There's another custom here. I don't know whether it's Princeton, America, or just the Institute: private dinner invitations. Once in awhile I get such an invitation. But when you are alone as a widow, - or the same would be if you would be divorced or unmarried or whatever,- they usually only invite couples.

Linda Arntzenius: Yes.

Gerda Panofsky: There is the host and the hostess plus two or three more couples. Now if there is a visiting scholar at the Institute, whose wife is staying behind in Europe because she has a job or they have children in school or whether she couldn't come along [for any other reason], and they have to invite him, they need a single lady for the sake of symmetry. Then you get invited. This really annoys me very much.

Linda Arntzenius: How do you find that?

Gerda Panofsky: There are very few exceptions. For instance, Easter Sunday I was at Elisabeth Ettinghausen's[7] house and she always has single people, whoever, men and women, and you feel very comfortable. But [normally] they have to be only two and two and two, and then you seat them symmetrically around the table. This is something I'm not used to from Europe.

I think we've covered everything. Yes. Maybe you can edit this afterwards and move things around which belong together.

[End of Audio]

[7] Dr. Elisabeth Ettinghausen is from Vienna (Austria).