

Rudy Turk Interview  
Tempe History Museum

OH/Tape #: 247 (2 Tapes, Side A and B)  
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Interviewer: Pamela Rector  
Transcribed by: Jessica Walden

Begin Tape 1 of 2, Side A:

PAMELA RECTOR: Today is Wednesday, April 26, 2006. My name is Pamela Rector, that's spelled P-A-M-E-L-A R-E-C-T-O-R. I'm a historian working with the Tempe Historical Museum conducting oral history interviews with persons instrumental in a variety of ways to the development of the growth of the City of Tempe. Today I have the privilege of interviewing Dr. Rudy Turk and that's spelled R-U-D-Y T-U-R-K. We are conducting the interview at Dr. Turk's home that he shares with his wife Wanda in Friendship Village located in Tempe, Arizona. Now Dr. Turk...

RUDY TURK: Can I make a correction?

RECTOR: Yes you may.

TURK: It's not doctor.

RECTOR: Oh it's not?

TURK: It's not doctor, no.

RECTOR: Oh.

TURK: I'm one of those millions of people that went all the way and then switched to another field.

RECTOR: And never got your Ph.D.?

TURK: No.

RECTOR: Well thank you for the correction.

TURK: I switched to another field.

RECTOR: Alright, I will make note of that. Thank you for the correction. Alright, Professor Turk...

TURK: Yes.

RECTOR: Alright. First of all, I want to ask you some questions that are specific to Tempe itself and um...but, I'll begin by asking the basics and the first question is, when and where were you born?

TURK: I was born June 24, 1927 in Sheboygan, Wisconsin.

RECTOR: And how long did you live there?

TURK: Until I was 18.

RECTOR: Until you were 18. And when did you first come to Tempe and under what circumstances?

TURK: I came to Tempe partially in '67. Let's see, that's 39 years ago, right? I always get my years mixed up. Uh...and I came to take a job as museum director or future museum director, art historian, humanities teacher, and lecturer and art history lecturer. So, I had four jobs coming here.

RECTOR: Okay. At Arizona State University?

TURK: At Arizona State University. The first year that we were here we did live in Scottsdale rather than Tempe and then a year later we moved to Tempe.

RECTOR: Now, in 1967 Arizona formally established the Arizona Commission on Arts and Humanities. Did this have anything to do with ASU having you come onboard?

TURK: No, none whatsoever. Dr. Durham, the president of the university, decided that ASU should become the "Louvre of the west." That was the term he used. We had a very

fine collection of American art that been given to ASU that spread all over the campus, but centered in the library, the old library because the library had moved out and three rooms in the old library were given over to art and that was supposed to be the genesis of the museum which was going to be built within five years and I came to that museum to teach art history and teach in the humanities.

RECTOR: So Dr. Durham was the president of the university at the time?

TURK: Yes.

RECTOR: And his name was spelled D-U-R-H-A-M?

TURK: Uh huh.

RECTOR: Okay, thank you. Now how did Tempe compare to your hometown of Sheboygan?

TURK: Oh, entirely different then and today. I mean, Sheboygan is on Lake Michigan. You have the lake breezes and the lake cold winters. Arizona is hot, humid, the whole bit, you know, it's entirely different and culturally-wise when I was growing up there was very little in Tempe...in Sheboygan and when I arrived in Tempe, there was very little available here despite the fact that there was a university.

RECTOR: Okay. Now where in Tempe have you lived? Which neighborhoods or streets?

TURK: We lived the first year...the first time we moved in Tempe we lived at 1006 East Manhattan. Manhattan is about three blocks south of Southern and Terrace. Then we moved to Huntington which is one block north of Southern and then finally we moved to Courtney Lane in south Tempe.

RECTOR: Okay and I think you mentioned that the first year in Arizona was spent in Scottsdale.

TURK: Scottsdale, yes. Our realtor assured us that no one would want to live in Tempe and the place to live was in Scottsdale, however at the end of the first year I said, "I can't stand this. It takes me ten minutes to get to work from Scottsdale. That is absolutely ridiculous; we must get closer to the university."

RECTOR: Don't we all wish it was only ten minutes to work.

TURK: Yes.

RECTOR: Alright. Now some questions specific to Arizona State University.

TURK: Okay.

RECTOR: As previously stated, you moved to Tempe in 1967.

TURK: 8.

RECTOR: Oh...

TURK: '67 we moved to Arizona, '68 we moved to...

RECTOR: In '68 you got the positions at...

TURK: No, no, no, no, no. '67 I got the position, but the first year we lived in Scottsdale.

RECTOR: Oh, I understand. Okay.

TURK: And then in '68, the second year we were here, we moved to Tempe.

RECTOR: So you moved to Arizona in 1967...

TURK: That's right.

RECTOR: To take the positions at ASU and um...

TURK: And as I said, the realtor convinced that no one lived in Tempe.

RECTOR: Right, okay and you listed previously all the jobs that you were hired for.

TURK: Hmm huh.

RECTOR: Okay. Now, is it correct that you held or you were employed at ASU for 25 years until retiring in 1992?

TURK: That's correct.

RECTOR: Okay. Now, could you describe your career and duties at ASU as they unfolded after you moved to Tempe? Kind of an outline...

TURK: Okay. Well, at first, number one, I taught three courses in art history and sometimes a graduate course in addition and worked on theses with graduate students. In addition to that, I lectured in the humanities program. In addition to that, I put on exhibits all over the campus because we only had three rooms at the museum in Matthew's Hall. I did do some small exhibitions in the hallways and various spaces, but at first there was very little room, so I put on exhibitions at Grady Gammage Auditorium, at the Memorial Union, anywhere on the campus where there was space available and I was doing all this for years. Gradually, I acquired more space in Matthew's Center and eventually the entire second floor of the building plus storage space on the sixth, seventh, and second floor of the building. So, but...right to the end I was putting on exhibits all over the campus.

RECTOR: So you're entire 25 years you were doing that?

TURK: Yeah.

RECTOR: Okay, now...

TURK: The last...the last five years I taught very little because by that time we had built the new museum and that was a full-time job.

RECTOR: Okay, so for 20 years you were...

TURK: Let's say that I had two full-time jobs for 25 years...

RECTOR: The museum and teaching?

TURK: Yes.

RECTOR: Okay, that sounds good. Now, you've touched on this a bit and I just want to make sure there's nothing else to add to it, but when you arrived at ASU you described the art museum, it's size, it was in the Matthew's Center which...

TURK: Second floor, Matthew's Center. One large exhibit room, one small room, smaller than this room which was office and exhibit area and one small room for storage. That was it.

RECTOR: And what were the holdings of the museum when you arrived?

TURK: We had a very, very fine collection of American art from the Colonial Period to the 1940s and we had a very, very fine collection of European and American original prints.

RECTOR: Okay.

TURK: Very, very fine. My early years at the university, I was not allowed to ask anyone for funds and the university did not fund me very well. My total budget for the first three or four years was 18,000 a year. This was for help, part-time secretary, part-time student guards, part-time helpers, stationery, office supplies, the whole thing.

RECTOR: So nothing for acquisitions?

TURK: No. No, but fortunately many people in Arizona were dissatisfied with the Phoenix Art Museum and the Heard Museum and they were interested in the showings that I was putting on at ASU and they volunteered money. I did not request...they volunteered money and usually it was a small amount, 100 dollars. I'd like to donate 100 dollars in honor of my father, okay. Well at that time you could not buy a painting for 100 dollars, so the early purchases and purchases over 25 years were primarily in original

prints, ceramics, Mexican art. Those were the three fields we built up. We were the first university in the United States to have a Latin American gallery. We developed one of the largest collections of ceramics in the United States and it is now one of the top five in the country. So, it was a slow process, but for many years we were not allowed to ask for funds. We were very, very fortunate however that people did contribute and then when I was let loose I gained nearly 100 pounds in 6 months because I was taking people out for lunch everyday and the new building, the new museum, the current museum cost approximately 19 million dollars. I raised most of that money myself. That is the most privately funded building on the ASU campus even today.

RECTOR: Something to be very proud of. Now, backing up a bit, when you arrived at the museum you mentioned you had an 18,000 dollar budget, did the museum have a mission statement?

TURK: No, we didn't have things like that and it wasn't...

RECTOR: Okay, they didn't do that?

TURK: No, no. The thing is it really had somebody that they paid very low salary to, it was high as far as I was concerned, but by university standards it was low. He was willing to do all these things for this measly salary, go ahead do it. They let me alone, they didn't give me much help. Be innovative, go ahead.

RECTOR: Now, it's my understanding that you built the museum's collection through acquiring contemporary and Latin American art and establishing a ceramics program.

You mentioned the prints and I want to know what factors steered you in the direction of collecting those types of items?

TURK: Well, number one, it was a ceramics...ceramics, I had a long history and knowledge of ceramics because I knew the two leading contemporary ceramists in the United States. I had talked with Peter Voulkos and Rudy Autio. So I knew a hell of a lot about contemporary ceramics. I knew who was producing and ceramics were very inexpensive at that time. The most I spent for years was 600 dollars for a Voulkos, the Voulkos is worth nearly a quarter of a million today. Okay, I could buy Maria pots for less than 50 dollars, you can't buy a Maria pot for anything like that today, it's incredible. So, it was an area which was easy to do. On prints, I always had loved prints. I had a large collection of my own most of which I gave to ASU over the years. Uh...the...again, prints, original etchings, and so forth were very inexpensive. Number two, there were collectors in the Valley and the Phoenix Art Museum wasn't particularly interested in prints. It helps very much when the Phoenix Art Museum director at one time turned down a collection of Whistlers because they weren't interested in prints. That kind of prints they were thinking...they didn't realize they were original works of art.

RECTOR: Oh my.

TURK: They were thinking it was copies. So the thing is, we built up in that area and then it was very natural that we were sitting here right next to Mexico, we have a Mexican population, of course I would collect Mexican art. So, those are the three areas.

RECTOR: So that's what steered you...

TURK: And then I very quickly became a member of the Friends of Mexican Art which for many years was the largest group of Mexican art lovers in the United States founded and centered in Phoenix and eventually I became president of that and the organization gave a lot of Mexican art to our collection and it still is.



RECTOR: Now in doing a little bit of reading about you, I came across something about...you mentioned the Phoenix Art Museum and how they...they didn't care about collecting the prints that you acquired. Also, in my reading it indicated that you were not allowed to compete with either the Heard Museum or the Phoenix Art Museum in collecting.

TURK: That's right.

RECTOR: So that also steered you in...

TURK: So the thing is, I just had to rely upon goodwill. I (unintelligible) like mad. I coveted your goods, you know. All museum directors are sinners; we all covet our neighbors' goods. People knew that I was anxious to get things and so forth and then when finally I was released to go...just like wild, you know, but it took a tremendous amount of time and, you know, I was teaching a full load of art history. I was lecturing in humanities, I was putting on exhibits major ones in the museum property as the space became available to me and then I was putting on small shows over the campus. I was representing the university and myself on the State Arts Commission, on the Tempe Arts Commission, on the Scottsdale Arts Commission, the Chandler Arts Commission. I was very, very active in the arts, but you have to remember that when I arrived in Arizona, there wasn't too much development in the arts. I came...very fortuitous, I came at a time when things began to happen and it was very interesting that for many years my exhibitions vied with those of the Phoenix Art Museum for size, quality...uh eventually they became the big institution, but I did some miraculous shows. I don't know how in the heck I ever pulled them off, but I did in the early years and it paid off, but I was very, very busy.

RECTOR: Sounds like it. So, you said it was only the last five years you were at ASU...

TURK: About the last five years...

RECTOR: Five to ten, maybe?

TURK: Yeah, something like that. I can't remember.

RECTOR: That you did not have to teach and could totally devote your energy...

TURK: I did teach one course right to the end, but I did not have to teach at the end.

RECTOR: Okay. And so, we start out...

TURK: You remember, you have to plan a museum too in the midst of all this time.

RECTOR: And...and what year did that open?

TURK: Let's see...I think that was '88, I think. About '88.

RECTOR: Now, you talked about what you started with in Matthew's Center and if you could just recap again uh...what the museum was like at the end of your tenure as director in '92 in terms of the collection holdings and size, etc.

TURK: Well, remember by that time we are in the new building. A completely new building, alright, we're talking about a 19 million dollar facility versus a single floor for an exhibition in an older building of the campus. We had developed large collections. We were loaning things to other institutions throughout the country. We became a full-scale museum to be reckoned with and when I say to be reckoned with, I can say the ceramic collection...we are in the top five in the United States, uh...and it grew. One of my last years here, I can't remember what year '89 or so, we hosted the largest ceramic conference ever held in the United States and people... not only did the ceramists come here, but collectors came and many of those collectors have since given their collections and when we talk about giving collections, we talk about an 11 million dollar gift

recently from the man who came to ASU, I spent time with him, hours with him, so his collection...worked with him so forth and last year he came up with 11 million dollars worth of ceramics to ASU and that's incredible. So, you know, there has to be a start for these things and you develop and then somebody else has to take over and encourage...now my successor has maintained the interest in ceramics, but I also know there's great interest in folk art, the folk art hasn't been displayed since I left, she's not particularly interested...it's in storage. Let's hope that her successor might be interested in folk art, you know.

RECTOR: So where...when did you start collecting the folk art and how...

TURK: Oh immediately, immediately, immediately.

RECTOR: Did that go on with the ceramics or with our ties to Mexico or...

TURK: All, all areas. You know somebody says, "Hey, I got a duck decoy. Would you be interested in it?" Sure I would, of course I would.

RECTOR: Was it because it was being offered to you and it was inexpensive or was it...

TURK: Because it was being offered to me and because I felt well here's an area we probably could grow in. Now, all the areas that I started or tried to start didn't follow through. For instance, my wife and I are very, very interested in fabrics and when I came, I was determined to make this a fabric center. I brought some superb fabric shows to ASU; brought some superb fabric artists to ASU, but the public did not give a hoot. The audience was virtually nil, okay, I didn't succeed in that. Now some of those people are internationally known today, they're huge names and they showed at ASU. As a matter of fact, in the opening of the new museum, the major gallery in the new museum was still devoted to contemporary fabrics, but it did not catch on in Arizona.

RECTOR: Okay.

TURK: See you don't quite know, you have to respond to the public. I'll give you another example. Goya is a big name, isn't it? You know Goya?

RECTOR: Yes.

TURK: I found a museum that was willing to lend me the 81 etchings that Goya did titled "The Disasters of War." This is major output in printmaking, brought it here...it was one of the biggest flops I ever had. I don't think we had 100 people see it in a month.

RECTOR: It sounds like timing's everything.

TURK: Timing and you have to try things and the publicity...I'll give you another example. I...the Levi Company put together...the Levi Company put together an exhibit of contemporary Levis. Levis which are designed by artists, made over by artists...all kinds of shirts, pants, the whole thing. I had that show at ASU and the newspaper coverage was two inches. Three months later it is at the St. Louis Museum. Our local newspaper, The Arizona Republic, gave that show at the St. Louis Museum three quarters of a page.

RECTOR: Now why do you think that happened?

TURK: Because they weren't interested when we did, but...

RECTOR: But why?

TURK: ...they got it through the wires. They had a space available and they got it through the wires and they put it in.

RECTOR: So it isn't that Levis all of a sudden caught on, you think it was just, it came off the wires and they had space.

TURK: And it caught on.

RECTOR: Oh it did, okay.

TURK: That it did catch on, sure. By the time it had traveled around the country for a year, oh boy, Levis were very much in demand all over. That show was very much in demand.

RECTOR: And now on the folk art a little bit more, was that something that you had an interest in that it was available and it was affordable?

TURK: Uh, yes.

RECTOR: And the public liked...

TURK: The public likes it, yes.

RECTOR: In Arizona.

TURK: Decoys and...yeah this kind of thing. There's a lot of Mexican folk art...the death cards and things of that sort. That's very cheap. It was available, people were giving it, yeah. Uh...the...but if you think about it right now, think about all the things you haven't seen in Arizona including the Heard, they don't do too much with folk art, but at one time...I don't know, I shouldn't even say this because I haven't been at the Heard for a year, but the last time I was at the Heard Museum, they didn't have the full Goldwater Kachina collection out. Now that I consider folk art...the Mexicans...

RECTOR: The Hopi?

TURK: The Hopi, yeah, but see...these things turn around. What's in favor today might not be in favor tomorrow and sometimes you're on the ground floor and sometimes you instigate the interest.

RECTOR: Now the folk art, where was that coming from besides Mexico? Is the bulk of the collection Mexican?

TURK: New England, New England.

RECTOR: New England?

TURK: Hmm huh.

RECTOR: Okay and so there wasn't much local except for the Mexican...

TURK: No, there was nothing local.

RECTOR: Okay.

TURK: I don't think there's...one of the ASU faculty members did organize a show which was at the Memorial Union of black women's quilting done in the Tucson area and then the state...Historical State Arts Commission did hire a man to do folk art in Arizona and that folk art was primarily from the south of the state.

RECTOR: Okay.

TURK: But there wasn't much around here, no.

RECTOR: Alright, now the ceramics research center...when did that start? Who started it?

TURK: Well, that started with the ceramic collection.

RECTOR: Oh okay, it was...

TURK: The ceramic collection grew and grew and grew and grew and then finally when the new director took over, it was so large and we were getting so much, that they decided to make it a completely separate part and have room to house it, so the place where it's housing is temporary housing, but that used to be two restaurants...

RECTOR: It was a strip mall...

TURK: There was two sandwich shops, yeah. Uh...so...and they hired a full-time person to do the ceramics, whereas in my...in the early days and all up until the time I left, I was

the only one, but now they have a ceramics curator. That's what he does 100 percent of the time.

RECTOR: So once they put it in that temporary housing, they gave it a name, Ceramics Research Center?

TURK: Yes and they are doing research.

RECTOR: Okay, but I'm sure they've always done research, but I hadn't heard that name until recently.

TURK: No...didn't hear the name, no.

RECTOR: It was more of a recent name, calling it that.

TURK: Yeah. See, once you get a collection that's large enough to warrant a curator or director, it becomes a division, a unit.

RECTOR: Okay and that was...you mentioned that they...

TURK: I'm sure that sometime the first director of the Tempe Museum did interview some of the old timers, but they finally got enough money to hire you and they have a program, see.

RECTOR: So now they have someone that's exclusively in charge of the ceramics collection which is separated from the rest of the collection?

TURK: Yeah and they have somebody in the print collection doing the same thing.

RECTOR: Oh okay.

TURK: It's separate.

RECTOR: And you did it all. You were a one man show.

TURK: Yes I was. I was a one man show for many years. The first couple of years I had a half-time secretary.

RECTOR: Okay. It's amazing the growth since then.

TURK: The growth was fast and it wasn't only me and the university, I mean, and the art. I think this was happening in all phases of activity in Arizona...growing years. We were commenting on the other night coming to Arizona, there were very few decent restaurants when we came here, very few...uh and gradually restaurants moved in and now, my goodness, you have all kinds of ethnic restaurants...its' wonderful. About a year ago a Polish restaurant opened and a Hungarian restaurant opened.

RECTOR: So you've seen quite a bit of change since '67?

TURK: Yes, but in '67 there wasn't that much, no.

RECTOR: ...diversity, yeah. Now I'd like to switch gears a little bit and talk about you as an artist, your personal collection, where donations have come from, etc. So it will be kind of a little potpourri of things and um...I wanted to start though with um...what you mentioned previously is, you were not even an art major when you were in college. You started as a political history major?

TURK: I completed all my degrees and all my studies were primarily European history, the specialty of the Balkans. I was a Balkan specialist.

RECTOR: Was it political history at all? That's what I read.

TURK: Yeah, political, yes.

RECTOR: ...political of the Balkans...

TURK: I was interested in political history. My main field of interest was the Balkans. My Master's thesis was on the Tito-Mihailovic controversy during the civil wars during World War II, okay. That's my basic field of study. I have minors in...let's see Masters and minors in French, in Spanish, in English, in economics, and in education and for my



Doctor's degree, I'm sitting in the office of the head of the department at Indiana University and he informs me that I need a main field and two other historical fields and then two fields outside the history department and I had no trouble...I immediately said I want folklore. I love folklore. I had influence of it when I was a student in Tennessee.

"Do you have folklore?" "Yes, we're the folklore center of the United States." So, I said "Okay, I'll earn folklore," and he said, "What about your second minor?" I said, "I don't know." He said, "What about econ?" I said, "I had enough econ as an undergraduate."

"What about political science?" I said, "Gosh, that's all history has been for me, so much political science." And we went through the list. He said "Foreign languages" and I said, "I don't have an ear. I can learn to read, but I have a bad ear. I have a bad ear for English." I said, "What's that building across the street?" He said, "That's the art building." I said, "Do they teach art history?" He said, "Yes" and I said "I'll minor in art history." Okay, simple as that. I took the art history course. It was fun, I enjoyed it very much. It was under the head of the department. The six weeks test he showed you twenty slides...who did it? What's the theme of it? When was it done? Make three comments. I thought, gee this is a simple test. I was all done and everybody else was writing like mad. I go over my stuff, everybody's still writing like mad. I had nothing more to say, I walked out and said, "This was a mistake. I didn't do what I should have done. They know more than I do." A couple of days later the chairman comes in holding these papers and said, "Who's Turk? Turk? I want to talk to Turk." He says, "Why don't I know you, Turk? This is the best test I've had in years." "Thank you, sir." He said, "Why don't I know you?" I said, "Well, I'm in the history department." He says, "Art history?" "No, in the history." He said, "Why aren't you over here?" I said, "Well, I love it over here. It's

wonderful.” He said, “How would you like to be my assistant?” I said, “Well, I’m an assistant in the history department.” He said, “How much do they pay you over there?” I said, “700” and he said, “We’ll get you 1,000. It’s a deal. I’ll straighten it out with the history department.” So, I became an assistant to the chairman of the department, but I still was a history major, okay. That was my financing from there on in and Henry (unintelligible), head of the department, was married to the Eli Lilly heiress had the largest collection of art in Indiana. Now a museum and their house had a whole wall of Paul Clay. I mean, just huge...and I took care of that stuff. I met...he was also editor of Unesco documents, so I met Rockefeller...Nelson Rockefeller and I traveled with him on that kind of stuff and met famous people. I just loved it. I had a ball...but it was a fun thing, that’s all it was. I never took it seriously. Okay, I’m in Paris on a Fulbright Scholarship applying for jobs across the United States as a Balkan historian. “Sorry Mr. Turk, the job for which you applied has been filled.” “I’m sorry Mr. Turk we want somebody with more experience,” etc. And one day a letter comes from the University of Montana, “Dear Mr. Turk, the job for which you applied has been filled, however we have four jobs which...one of which might appeal to you. Would you be interested in starting a gallery, starting a historical museum, lecturing in humanities, teaching art history, or a combination thereof?” I wanted a job, so I said, “I’ll take it” and I went to Montana and did all of them.

RECTOR: So, looking out the window at the University of Wisconsin you happened...

TURK: No, at Indiana University.

RECTOR: Oh, I’m sorry. At Indiana University you see the art building and that’s how this all started.

TURK: Yes.

RECTOR: That's great. That's a good place to stop on this side of the tape.

End of Tape 1 of 2, side A.

Begin Tape 1 of 2, side B:

RECTOR: Okay now.

TURK: Let me finish...

RECTOR: Oh, go ahead.

TURK: So, I go to Montana and my first gallery is the stairwell of the art building, that's it and I had 100 dollars a year to spend, great sum, and I had a friend in Minnesota who sold prints; not originals, copies and I got 100 dollars worth of Japanese prints and put them all over the walls and sold them and then I got more and sold them, got more and sold them and I made enough money to get a legitimate show from San Francisco and I sold a painting out of that show for 25,000 dollars and we got 2,500. I had money, so I started getting shows...uh I got one show...ordered one show "50,000 Years of Jewelry" came in 3 glass cases and when it arrived the pieces were smashed. I report this to the national government; they say "Can it be fixed?" I said, "Yes." They said, "Get somebody to fix them...get pricing on it." I got the price, they called back and I casually said, "Well, I could fix them myself cheaper than that" and I did. I wound up doing that and they were so pleased that they gave me all the shows free for three years provided that I fix up cases, fix up frames, do all this little stuff. I had one of the best shows of any university in the Northwest because of that.

RECTOR: Because you were a handyman.

TURK: So I got a reputation as a handyman. Okay, in my historical museum we had a whole mess of boxes and things wrapped up in one of the...and I got a fraternity and sorority to come over every other night and help set-up, okay, because again I only had 100 dollars there and one of the first nights we realize this thing over here is a tepee, so we put up the tepee and we put this tepee together and put it accidentally over the phone in the room...one large room and one day the president of the university comes and while I'm talking to him the phone rings, I go over to the tepee and he said, "Stay there, stay there" and he came back 15 minutes later with a photographer and they took my picture sitting at the entrance of the tepee (unintelligible)... "Museum director has his office in a tepee." That went all over the country. Even today people say, "You're the guy that had his office in a tepee." So, I was getting a strange reputation and finally after, I think, three years in Montana I wanted to leave and I took my next job as director of a city art center in Richmond, California, so I was completely wrapped in art by that time; never had planned to. So, in Richmond I was director of the galleries, director of an orchestra... a junior orchestra, a ballet company, and all the playgrounds of the city of Richmond, California.

RECTOR: So you're...you're education took some strange twists.

TURK: Yes. So, I think that's important and this is what they wanted at ASU and this is why they hired me.

RECTOR: An eclectic person.

TURK: Hmm huh.

RECTOR: That could do everything.

TURK: Well, willing to try...

RECTOR: Willing to try everything.

TURK: I did some of these things very badly, I assure you.

RECTOR: Well, I think the end result speaks for itself. Now, to get back to you as an artist, Professor Turk, when and why did you yourself begin to paint?

TURK: Okay, well while I was at Indiana University I did take one class in drawing just for the hell of it. That was it and I painted two pictures in two little frames and that was it. However, when I was in Richmond we had a state-wide competition and the final show was interesting, but I looked around the show and I said, "My gosh, I can paint as well as any of these people. Of course I really couldn't, but I thought I could and I started painting. Now I didn't have much time to paint, weekends and so forth and so I painted weekends and free time, but I wasn't getting too much done. When we came to Tempe, we had a house on Manhattan that had a breezeway and I...the breezeway was four by four and I closed the breezeway and that became my studio and my office and I wrote my first books there and I painted there and because it was so small, my elbow was always into my chest and I painted, you know, very staccato...

RECTOR: Four by four feet.

TURK: Yes, uh huh and I was writing textbooks at this time too and painting there. So, if I had a weekend that didn't have lectures or something going on, I would paint 12 or 13 hours and then when I retired, I had all the time in the world to paint, but then also I finally got a studio and I was able to move my art away from my chest.

RECTOR: So the painting's changed because you have more space.

TURK: Yes.

RECTOR: Now you're known for painting faces and still-life and why did you choose these subjects?

TURK: Well, I like faces. Faces...you know, sometimes they're a mask for people, sometimes they reveal character, sometime they are icons, they're just fascinating. I like faces, I paint them a lot. Um...I paint a heck of a lot of flowers because for years when I was...I don't do oil painting anymore, but when I was doing oil-painting, I'd have paint left on the easel at the end of my painting day or hours and you can't waste this paint of course, so I'd get out a small canvas and use what paint I had left, whatever color it was to do a flower. So, I've done lots of flowers that way.

RECTOR: Now was it because of the colors you thought you could do flowers?

TURK: Well, because I was tight and I didn't want to waste the paint.

RECTOR: But why flowers? Why not something else?

TURK: I have no idea. I like flowers.

RECTOR: And you had all those colors, did that maybe have something...

TURK: No...but faces, I think, are very revealing. Sometimes they reveal the soul and sometimes they're a mask; very interesting. Faces are, you know, incredibly interesting.

RECTOR: So that...would you say that was the favorite thing that you painted?

TURK: It still is, oh yeah.

RECTOR: It still is. And even in your collecting?

TURK: No, not necessarily. Now 90 percent of what we've collected...95 percent of what we have collected over the years has either gone to our children or to other institutions. ASU has received a tremendous amount of prints. Prints have gone to Milwaukee...you know, we've just given them all away.

RECTOR: So, you've donated...you figure about...or estimate about 90 percent of your collection...

TURK: Yeah.

RECTOR: And you've donated...we'll you've given it to your children and where else now?

TURK: ASU is number one. Airport...I'm still giving pots to the airport collection. I started the airport...the ceramic collection at the airport and this is Arizona ceramics and I donate...in fact, I just donated this year. I donated some pots to the collection...

RECTOR: So, ASU has gotten part of your collection, the airport has gotten part of your collection, any other?

TURK: And then small gifts to various museums across the country.

RECTOR: But that's the bulk of it has gone to those two besides your children?

TURK: Yeah, yeah.

RECTOR: Now, what types of art did you collect for your own personal collection? What categories?

TURK: Prints and ceramics again. I love those fields. Ordinary museum directors don't collect the fields of interest in that museum because it would be a conflict of interests. I never worried about that because most of the things wound up at ASU anyway. So, yeah...one time my wife was very upset, I came home with a pot and she said, "Look, we have pots all over the house...we don't have decent cupboards and so forth, but we have pots." And I said, "From now on, we'll never have more than 50 pots in our house." And I've tried to keep that since then. So, 50 pots and gradually as I was giving things away, I realized get rid of the big ones because we're going to be moving eventually here, for

example. So, most of our pots are six inches high and if you'd come here two weeks from now, there's going to be a big shelf here and shelf all around here and it's all going to be pots in there.

RECTOR: Wonderful.

TURK: Yeah, but 50 or less.

RECTOR: I was going to say, you have to keep your 50 promise.

TURK: Yes, yes, yes, yes...Prints and sometimes an Arizona artist. Now, the Merrill Mahaffey there is a nice painting. This is was a (unintelligible). I wrote a book on him, he gave me the painting, okay. I had very rich friends in San Diego who always sent me an art gift every year and the print up there...Wanda was on the Arts Commission and the Tempe Arts Commission commissioned some famous Arizona artists to do prints and she bought one of the prints.

RECTOR: Now I'm interested in the painting behind you which is birds.

TURK: Very interesting painting. It's a very happy looking painting and with the water cooler in the center. It was a graduate student show. It was 200 dollars, okay and I thought "Gee, this is a nice painting. It's happy and I liked it and 200 dollars I happened to have at that moment." By the way, all art I've bought was always out of extra earned money from lectures and things that sort...my books and so on, never out of household money. So, I bought this painting. A couple of weeks later I received a letter from the student...graduate student and it said, "Dear Mr. Turk, I'm so glad you purchased my painting. You might be interested to know that during World War II my family...Japanese...were interned in Papago Park and they were interned behind a fence and they were allowed one bottle of water a week, however my mother and my aunt in



order to make money to get more water made little birds out of scrap cardboard and wood they found and sold those birds through the fence to get the water.” And if you look, there is a grill that the birds are on...

RECTOR: Oh with the white around each one of them?

TURK: Yeah and then this little connecting line...they're very faint. So, it's the story of World War II...

RECTOR: And Japanese internment and how to make some extra money.

TURK: Uh huh.

RECTOR: It's...yeah, it's a beautiful painting. Just, you know, since we're on audio tape here, it's probably 60 birds painted and then in the center is a water cooler and the bottom is...it's red it must be the ground...

TURK: The red ground...little birds.

RECTOR: Oh that's a great story.

TURK: Isn't that a great story?

RECTOR: Yes. So you...

TURK: So, some of them...things that I see...I've had that newel post... I bought that at an antique shop and it was just black. It took me a month to get all the paint off of it. I just like it, I like it very much and over the years everybody always says, "Oh, they're going to get rid of that next time they move," but it stays with us.

RECTOR: You just can't part with it.

TURK: I bought the cardinal at the...at one of the junk stores. Either it's worth the 15 dollars I paid for it or it's worth...if it's by the artist who it might be and some critics say it is, it's worth 40,000. Who knows?

RECTOR: Oh my.

TURK: I bought a lot of things for ASU that went up in value. The George Washington at ASU...you remember the George Washington sculpture? Big head...

RECTOR: No, I don't.

TURK: That's an original Hiram Powers and I got that for 3,500 dollars at auction and within 48 hours, I had an offer of 75,000 dollars for it.

RECTOR: So, you're a shrewd buyer.

TURK: Sometimes...sometimes I have bought things that aren't worth a cent.

RECTOR: Right. So in your personal collection you would characterize it as primarily prints and ceramics...

TURK: Yeah...

RECTOR: But you also have other interests like the newel post or the...I don't know, is he a bronze...?

TURK: Yeah, he's a bronze.

RECTOR: The cardinal is a bronze cast.

TURK: Uh huh.

RECTOR: And different things like that. Now, I read somewhere that you were also or are also interested in Picasso.

TURK: Oh, I love Picasso. Picasso and Matisse and Rouault.

RECTOR: Now how did that influence what you do collecting wise...uh being a director of a museum...

TURK: Well, it...I have shown Matisse. I have shown Picasso. I've shown all three of those people. Basically, prints or drawings because you just can't afford to have a Picasso

painting on a small budget, but just by seeing their work is so alive. It sort of freed me to move in directions. When you see something and you see something else, you say “Oh gee”...for instance, that blue painting over there, when I bought it, it was considered real far out...oh terribly far out...

RECTOR: That solid blue on the left?

TURK: Yeah, uh huh.

RECTOR: The kind of three dimensional?

TURK: Yeah and if I showed that here at a dining hall, I think people would still think it was pretty far out, but that's pretty conservative now. By looking at some of these wonderful free, new things, it opens your mind. It's like we can't keep on...Jane Austen is my favorite author ever. I love Jane Austen, but the thing is you can't read Jane Austen forever. You have to find room for Henry (unintelligible). You have to find room for all kinds of people and those people have been a big influence on me. Sometimes Rouault most obviously, you know. He does these wonderful stained glass window lead lines and that's affected me, but basically it's an attitude. It's a freedom that I got from these people.

RECTOR: From Picasso and Matisse, you mentioned, and so forth.

TURK: You know...I don't know if you're aware, but in the United States since 1945, there's been an average of three museums opening every week, okay. That's a hell of a lot of museums. They aren't all art museums, historical museums and so forth, but so many of the museums wind up being bogged down. They don't move, they stay in one little center. They might be interesting, but they haven't shown a breath. I think you have to look and say, “Gee, now that's interesting. I really don't like this, but gee that's

interesting.” I showed a lot of art that I didn’t like, but I thought that it was good stuff of its kind and this is very, very important. For me it’s always been important. You show things even if you don’t like them if you realize...if you really can say it’s good.

RECTOR: It’s for the benefit of the public...

TURK: That’s right.

RECTOR: ...even if it’s not your personal taste.

TURK: And one of the things I did at ASU always...a lot of people complained and said Rudy, “You show us so damn much ceramics at ASU” and I did show ceramics, but if you came to ceramics to the museum on a Sunday afternoon I was there and you said to me “Gee, another ceramics show,” I’d say, “Why don’t you go over there? There’s a beautiful prints show in that gallery or you can go upstairs. There’s a wonderful fabric show up there or you can go over there, there’s a folk art show.” I always try to keep a variety going and I think that if...I’ve had some success as a museum director and I think part of my success was showing the variety.

RECTOR: Trying to appeal to a broader audience.

TURK: Yes, uh huh.

RECTOR: Now, on your own personal collection, have you sold any of your work?

TURK: Umm...the works that I’ve done?

RECTOR: Works that you’ve done.

TURK: Oh yes, the work that I do. I sell my work, but from the collection, no I don’t. Once it’s acquired as a part of the collection, it will either go to family, friends, or another institution before I would sell it.

RECTOR: So you've sold some of your own work. Have you also donated part of your work to these other institutions?

TURK: Yes, yes. Now my own work I sell. I...I have always, well the last ten years since I've retired...14 years...I've always made enough money to cover the cost of my studio, my supplies, my framing, and so forth. I have been ahead as much as 9,000 at the end of the year after paying all my bills. Three years ago, I was 85 dollars ahead, okay. So, I do sell. I sold a painting yesterday. I was at the studio because I was going to have a big sale and close the studio. I no longer can drive, so there's no sense in having the studio in Scottsdale. I'm going to have to find some way to paint here. Uh...but I sold a painting yesterday afternoon. Now my own paintings uh...museums aren't anxious to have my paintings, but I have donated to causes. You always start reading about raffles and silent auctions and various charities...Hospice of the Valley...I always donate to Hospice of the Valley and I'd like to make a point here because other people will hear this and read it, I assume, so I'm not grandstanding on this. I just gave to that house that the museum is...

RECTOR: Petersen house?

TURK: No, the other house.

RECTOR: Oh, Eisendrath.

TURK: Yes. I donated a painting...a framed painting which would go 600 dollars in the gallery, okay. That would be the price of my painting.

RECTOR: And you donated it to raise funds for the Eisendrath rehabilitation?

TURK: Yes. Okay now, they said, "Oh you can take it off on your income taxes." You only can take off the price of your materials as an artist. So, if that painting...if I had

given it to you and then you gave it, you could take 600 dollars off of your income tax. I could take off 125.

RECTOR: Okay.

TURK: Okay, so the thing is, yes I do donate to these charities and this is fine, but I don't fall from the vine because you're donating to this charity you're going to get many offers from our group to buy your paintings. No, those people never show up...

RECTOR: So you donate to worthy causes and you mentioned Hospice of the Valley and the Eisendrath house. Now, you mentioned the Eisendrath house which leads me actually to another questions uh...you have a connection with Jessie Benton Evans and I...I understand her son designed the Eisendrath house as well as the Jokake Inn.

TURK: Oh, I didn't realize that.

RECTOR: Is that correct?

TURK: Um...Jessie...Jessie Evans, her granddaughter is a practicing artist here in Arizona and I know her granddaughter.

RECTOR: And her name is?

TURK: Jessie Benton Evans...I can't remember Jessie Benton Evans the last name...I cannot think of it.

RECTOR: Okay.

TURK: But she's a practicing artist in Arizona currently and a very sad state because her husband died a year ago and she hasn't recovered from it yet, but uh...and at ASU we had two Jessie Benton Evans paintings, so yes I know Jessie Benton Evans. She has some paintings at ASU and I know her granddaughters who are...granddaughter and son-in-law's work. Yeah, so I know her.

RECTOR: So, it was the son-in-law and he designed the...

TURK: No, no, no, no. Jessie Benton Evans' granddaughter, her husband is also a painter.

RECTOR: Okay.

TURK: Father was an architect.

RECTOR: Okay, I thought I read something that Jessie Benton Evans' son designed the Eisendrath house.

TURK: That's him.

RECTOR: Oh, that is correct, okay and the Jokake Inn?

TURK: Yeah.

RECTOR: Okay, alright and so your connection is just that you had a couple of her paintings and you know her granddaughter.

TURK: Yeah.

RECTOR: Okay, okay. Since you mentioned Eisendrath, I thought I'd throw that in.

TURK: And I'm glad they're restoring it. It's about time. The house is in terribly bad shape, but it's beautifully structured and there's not much in Tempe to save, let's face it.

RECTOR: Well, the Historic Commission is working on it.

TURK: Yeah.

RECTOR: And it's nice, the Eisendrath, because of it being part of Papago Park...

TURK: Yeah, it's wonderful. I'm glad they're doing it.

RECTOR: Yes.

TURK: You know if you were in New England, every block has a house that's...

RECTOR: But we're in Arizona, in the desert.

TURK: ... Tempe was a very small town.

RECTOR: Yes.

TURK: One of the reasons I took the job at Tempe, I wanted to teach in a small school and a small town.

RECTOR: Well isn't that ironic how small ASU has stayed?

TURK: When I taught in Montana, we had 1,300 students and it was heaven, but I wouldn't want to teach here today.

RECTOR: It's a big school.

TURK: It's too big.

RECTOR: Big school. Now what City of Tempe organizations were or are you a member of?

TURK: I am a member of nothing now.

RECTOR: What were you a member of when you were actively...

TURK: Tempe Historical Society, of course. I was on the board of directors...the city board of directors of the Tempe Historical Society. I was one of the first...I was in the first group of Tempe Arts Commission. Actually, my wife has served on more committees in Tempe than I have. She's been very active in Tempe.

RECTOR: Well good for her.

TURK: I have served on practically every art commission and...in the state.

RECTOR: You mentioned the state, the City of Chandler, and the City of Tempe Art Commissions.

TURK: City of Tempe, City of Chandler, Mesa...I've been very active in fundraising for their center. The Yuma Arts Center I actually designed the renovation of the old center



since it burned down. I was very active in Yuma development. Yeah, I've just been active around the state. (Unintelligible) when I was at ASU...25 years in addition to the lectures I gave at the University. I gave a little over 3,500 lectures in the community and I think I was paid for 10 of them...free of charge and this was to promote the arts and sometimes it was very successful and I enjoyed some of them, but I was always terrified about lecturing. I used to sweat like mad...armpits down to my waist.

RECTOR: So 3,500 episodes of terror...

TURK: If the audience was large...if it was 400, no problem because they became faceless, but if you gave me an audience of 20, I'd vomit before I'd get up to talk.

RECTOR: Well, it's great that you did that.

TURK: Think about it. Listen, you're invited to talk at the Methodist Church at (unintelligible), so you get there and there are 25 people there. Five are 70 and above, 5 are 50 and above, 5 are 45, 10 are under 15, you know and they want you to talk about the Bible and art.

RECTOR: You have quite an eclectic audience there, the range I should say.

TURK: But I did a lot of that and I was...I was a free lecturer. I often settled for, you know, a jar of jelly or jam something like that.

RECTOR: It seems like professors will do that quite frequently, at least...

TURK: But I was very much in demand.

RECTOR: Well, that's nice. I mean, that says a lot for you.

TURK: And my favorite...one of my favorite stories was this happened in San Diego, not here. I was in San Diego before I came here and I got a call, "Mr. Turk, Dr. so and so is supposed to be speaking to our group this Thursday and unfortunately he is ill. Would

you mind taking his place on short notice? We'll be very understanding" and I said, "Sure, I'll take his place. What time?" And she said, "Well, it's the Wednesday Club, but we meet on Thursday and it will be noon," so...She said, "But you'll have lunch with us." So, I had lunch and after lunch, a salute to the flag and sing God Bless America and then the report of the various committees and so forth, then finally this lady said, "And now we'll introduce Joyce who will introduce Mr. Turk" and Joyce gets up and says, "Ladies, isn't this very, very interesting? Dr. so and so could not come today..." Ohhhh. "However, at the last moment, Mr. Turk from the art gallery has volunteered to speak in his stead." "Oh, that's nice," you could hear that. "And ladies, he doesn't charge anything so we can afford a good speaker next week."

RECTOR: Oh, that's a riot.

TURK: So, that's what you're dealing with. But uh...everywhere I have gone, I have done a lot of public speaking because I felt it was imperative that people get friendly with the arts. See, generally people, despite the fact that you're building museums at this terribly fast rate, people really on a whole don't like museums. They're afraid of them. They're afraid of history and it takes a lot to get people interested and uh... You're a historian and you think, "Gee, it's fascinating."

RECTOR: And what I've found is unless it can be personalized...

TURK: That's right.

RECTOR: Then...and so when you were doing all these lectures, these talks you were trying to personalize it for them.

TURK: And I would like to add, I did a lot of lecturing around the community and the state and if you look at the people who developed Tempe, you look at the Harry Mitchell,

for example, these guys who are lecturing all over the place all the time. Not just talking about government, but talking about the city, talking about life in Tempe. I think that you don't recognize how important these people who speak to the community are and fortunately Tempe has had a lot of people who have done this type of thing.

RECTOR: And that's great. That's great and wonderful that you did that. A couple of things that I wanted to backtrack on...Could you mention some of the major donations that were made to the Arizona Art Museum...ASU Art Museum and...as an example, I've got something here that says you received 35 pots from a Maria Martinez and that was kind of a large donation.

TURK: Yes, I can't remember the name of the man, isn't that terrible...35 pots, yeah. I was in the doctor's office one day and the nurse finally came out and said, "I'm sorry, gentlemen. The doctor has been called away on an emergency. We'll set new dates, Mr. Turk, when could you come in?" And the man next to me said, "Turk? Are you really Turk?" And I said, "Yes" and he said, "The Rudy Turk" and said, "Well, as far as I'm concerned I'm the Rudy Turk." He says, "You collect pots" and I said "Yes." He said, "Come over to my house and I'd like to show you my pots. I have some wonderful Roman pots" and I said, "Give me your name and address and I'll make an appointment." He said, "No, right now." So, I'll go, I went over to his house and saw some Roman pots. They were (unintelligible), they were okay. I didn't know if they were real.

(Unintelligible)...he said, "Let's go in my library and have a drink." We were both prostate patients, by the way, and I said, "Oh, I can't drink." So, he said, "We'll have juice." So we went in the library and there were no books, but there were shelves and each section of the shelf had a Maria pot, big black pot and I said, "Maria!" He says, "Oh

you know Maria?" I said, "Yes, these are great Maria pots." I don't know if you're aware, but she's the greatest...she and her husband developed the black pots...the Indian pottery.

RECTOR: Oh okay, I was not aware.

TURK: Okay and he says, "But I want to know, did you really know her?" And I said, "I've known her for 50 years." He said, "Come on." I said, "When I was a little boy, I went to the World's Fair in Chicago and we wandered from one exhibition to another and we came to the New Mexican exhibition and there was an old lady making pots on her lap and an old man making rugs in the floor of sand and when it was time to leave, I had a hissy fit and I didn't want to leave. So, the old lady said 'Keep him here and when you're ready to leave the fair, you can pick him up' and so I sat on this lady's lap and made pots and that lady was Maria." He said, "Oh, would you like to have these pots?" I said, "I would love to have them." He says, "Not you, ASU." I says "Yes, I would love to have them." He says, "They're yours." I says "Great, is it okay if I come pick them up next Monday?" He said, "Pick them up tomorrow or forget about it." I said, "I have classes tomorrow." He says, "Okay, forget about it." I said, "I'll cancel my classes." So, my secretary and I and a student came out and we packed those pots. It was 35 pots and took them back. Now, that was a great gift, okay. Uh...a week later I went back to the doctor's office and the doctor said, "I'm so sorry I couldn't meet with you on the day" and said, "Well, that's wonderful, Mr. god the name always...gave us his collection of Maria pots." He said, "Did he sign anything? Did he sign anything?" I said, "Oh, he was difficult, but yes he signed something." He said, "That's great. He died Sunday."

RECTOR: Oh, that's a great story.

TURK: Now, 35 pots worth 300,000 today, okay. You say, “How do you get something?” See, I didn’t do anything, but the guy knew Rudy Turk as the guy at ASU who collected pots.

RECTOR: That’s a great story. That’s great. Now, have you got some...I’m sure you have several stories, but as far as some of your other major contributions or significant contributions in terms of the artist...uh do you have some stories to share about...

TURK: Well, when I left ASU some major donations were made in my honor. A wonderful old renaissance...renaissance Dutch painting was given. A magnificent contemporary Mexican painting was given. Uh...my friends, the Wicks, from San Diego who gave me that collage over there gave half a million dollars worth of decoys. Yeah, it gets (unintelligible) quite often...

End of Tape 1 of 2, Side B.

Begin Tape 2 of 2, Side A:

RECTOR: ...was telling some stories about some of the people who have donated to the collection at ASU and some of the stories that he has.

TURK: Okay. I’ll give you another pot story. Uh...we were already in the new building, but hadn’t moved out of the old building completely and the pot collection was in the old building at that time and one day I went over to the old building, Matthew’s Hall, and the guard said, “There’s a couple who really would like to go in the back rooms and see the pots and they’ve been trying to reach you to get permission.” I said, “Oh, I’ll show them around.” So I went in the back room with this couple and we talked pots. They knew a lot and it was very interesting conversation and someplace in the conversation found out that she made pots and I looked at her and said, “You make pots?” And she had tiny little

hands and I said, “Such tiny little hands make big pots” and we laughed and that was it...goodbye. A couple of months later I get this gal who called from Oklahoma...

“Uh...my name’s so and so, you don’t remember me, but I’m the lady with the little hands that makes pots.” “Yes, I remember you. Of course I remember you. How are you?” She says, “My husband and I are moving to a retirement community and I have this large collection of tea pots. Would ASU be interested in 87 tea pots?” Okay, see.

RECTOR: Just from having a nice little conversation...

TURK: Conversation, yes.

RECTOR: ...and showing them around.

TURK: Uh huh. Uh huh.

RECTOR: Wow.

TURK: The...one of the members of the board of directors of the Whitney Museum in New York lived in the Valley and he had at one time a large collection...gosh, I can’t even think of the name...of a very prominent old, eccentric artist and his name I’m losing now...and he...

RECTOR: Was it a ceramist?

TURK: No, no, no, this was a painter and I’m losing the name, I’m terrible, and he had given most of it to the Whitney and I jokingly said, “You know, I’ve known you for years and you’ve never given anything to ASU and I would love to have one of those paintings by this artist.” The next time he came, he had the painting. There it was.

RECTOR: Ask and you shall receive.

TURK: Ask and you shall receive. Uh...very famous Spanish artist was visiting and at that time I was working part-time this is after retirement at the (unintelligible) Gallery in Scottsdale...

RECTOR: And you were saying a Spanish artist was visiting...

TURK: Hmm huh and in Madrid they had just a whole room in one of the major galleries in his honor and (unintelligible) said, "Will you take him out for lunch?" And I took him out for lunch at an Afghanistan restaurant and we spent the afternoon there and he loved it and at the end of the afternoon he said, "How can I ever repay you?" I said, "You can give a painting to ASU." See, this is the way you go about doing this.

RECTOR: Now do you remember the Spanish painter's name by chance?

TURK: No, I can't. It's terrible.

RECTOR: That's okay.

TURK: I'm just losing my mind.

RECTOR: That's one painting, but I mean, so you got of onesies and twosies this way.

TURK: Oh yes.

RECTOR: And then there were some significant donations such as the teapots...and what was the name of the woman who donated the teapots? That we can find out from the ceramics center.

TURK: Yes, you can find that out there.

RECTOR: And then you also got the 35 Maria pots.

TURK: Right, yes.

RECTOR: And those were significant.

TURK: And this is the way it went, by researching people in the community who just...the Mathers, M-A-T-H-E-R-S, an architect in Scottsdale...in Phoenix...gave us this cigar store Indian. He gave us a ship's figurehead. He gave us a ship's figured railways from an old ship.

RECTOR: Beautiful.

TURK: Uh...they bought some folk art pieces...they were very interested in folk art and they were very significant collectors in that area. ASU at one time acquired and helped develop...first of all, helped develop the largest collection of contemporary wooden (unintelligible) bowls in the United States. An attorney in Phoenix, Bud Jacobson...Edward Jacobson started collecting wooden bowls. He had...there was a big convention of museum directors in Phoenix and because he had a collection of art including (unintelligible) and lots of well-known painters, they decided we should have tea or drinks at Bud's place and much to one's surprise, these museum directors could have cared less about the (unintelligible), could have cared less about the paintings, could have cared less about his (unintelligible) but were fascinated by his wooden bowls. He immediately said, "Aha, wooden bowls are the thing" and he started collecting wooden bowls and he came up to Rudy and said, "Rudy, I'm collecting wooden bowls. Who should we get? How should we get them?" So, I advised him and pretty soon he had this wonderful collection of wooden bowls and we show them at ASU and people were impressed that Bud had developed this...about 90 wooden bowls and we publicized the fact and the Craft Museum in Washington D.C. decided that they wanted to show the wooden bowls and Cooper Union in New York decided that they wanted to show the wooden bowls and the critics mostly have happy days uh...they responded to the wooden



bowls like mad. So, in New York they were raving about ASU's wooden bowls. In Washington D.C. they were raving about the wooden bowls.

RECTOR: But they were only on loan from...

TURK: They were on loan, okay at that time and uh...during the time that we had some of these in our possession, a young attorney from New Zealand who was visiting ASU for the year came up and in New Zealand wooden bowls are the thing. It's like ceramics in the United States and he admired the bowls very, very much. Okay, about three years pass, Bud is collecting very slowly, he has died down, the show is recognized, there is a book out...a small book. I wrote a forward on it on the wooden bowls and other people are starting collecting bowls. In fact, some people are collecting larger collections by the time...but Bud was the first in the whole United States and one day I got a call to the president's office. "The prime minister of New Zealand has asked that the wooden bowls travel in New Zealand. Could you take those wooden bowls to New Zealand?" I said, "Sure, sure, but I don't have any money to travel." He said, "Well, maybe Bud will supply it." Bud supplied the money so I could go take the wooden bowls to New Zealand.

Tape cuts out

RECTOR: Okay, go ahead.

TURK: That young lawyer was now prime minister of New Zealand.

RECTOR: Not Bud?

TURK: No, the young lawyer that...from New Zealand who came to spend the year and admired the bowls.

RECTOR: Oh okay...is now prime minister...

TURK: Prime minister of New Zealand, he asked for the bowls. So I brought the bowls over to New Zealand and they had this big, big opening and oh, it was incredible and at...the night of the opening the ambassador of the United States stood here, the prime minister stood...the ambassador of the United States was a woman by the way...stood here, the ambassador stood here and I stood...

Tape cuts out

RECTOR: Okay.

TURK: And I stood between them because they were very angry with each other because that day New Zealand had disbanded its navy and the U.S. was very upset because they wanted the navy for Southeast Asia. They were...

RECTOR: What year is this around?

TURK: This is about '80, about '80.

RECTOR: Okay.

TURK: And...so, I was sort of the pacifier that evening standing between these two very significant people and this show. Well, in New Zealand at that time they only had two TV stations and I was interviewed and wherever I went in New Zealand, "Oh, you're the man that brought the bowls to New Zealand. You're the American that brought the bowls to New Zealand."

RECTOR: You were a celebrity.

TURK: I was a celebrity. I'd never been such a celebrity in my life as I was in New Zealand.

RECTOR: Oh my gosh.

TURK: It was great fun. So, anyways we brought the bowls back and then start urging Bud to donate and Bud is very much a prima donna and the dean didn't like Bud and didn't care for the bowls and he suggested to Bud that he give us a few samples, so I had to fight the dean and re-convince Bud...so I got the National Wood Society to honor Bud, took him to California and surprised him with the honor and gave the speech telling how wonderful he was and then he gave the wooden collection to ASU.

RECTOR: And how many bowls were there?

TURK: I think there were 90.

RECTOR: 90?

TURK: Uh huh and then when he died, he left I think 2,500 to buy some more. So the wooden bowls...in fact they're on display...some of them are on display right now at ASU, but when it was given in those years it was the foremost collection, so it's a genesis. I wish somebody else would take over and keep on adding to it now, but it might die out, who knows? But at one time...in other words it's...the fruits or the seeds for a very major collection are there, now somebody else has to come in and I don't know if they're doing anything about it.

RECTOR: Well, I suspect during your 25 years you saw things ebb and flow in terms of interest and...

TURK: Yeah.

RECTOR:...so I assume that someday someone will pick that up.

TURK: Hopefully somebody will pick it up or they might trade it to another museum, who knows, you know? But it's done nowadays quite a bit, but the wooden bowl collection was considered quite a feather in my cap.

RECTOR: So you got the Maria pottery or ceramics, the teapots, the wooden bowls, so those are three major...

TURK: Yeah, a lot of prints and the folk art from the Mathers. That was significant uh...and then of course, you know, prints from many, many different sources.

RECTOR: And there...

TURK: And...oh also, we had a gallery store in the old museum and this lady came to me...one of my docents, an old lady came to me and said, "We need a store" and I said, "I don't have money to start a store." She says, "All I need is a table. I will start a store" and I gave her a table and a chair and she bought 100 dollars...1,000 dollars worth of merchandise and then I donated...personally I donated 1,000 dollars and that was the beginning of the gallery store. Uh...the gallery store has been very, very profitable. It's one of the best stores of its kind in the Valley, maybe in the whole nation as a matter of fact.

RECTOR: I've shopped there.

TURK: Very good store and it's run completely by volunteers. The lady who's running it has just turned 80 and I don't know if she will be able to last much longer, I don't know what will happen then, but that store provided funds constantly for art that I desired.

RECTOR: Now when was that opened?

TURK: Uh...that was the second or third year that I was here that we started.

RECTOR: Oh, so around 1970.

TURK: Yeah.

RECTOR: And do you remember the woman's name?

TURK: Astred Thomas is now 107 and she is (unintelligible) over in the health center here.

RECTOR: Astred Thomas?

TURK: Astred Thomas.

RECTOR: A-S-T-E-R?

TURK: T-R-E-D.

RECTOR: Oh A-S-T-R-E-D.

TURK: And let me tell you, there's another story. Uh...a young artist made a collection of American crockery...first class crockery, beautiful crocks. You know what crocks are?

RECTOR: Hmm huh.

TURK: Okay and when he...he was offered a job at Oregon and he called me and said, "Rudy, would you store my stuff for me?" I said, "I can't store things. That would be against all university rules, however if you let me show those things and I'll give you a deadline to pick them up and if you don't meet the deadline, I don't know what I will do," and he says, "Okay." So, we showed these wonderful pots, about 30...beautiful...well, I kept trying to bribe him...give me the collection, sell me the collection, sell me one...no way. One day he came back to Tempe and he says, "I'm taking my collection up to Arizona...uh, Oregon." I said, "Okay." So the next day we had all of the pots in one of the galleries, closed the doors and were packing them. In walks this docent, Astred Thomas, this old lady who started the store, "I can't find a parking space on the campus and I've got two tickets already and it's just terrible that we don't have parking space. We've got to do something about it." I said, "Astred, just leave me alone. I can't deal with this now." She said, "Oh, well you're crabby today, aren't you?"

and she turned around and walked out. I was crabby, I really was crabby, so I walked out, “Astred, I’m so sorry. I didn’t mean to be crabby, but I’m losing the pots.” She says, “What pots?” And I says, “Those crocks, those wonderful crocks.” “What crocks?” I says, “The crocks that we showed for six months.” She says, “Were they (unintelligible)?” And I said, “Yes they were” and I started crying, just crying. I went to the office and cried. Okay, this is on a Thursday...Monday, it’s early in the week. Next week Astred shows up in my office, “I spent the whole weekend going to junk shops and buying crocks and Joe says that I can buy any crock that you want to buy, so (unintelligible) nobody can buy in Arizona and give them to you, so uh...Rudy can you have somebody unpack the crocks?” And that was the start of the ASU crockery collection.

RECTOR: So Astred Thomas started your collection?

TURK: Hm huh.

RECTOR: And they were all Arizona purchased?

TURK: Purchased in Arizona. Her husband invented the hide-a-bed and she’s still alive over there at the health center, but...

RECTOR: Bless her heart.

TURK: And she started the gallery store and the present gallery store is the Astred and Joseph Thomas Gallery Store.

RECTOR: That’s a great story. So Joseph was her husband?

TURK: Uh huh.

RECTOR: Okay, wonderful. I love these stories.

TURK: Yeah, they’re stories...you know, I forget them...

RECTOR: Well, that's why we take time and...

TURK: But you can see, you know, we're talking about crockery...the present director could care less about crockery, but it's there and it's not a great collection, but, you know, in the East there's better crockery collections, but there's a great nucleus there. Occasionally I would say "Astred, there's a crockery breadbox up at auction and it's going to go for about 1,500 dollars can I spend outside of Arizona for that?" She'd say, "You can have it for 1,500 if you can get it." So, we had a crockery breadbox that we got that Joseph and Astred Thomas paid for and she was running the store and I would say to her, "Astred, you've made too much money lately. Let's take some money from the store and buy some pots."

RECTOR: Well this is great because by telling some of these stories, we're getting some more information like when the store...the gallery store opened and who started the gallery store and these are...the stories are wonderful.

TURK: The present director of...the gal who runs the gallery store is Lareal Eyring and her husband was a chemistry professor at ASU...

RECTOR: How do you spell her name?

TURK: E-Y...Lareal L-A-R-E-A-L Eyring E-Y-R-I-N-G and her husband, two of his brothers were presidents of the universities. They were all chemists and he was known internationally. H traveled a lot and Lareal was working with Astred at the store...when her husband went off to China or Manchuria or whatever she went with him and out of her own money she bought things for the store and then she had to be reimbursed and it took forever to get reimbursed, you know how it is at a university, but until her husband died in December, but she's been doing that for years. This is why we've got such good

things. She's paying cash from them on the spot. These aren't things she's getting from import houses; she's going over to these places.

RECTOR: She did the traveling and found them.

TURK: She's doing less of it now. She's 80 years old, but she looks like she's 60, but yeah...

RECTOR: That's...

TURK: That's a great contribution. That woman puts in about 50 hours a week. She put in more...I will say this, she put in as much time and some weeks more time than I did.

RECTOR: And are you talking about Astred or Irene?

TURK: Eyring...Eyring.

RECTOR: Eyring. E-Y-E-R-I-N-G, okay. Now I want to give you the opportunity to uh...add anything that I have not touched on that you think would be important to the story of the ASU Art Museum, how it developed, your part in it, your artistic life, whatever you feel like needs to be on the record.

TURK: Well, it's so hard to say. There's so much that has been done. I had a very exciting life in Arizona and I was recognized for what I did not so much financially, but I was recognized and honored for it. Wanda has been honored. We were supporters of the New School for the Arts in Tempe. I don't know if you're aware of the New School for the Arts? Okay...

RECTOR: That's the charter school.

TURK: Yes and we were beginning supporters of that and the gallery at the New School for the Arts is the Wanda and Rudy Turk Gallery.

RECTOR: Okay.



TURK: Okay.

RECTOR: May I ask a question? Umm...you mentioned that Wanda has been honored also, could you briefly summarize what...I guess, her background and how she is also in the arts?

TURK: Okay, Wanda has her degrees, all her degrees in the arts. She has a degree, a Master's, in a painting and in weaving.

RECTOR: Okay.

TURK: And I met her at the university and we got married when I won the Fulbright and we went off to Europe together and had our first child in France.

RECTOR: Okay.

TURK: Wanda was a practicing artist...

RECTOR: Did she do weaving or did she...

TURK: Both.

RECTOR: And painting?

TURK: Hmm huh and she is a much better painter, I'm not being modest, she is a better painter than I, but she doesn't really enjoy it that much. Umm...she gets discouraged very easily and she doesn't like a lot of contemporary art and so forth. So she sort of takes a back track on that. She however has always supported me. She went to opening after opening and smiled at a lot of people. In Tempe, she was on the Library Board. She was chairman of the Library Board when they built the new library, for example. She was on the Arts Commission. She was chairman of the Arts Commission Board. She has always been very active in politics. We supported some candidates financially and physically. I won't name them. Wanda's much more active politically than I am. I'm interested in

politics, but I don't work at it. She does...and Wanda would never live anyplace but Tempe. If this building were one foot over into Mesa we wouldn't be here. She loves Tempe. She loves Arizona.

RECTOR: That's great.

TURK: I don't love Arizona in the sense that this is heaven. I like the water. I wish that Tempe were on the ocean. I regret that so much.

RECTOR: Well, you've done a lot for the state regardless of your feelings for it. Now you talked about how you've been recognized and one example was the...it's called the Tempe School for the Performing Arts?

TURK: No, it's the New School for the Arts. New School for the Arts.

RECTOR: High School for the Arts and it's in Tempe?

TURK: Yeah.

RECTOR: And you have the Rudy and Wanda Turk Gallery named after you?

TURK: Yeah and the gallery...one of the galleries at the ASU Art Museum is named after me.

RECTOR: Which gallery?

TURK: It's the craft gallery.

RECTOR: The craft gallery? Okay.

TURK: And I...when they put in the plaques, I had them put it real high because I was embarrassed. Most of the plaques are this high, but mine's way up high, but in the elevator they have the Rudy Turk Gallery painted...

RECTOR: There you go. You couldn't get away from it.

TURK: No, but that's alright. The...I'm not modest, but sometimes I think, just play that stuff down. There's so many people that made contributions. Occasionally I would find a painting or, you know, that fit the collection. For instance, we have a Georgia O'Keefe and if you can get a painting or a drawing by Georgia O'Keefe...and if you don't have the money, I sometimes would get the painting on loan and I would say, "This painting is 3,000 dollars, would you contribute to it?" and I just put this on the wall and people would come in and some would donate as little as 50 cents and some would donate 50 bucks, you know.

RECTOR: So you were able to acquire the painting then through donations.

TURK: Yeah, uh-huh. I did that occasionally and it worked. So, there are many different ways of acquiring things and then of course there are national organizations that give money for the acquisition of arts of various kinds and of course on ceramics I was on the ground floor.

RECTOR: Well...

TURK: You know, in many circles I'm called Mr. Ceramics.

RECTOR: Well, there's a lot written about your ceramics and folk art and so forth, but the ceramics is...

TURK: Yeah, ceramics is pretty high. Uh...the painting didn't do too much because the thing is, painting has always been expensive, very expensive. If somebody died and left us a painting, that's wonderful or somebody decided they wanted a tax break and they donate a painting, but the paintings were always hard to come by. Sculpture is very hard to come by.

RECTOR: Well, I think it was fortuitous that then in '67 the Arizona Commission for the Arts and Humanities was formed...was officially legally an entity.

TURK: And I was a member of that.

RECTOR: Right and then your career in Arizona began then and so it grew as arts in Arizona grew.

TURK: As a matter of fact, they used to have a traveling exhibition program which they've...because of lack of funds they cut two years ago, but the first show was from ASU.

RECTOR: And travelled around the state?

TURK: Hmm huh.

RECTOR: And this was funded through the Arizona...

TURK: No, I organized them at ASU.

RECTOR: Great.

TURK: I was really proud of that and very sorry that they stopped the program.

RECTOR: Well hopefully someone will pick that up.

TURK: But you don't know where these are going to be, what's going to catch on, who knows you...Are you the Rudy Turk...or you know...you don't expect that. People come in and bring me gifts for the museum and you've never heard of them, but they've heard of you and sometimes you have people who just detest you, oh gee. We had lots of religious art from the Renaissance, second rate religious art, this was a collection again...a collection which most of it was given to us. A lot of people are anti-Catholic and they just come up to you, "You damn Catholic," you know that kind of thing. So, there's negative aspects too or you give a speech, a lecture at some hall and everybody in

the hall is ultraconservative and you're talking about contemporary art. Oh boy, you've made a mistake.

RECTOR: On your topic, yes.

TURK: You misjudged your audience.

RECTOR: Yes.

TURK: The best...oh I'll give you the best thing I've ever said in public though...

RECTOR: That would be a good note for the end of our...

TURK: It was before I came here I was asked to speak to a National Parent Teachers Association group at the Cow Palace in San Francisco. The main speaker was Senator Hayakawa and I was the secondary speaker, but speaking first okay and I was asked to speak about children and art okay, so I got up...and I had, you know, 10,000 people...10,000 people don't scare me, 20 does.

RECTOR: I got it.

TURK: So there was 10,000 people there, I get up, I'm happy and so forth and I start talking and in the midst of the talk I said, "Hey, if anybody wants to interrupt me...I want to make sure you people are listening, do raise your hand and reveal something about it," and then I said, "You know what, I think it's very important that children have a large space to...little children have a large space to paint or draw in. You given them a large space, you know yards, and give them crayons and give them paints and they go paint the space (unintelligible)." "Mr. Turk, do you believe in corporal punishment for children?" I thought, "Oh god, (unintelligible)." I answered though, "Ma'am, I believe in capital punishment for children."

RECTOR: Oooh and you have four of your own.

TURK: Yeah, it brought the house down. It brought the house down.

RECTOR: That's great.

TURK: Hayakawa, the senator who was sitting on the podium, and he laughed so hard he fell off his chair. You know and there are moments where you say the right thing. There are also moments when you say the wrong thing. If you're going out to the public, you're risking this all the time. Uh...sometimes you're very, very fortunate and you come out on top, but uh...it's always a little bit dangerous and you have to be a little bit foolhardy to get ahead in the world.

RECTOR: Well, I think you made a lot of good choices and shook a lot of the right hands and...and made a great contribution to the State of Arizona with the ASU Art Museum and I want to thank you, Professor Turk, for granting me the time to sit and chat with you today.

TURK: Well, I've enjoyed it. I'm sorry my memory isn't better.

RECTOR: None of ours are, but thank you so much.

End of Tape 2 of 2, Side A.

Tape 2 of 2, Side B is blank.