

Jonathan Elkus Oral History

San Francisco Conservatory of Music Library & Archives

San Francisco Conservatory of Music Library & Archives
50 Oak Street
San Francisco, CA 94102

Interview conducted November 26 and December 14, 2012
Sam Smith and Tessa Updike, Interviewers

San Francisco Conservatory of Music Library & Archives Oral History Project

The Conservatory's Oral History Project has the goal of seeking out and collecting memories of historical significance to the Conservatory through recorded interviews with members of the Conservatory's community, which will then be preserved, transcribed, and made available to the public.

Among the narrators will be former administrators, faculty members, trustees, alumni, and family of former Conservatory luminaries. Through this diverse group, we will explore the growth and expansion of the Conservatory, including its departments, organization, finances and curriculum. We will capture personal memories before they are lost, fill in gaps in our understanding of the Conservatory's history, and will uncover how the Conservatory helped to shape San Francisco's musical culture through the past century.

Jonathan Elkus Interview

This interview was conducted in two sessions at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music on Monday, November 26 and Friday, December 14, 2012 by Sam Smith and Tessa Updike.

Sam Smith

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Table of Contents

Early Years	3-9
Music Education	9-11
Professional Career	11-12
Family Friends	12-17
Ada Clement and Lillian Hodghead	17-18
Ernest Bloch	18-22
House in Mill Valley	22-23
Conservatory Locations	23-24
Albert's Retirement from the University of California	24
Albert's Teaching at the Conservatory	25
Albert's Pupils	25-26
Albert's Relationship with Faculty	26
Attempted Merger with the University of California	26-27
Conservatory Faculty Members	27-32
Giulio Silva	32-33
Griller Quartet	33-34
Early Music at the Conservatory	34-37
Robin Laufer	37
Milton and Peggy Salkind	38
Albert's Retirement from the Conservatory	38-39
Albert's Accomplishments at the Conservatory	39-40
Albert's Life as a Composer	41-42
Reflections	42-43

Tell us about your early history; where and when you were born and where you grew up.

ELKUS I was born in the San Francisco Children's Hospital [1931], the old building no longer there on California Street. At that time my parents were in their second residence together, their first one having been in Father's bachelor apartment at the Crestview on Washington Street. I was born into a house that Father rented on Steiner Street, following which we moved to a lower flat on Clay Street, in what Helen Salz called the Jewish Forest: all these streets named after trees like Locust and Elm and Spruce. I was brought up for my first four years on Clay Street. One of Father's piano pupils whose name was Olla I remember would take me on walks, partial walks, some of it was in the perambulator and some walking, through the Presidio and I remember a windjammer coming in probably an Australian grain trader. It was a heralded event; I remember people came to watch her come in and I can't remember if she was tugged or not, but I remember the sails. I remember clearly a series of walks, seeing the Golden Gate Bridge under construction.

We spent several weeks every summer in Marin County. Friends like Ada and Lillian would lend us houses. Father would teach during the week and he would come see us on weekends via the Sausalito auto ferry and the old Route 1 to Stinson Beach. When I was four years old we moved to Berkeley, on Shattuck Avenue just north of Live Oak Park. My mother lived there after Father died, which was in 1962. My mother died just approaching the age of 92. She was born in 1902.

From the house on Shattuck Avenue I went through the Berkeley Public School system, the elementary school which is now the Jewish Community Center at the corner of Rose and Walnut, and then to the Garfield Junior High School, now the Martin Luther King, Jr. School, and then through Berkeley High School, and then through Cal. That's the growing up.

Summer weeks in those years would be spent at Tahoe Meadows, where we rented usually for a month. By this time Father wasn't dependent on teaching privately anymore and there was the two to three month hiatus at U.C. Berkeley where he was teaching. Father spent those times with us. This is when he would catch up on the musical literature, on periodicals and new books, and occasionally do some writing.

One important thing to me was that our house was just a block or two away from a stop of the interurban train which took one right to San Francisco. When I was old enough to go to the city by myself it was quite an easy thing to take the Key System which then went over the bridge. The ferries had stopped running except to connect with the main line transcontinental trains. For a while one still approached the city by water, but for commuters the trains from 1939 went over the bridge. I'd end up at the Transbay Terminal where all the street cars were running and could get wherever I wanted in the city. That was an important part of growing up.

What was your early exposure to music? Did your father play a role in your musical education?

ELKUS Yes. There was always music in the house. Occasionally Father would practice. He was an absolutely incredible pianist, but the work that he had in Berkeley was not conducive to regular practice hours and when asked to play he would simply say he was out of practice. He

played duets with Professor Durham of the English department. They would play at the faculty club Christmas party, which was part drama, part concert, part fooling around. I imagine they were rather like what one hears about the Bohemian Club. But Father and Professor Durham would play four-hand music and Father would practice for that. Father's big solo appearance when I was growing up was with the University of California Chorus – again, this was during the war and the men were for the most part doing military and other work. The chorus was a women's chorus and one of the pieces they sang was Debussy's *Blessed Damsel*, the text by Rossetti. It's a virtuoso piano part and Father was asked to play that number in the chorus program, which he did, and practiced at it for some weeks.

Father's pupil from the 20s and 30s, Estelle Caen, also figures in the history of the Conservatory. Estelle was a Sacramentan by birth and her brother was Herb Caen, the columnist for the *San Francisco Chronicle*, which is a whole other story. Estelle would give lessons to children in Berkeley, mostly faculty children, and she used our house as a base and would come and have lunch with my mother. I think Tuesdays were her days. When school let out the children would come to our house every half hour for their lesson with Estelle, and then in return for the studio my brother and I had free lessons from Estelle.

There were always musicians in the house and there was always musical talk. In the less politically correct days all the Polish musicians would tell jokes about Hungarian musicians and Hungarian musicians about German musicians and so on. There were receptions after concerts – I remember the Budapest Quartet concerts in the summer series on Sunday afternoons. After one of the Sunday afternoons with the Budapest Quartet there was a reception at our house. The men in the Quartet, in one hand they had a glass of champagne and in the other a glass of beer and they would alternate sips of these but it meant that nobody could shake their hand. This struck me as really clever, that was the coolest thing. On seeing that, the rest of my life I've been very, very careful, even when offered, to shake the hand of a musician very gently, if at all.

Father was a very impatient man at times; he had a streak of impatience and as I shared that from the beginning we got quite impatient with each other sometimes. Especially over piano playing. It occurred to me decades and decades later that I do have a problem – that there's a synapse missing between hand and eye coordination and I could never really sightread instantly the way everybody else could – the way anybody else with any skill could. I could never transpose, I could never play from music without looking at my hands, I could never play baseball on the playground without looking at the tip of the bat and the ball, which is fatal. It was rather like dyslexic kids at school, classically, being told by the teachers that they're not trying or they're being willful or something like that. Nobody had any understanding of these things then. I was certainly never called willful, but the attitude was that if I only tried harder or practiced more, I could get proficient. Father was very good about getting me the instruction: he never tried to teach me himself. He did teach me how to drive, and he was very, very good at that. I remember with affection the driving lessons which we did on back roads. There was a seldom used county road between Fairfield and Woodland which was used as a bypass when we visited my grandparents in Sacramento every few weeks.

Leonard Ratner, who was my mentor at Stanford, was one of Father's musicology students. Students of Albert were always very, very good to me – careful, diligent, and so Father's work with me was through a very tangible process – through his own pupils.

SMITH How old were you when you started – was piano your main instrument? How old were you when you started that?

ELKUS We began before I was four, before we moved to Berkeley. Estelle came to our flat on Clay Street and gave me beginning lessons, when I was maybe two or three. But later on I played other instruments – I started on violin and didn't get very far – again the eye-finger thing was impossible, and coordinating my left hand with a bowing arm was just – I just couldn't do it well enough after the first year's lessons – I couldn't keep up with what was required. Then I happened onto baritone horn in junior high school. The music teacher put it in my hands and said "take this home and learn it." Father found a neighbor to teach me on that and I got along very well with baritone horn and then went on to bassoon; my teacher was one of Father's old friends, Ernst Kubitschek from the San Francisco Symphony. I did far better on bassoon than anything else and that was my instrument of greatest satisfaction.

SMITH Why did you fare better with bassoon?

ELKUS I don't know, possibly because there was so little competition for the instrument from people my age.

SMITH The bassoon is the viola of the wind section.

ELKUS That's right. There was less competitive pressure. I've never done well with competitive pressure and there was less with bassoon than anything else, I think.

Do you have any early memories of your parents that you would like to share?

ELKUS There are of course tons of memories that go on in the William James way, 24/7. There are streams of consciousness, and I am no less prone to those than anyone else. The memories that I remember particularly are our months in England in 1938, in London. My mother was an East Londoner by birth and we stayed with her parents in a small row house in East London, the borough of Walthamstow. I remember that summer particularly. Father was doing work on Beethoven's sketches in the British Museum. He attended the Convent Garden production of Wagner's Ring. I remember he would come home on one of the late trains after concerts, which he'd attend after work at the British Museum. He was always with us on weekends, and we went to Kew Gardens and the Zoo, and things like that. Once Albert showed my brother and me where the British Museum was, where he worked during weekday afternoons. He showed us the pigeons in Trafalgar Square, just like Mary Poppins. We loved the train ride from my grandparents' suburb into the central city, on the little suburban steam train. Everything in England looked to me at the time dinky, compared with the huge steam engines, the Trans-Sierra steam engines we were used to coming in and out of the Berkeley Station on their way to and from Chicago.

The time I remember most of all in England was a Sunday, when a lot of the family had come to my grandparents' house for a Sunday dinner and tea and beers, and my brother and I were playing with our younger cousins out in the backyard, the garden, as it was called. All the men were gathered around the radio hearing the BBC and we all sensed that something was up. It was

the breakdown in talks between Neville Chamberlain and Hitler. Father usually went to the British Museum Library – it was called the British Museum Library then, not the British Library – but when he went downtown on Monday it was to Thomas Cook’s to advance our reservations on the Queen Mary going home. We went home as soon as we could get bookings, which was a couple of weeks later, because Father had been in Europe through the outbreak of World War I and he knew exactly what was coming and feared that greatly. His fears of course immediately for Britain came true; had we stayed there we would have been in the middle of the blitz, as our cousins were. I remember the fairly rapid packing into the steamer trunks, which is how one travelled in those days, and the taxi ride to the boat train, I think Waterloo Station – with my mother’s older sister and her family riding with us to Southampton.

The summer months at Tahoe [1940s] I remember vividly. These weren’t entire summers – these were weeks out of the summer. Also Marin County, where we were loaned cottages every now and then. Once or twice at least we were at Ada and Lillian’s when they were away. Tahoe was much more primitive than it is now. I remember the first view of the lake, and, from the back window of the car, the last view of the lake, going home on the Meyers Grade, which is still pretty much the same, a little wider maybe.

Tahoe Meadows needs a little explanation. Tahoe Meadows was a marshland community filled in somewhat for really rustic houses built mostly by members of the U.C. Berkeley faculty and staff. These were preppies and ivy-leagues who had been used to rustic houses on Cape Cod or Cape Ann and knew how to build simple rustic houses. When their sons or daughters reached teenage-ry they’d go up and work on the house in Tahoe Meadows and sleep in sleeping bags. When we were there it was still all kerosene lamps and rows of Agatha Christie books on the shelves, and things like that. It all smelled as if the cabin had just been opened after a long winter, and the smell never changed. We were all outdoors anyway; the smell was good, it was a smell of kerosene and lamp-black, pine and cooking. Cooking was usually done outside in a shed on a wood fire – not an open campfire. Tahoe Meadows had a communal campfire and generation after generation of kids sang campfire songs every night. Different faculty or staff would be up there different weeks, as everybody loaned or rented their cabins and we got to see a lot of Albert’s colleagues and their families. We saw a lot more of the U.C. faculty at Tahoe than we ever did in Berkeley – at least the kids.

UPDIKE What types of activities did your family do together on these trips?

ELKUS Well, at Tahoe my father taught my brother and me how to row. My brother and I picked up canoeing. The houses we rented always seemed to come with a rowboat and/or a canoe. We set minnow traps for fishing and Father went horseback riding with us – there was a riding stable nearby. Father introduced us to horses, how to behave around them and everything. That was great. In the event of a phone call a messenger would come from the grocery store at State Line and say “there’s somebody who’s been trying to telephone you” so we’d go to the payphone – a big thing on the wall labeled Western Electric – and Father would with great effort contact San Francisco, or Sacramento, where his parents lived. Sometimes my grandfather would come up. He didn’t really like to stay with us at Tahoe Meadows; he’d rather stay at nearby Bijou where he knew the owners and where the bright lights were. Grandfather was a real sport – he’d much rather be at hotels and resorts than stay with the family. He was the one that liked to take the river boat, rather than the train, to San Francisco to see his brother Charles, the attorney,

who worked with him on the creation of the Sacramento Water District and in the fights with PG&E and so on. Because wherever there is water, there's electricity.

UPDIKE So were most of your family trips into the "wilderness" or did you go to cities together?

ELKUS Let's see, well, Tamalpais - every weekend we didn't go to Sacramento to see my Uncle Fred and his wife and my grandparents we were one day or the other on Tamalpais. That was a given. Very rarely Mount Diablo - during the war that took gasoline, and Tamalpais was a matter of taking the Key System to Transbay Terminal and the streetcar and cable car to the Hyde Street Ferry, and so forth.

UPDIKE Could you talk about where and when your parents met?

ELKUS My mother had been engaged to a man in England who went to America, where his parents lived, and died in a motorcycle accident in New Mexico or Arizona. Mom - Elizabeth - went to San Francisco to be with the young man's parents. At a dinner party there she met my father, who was a bachelor, and three weeks later they were married [December 2, 1928]. They honeymooned in Carmel, which was another place where we would go sometimes. Carmel, again, like Tahoe Meadows was far more primitive in those days than it is now. It was the favorite of San Francisco Symphony musicians, so Albert would play chamber music and have long summertime conversations with the Hertzes and other old friends.

UPDIKE Would you like to talk about your relationship with your mother and about your mother herself?

ELKUS Yes. Mother was the first of her family to attend college. She attended a teacher's college in a suburb of London and did very well. I've read some of her essays, which were good. Her thinking was clear; she was a socialist and a freethinker generally, as her sister's kids said about their mother Jenny - my mother's older sister - that was the Macintosh branch of my mother's family. The Macintoshes didn't use the word atheist, they used the word rationalist, which was a little softer, but mom was definitely a rationalist. Father claimed he was an agnostic, and really didn't like to hear my brother and I describe ourselves as atheists, but that's what we really were, and, speaking for myself, I am. But when I want to soften it, I say rationalist, and that does it just fine. So mom was a rationalist; she had read all the Fabian socialist tracts, and had read H.G. Wells in college and all of the journals that were rife with progressive thought through the 1930s. She thought that all war was absolutely criminal, and that the Great Depression was a criminal act. She was quite up to date with her time and thinking. She took further training after my brother and I were out of the house and became a teacher at a special nursery school for disturbed children, and did some writing on case histories that was much admired in the time.

UPDIKE What was your relationship with your mother like after your father passed away?

ELKUS We were very good friends. I helped her get Albert's papers in order. I'm still working on annotating them after years. We got most of his papers moved to U.C. Berkeley, where the then music librarian Vincent Duckles was an enormous help. I was away, I was living

in Pennsylvania then, but I went out for a couple of weeks every summer. Mom would get things organized in piles and I would go through them with her. We'd annotate some things together. I'm glad we did because my mother's memory was incredible, and a lot of the people that I've been able to help identify is what I remember from Mother, not from Father, so it's to her we really owe a lot of the annotations. Some of the papers that you have show her handwriting. She was a historian at heart; she saw to the typing up and family distribution of all of the letters that we received from London during the war. The originals are at the Imperial War Museum in London and are often cited by World War II historians because these letters give a pretty clear idea of much that was going on in the home front.

Did you grow up in a musical household?

ELKUS Yes, very much so. There was the radio: there was the NBC Symphony, with Toscanini; the New York Philharmonic had an hour; there was the Standard Hour which was heard at school and on the Sunday broadcast at home. For the Saturday Metropolitan Opera, Father would bring scores home from the U.C. library and he and I would sit at the dining room table – the radio was in the dining room – and we'd turn on the Met and follow the score. One of those sessions that I remember particularly well – Father brought home the score of Verdi's *Simon Boccanegra*, and brought home – I think in error – yes, he said he really should have looked – it was the old version of *Simon Boccanegra*, and the Met of course was doing Verdi's revised version, so we had the opportunity of hearing the revised version at the Met with the old score, seeing what Verdi had done in the meantime after decades of further experience to the accompaniments particularly – not to mention the new material that Boito added for him. How the vocal line was kept essentially the same – because after all singers internationally knew it that way – but Verdi lavished attention on the orchestral detail and on the accompanying figures and it was fascinating. Father pointed out – I was just a teenager then – his finger on the score, and we'd nod and say – “yes, I get it,” you know, and “good.”

SMITH Did you really follow the entire score?

ELKUS Yes.

SMITH That's quite a labor of concentration for a whole opera.

ELKUS Yes it is. With the Wagner operas too, one after another.

There was a constant flow of musical guests: Father's colleagues from U.C., the age of collegial dinner parties. This was one of the social problems, I think, in passing, with both the mother and father working: dinner parties became a thing of the past. When faculty wives were more or less housebound, a lot of the time was taken up in planning dinner parties. There would be visiting musicians: Ernest Bloch was there at our house maybe once a week during the summer when he came down from Agate Beach to teach one of the two summer sessions. Visiting string quartets – Father generally knew at least one member, maybe more, from the old days. Symphony players, artists. The talk was about music; there was, as I said, rather little music making in the house, except for the sound of lessons. Sometimes there would be a visiting pianist who was encouraged – Father, or my mother, later, after Father had died, would offer the piano – it was a Steinway grand – to visiting artists so they could come and practice for an afternoon. Alfred Brendel was

one, for example, who used our piano on several tours when he came by Berkeley. It was that kind of thing throughout my growing up.

SMITH He must have been just getting started at that time, Alfred Brendel.

ELKUS This was after Father died, in the 60s. Yes, absolutely, you're right.

SMITH You said that the music that was being played was lessons. Are you referring to Estelle Caen?

ELKUS Father gave the occasional lesson. The pupils then would have been Robert Triest, Edgar Sparks and a lady who came in from Tonopah, Nevada every month or two for lessons: Mrs. Vierra, who was I think a member of the Berkeley Piano Club was one of the regulars.

Roy Bogas was one of the last of the formidable pupils. I remember Roy coming in for lessons when he was a youngster. The living room could be separated from the rest of the house; there were huge sliding doors into the dining room which could be closed, and were closed for lessons. When we moved into the house one of the renovations was that we had a sliding door put in-between the hallway and the living room, so my brother and I could come home from school and go right upstairs or down to the basement or into the kitchen for snacks and we wouldn't interrupt the lesson at all.

SMITH Did you say that your mother was also musical?

ELKUS She was musical. She had a nice singing voice. She sang in a madrigal group that Father organized when we were still in San Francisco. When Father died, I found the part books that he had written out. He would copy out the vocal parts of Renaissance ensemble pieces and English madrigals. My mother loved English madrigals and the vocal ensemble would sing those. I don't remember any of this myself, but they spoke of it.

SMITH So it didn't happen in the house?

ELKUS It happened in our flat on Clay Street, but that was long after I was asleep – so I don't remember. My grandmother, Father's mother [Bertha], was a fine, fine pianist and taught in Sacramento. She was Estelle's first teacher, actually. Mom told me that once during a stay in San Francisco with us that her mother-in-law had said, "why don't we do some music, dear?" and Bertha asked my mother what songs from Schubert she knew, and my mother named a few, so they tried them but it just didn't work. And then my mother realized that Father, when he played for her, would pick up the rhythmic problems where my mother shortened a note or lengthened it or something like that – but mother-in-law was unrelenting.

Tell us briefly about your studies with Charles Cushing, Ernst Bacon, Leonard Ratner and Darius Milhaud.

ELKUS Charles Cushing was a student of Charles Koechlin who was a visiting professor at Cal in the mid-late 20s. Charles went on to Fontainebleau in Paris to study with Nadia Boulanger. Charles taught in the French manner, the way Ernest Bloch taught, of periodic

construction, of balance rather than contrast in composition. He taught a very discreet conducting style. He himself was soft-spoken, exact, always kindly and patient. He held the graduate seminars in his house with martinis and coffee. Strong martinis, strong black coffee. He was taught at Berkeley, and in France, of course, in the French academic way. That is to say, discipline, precision of thought.

Charles and Ernst Bacon were totally different in personality. Ernst was the flamboyant one, the extroverted one. Ernst was the divine right of kings, Charles was the divine eighteenth century balance of things. Both Charles and Ernst taught me how to set the English language to music. They were both masters of this, each in his own way. They would not allow – they would point out at great length – any missteps in treating the English language when setting it to music. Virgil Thomson was a third – Thomson favored me with his famous ten minute lecture on setting the English language. Week after week, month after month, year after year, my setting of the English language was monitored attentively.

Long after I was a student – when I was teaching in the East for some years – when I visited Berkeley I would always take my latest compositions to Charles. I would go up there usually after dinner and maybe get there at 8 or 9 o'clock; the Cushings always dined late. I'd almost always have dinner with Elizabeth, maybe we'd go to a concert on campus, and then after that I'd walk the few blocks up the hill to the Cushings' house and maybe stay there until 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning going over the composition that I'd brought. Cushing was a night-owl, and I don't think ever taught a class before 11 o'clock in the morning. I don't think Cushing had any association with the Conservatory. There was an attorney named Cushing; they may have been distantly related, but it was not anything that figured in the whole relationship.

Leonard Ratner was my thesis advisor at Stanford. He had been the first person to earn a doctorate in music at U.C. Berkeley. His career was at Stanford. I became a graduate student under Leonard's mentorship and he supervised my M.A. thesis, which was a string quartet. Leonard had great insight as to what could and should happen to a musical thought – how it could be extended, contrasted, down to detail. Leonard was very good at singling out what he called the "arabesque," and might suggest a more natural or more effective figure. Ratner's scholarly writing was on eighteenth century music and his classroom presentations were marvelous. His courses were very, very helpful because Leonard had consulted the old German theory books, the manuals and how-to-do-it books, and he understood how eighteenth century musicians and teachers thought and wrote. He carried all this forth very, very well to his students, both in the classroom and in one-to-one composition sessions. Ratner was a fine violinist and understood string quartet writing like few other composers.

The whole eighteenth-century notion of periodic construction, which he stressed, was – in other words – how music was put together. With Leonard Ratner I finally learned the application of what Charles Cushing had always stressed in my undergrad days about how music is put together. Leonard passed on to us from his own studies what he had learned from the old German and Austrian treatises about how tonal music was put together. That's what I learned, and it was a great, great help to me as a listener and as a commentator.

My lessons with Milhaud were once a week for one year, I think. It was my last year of graduate work at Stanford and I drove to Milhaud's one day a week. I remember one thing especially with

Milhaud when looking through a song I had written. The middle part of it was sparse, and I remember Milhaud saying – I shan't attempt the accent: "Jonathan, you must improve your fantasy," which was his way of saying, this is not imaginative, you must improve your imagination. That line has haunted me my entire life. I seem to lack imagination when I really need it. I'm ever grateful to Milhaud for pointing that out, he was absolutely right. That is probably why I finally realized that composing was very much a secondary venture and eventually abandoned it. The lessons were marvelous, the insight into all music that Milhaud had. It was legendary that he had welcomed a pupil who dropped in after William Steinberg had conducted Mahler's Second in San Francisco, and Milhaud – who had "been there, done that" decades – before yawned and said that he was not at all interested in Mahler, the Second, and so on. Finally the pupil said, "Isn't it after all a matter of taste?" And Milhaud leaned back and laughed and said "*mai certainement* – you have bad taste."

Please briefly summarize the different aspects of your professional career.

ELKUS I've earned my livelihood largely as a college band director. That came about through a very happy association with the Cal Band, first as their arranger, then in my senior year as student director. Also at Cal I arranged and composed incidental music for dramatic productions of the Department of Dramatic Art and for the student production group called Mask and Dagger. I became a member of the 49th Division National Guard Band and learned an enormous amount of band leadership and conducting from the commanding officer – Chief Warrant Officer Charles L. Kreuter, who maintained a music shop in Oakland specializing in band instruments, and had been, incidentally, one of the cornetists in the resident orchestra at the 1915 Panama Pacific Exposition, where he had played under Saint-Saëns.

Charles Cushing was my conducting mentor at Cal. After graduating from Cal I attended Stanford as a graduate student. One of my teaching assistant stints was with the Stanford Band as conductor of their second concert band and as arranger for the marching band, whose director then was Julius Shuchat, a Cal graduate who taught at Palo Alto High School and was the instrumental director there. He did part-time work at Stanford, very good work, teaching instrumental methods to the music education students there. I enrolled in his instrumental methods course as a graduate student.

My first job out of graduate school was at Lehigh University as the junior faculty member in a music department of two professors. There were mainly choral activities, which my colleague Robert Cutler directed, and band activities, which I directed. Bob and I shared in teaching the music courses. There was no music major at Lehigh at that time, although we did groundwork for its eventual establishment, first of all through Moravian College, also in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, which became the music major program that Lehigh took over on its own, I believe. It was around my time at Lehigh that I became interested in the music of Charles Ives, and I made transcriptions for concert band of some of Ives's pieces. These were published, and eventually I was commissioned by the U.S. Marine Band to do transcriptions and adaptations of Ives's work for the Marine Band, which constitutes, in my opinion, some of my very best work. These are very fortunately for me on two of their compact disks. So that's the career, essentially. Oh yes, after teaching at Lehigh for some fifteen years, we moved to Cape Cod and I took up teaching at a prep school there, taught English and history, and directed some music and

dramatic productions. After a short stint when my wife and I taught at a school in Virginia, I was invited to U.C. Davis, where I spent the last ten years of my professional life conducting and directing the band program there, and teaching as needed in the department.

Who were some of the well-known local artists and musicians that Albert was friends with, including Imogen Cunningham? Do you have any specific memories of these people to share?

ELKUS In those days there were visiting faculty members from here or there, mostly from the East, sometimes the Midwest. There were touring artists; even then there was a college circuit, and, of course, most players would come to San Francisco. Artists of international fame would come to play in San Francisco, occasionally Berkeley. Two of Father's first cousins, both San Francisco born, married world class violinists. Cousin Helen Katten married Mischa Elman and cousin Estelle Manheim married Toscha Seidle. Whenever Mischa or Toscha came to San Francisco there would be Sunday lunches with other cousins – that sort of thing. After the concert generally one of our San Francisco cousins would give a reception and we were always there. I remember more than once Father and Mischa would play sonatas, Father at the piano. Father would find this frustrating because Mischa was always in total practice. He was the one incidentally who said, "If I don't practice for one day I notice it. If I don't practice for two days the public notices it, and if I don't practice for a week the critics notice it." Father hadn't really practiced for years; it would show, and Father would sometimes have to fudge through a difficult passage on the piano. But Mischa understood this, I think. I remember once when Father and I were in Los Angeles staying at Toscha and Estelle's house, the Elmans were in town, and Toscha and Mischa and Albert played Bach trio sonatas, late one morning before lunch for an hour or two, and they all enjoyed this. Once in a ritornello Albert began the repeat and Mischa just waved him on, but Albert just continued the repeat of the piano interlude.

SMITH Would you say that your Father came reluctantly to the piano when his friends wanted him to play?

ELKUS No, not reluctantly. He'd gladly play for Christmas singing at our house and at friends', and would accompany a cousin whom we liked to hear sing after dinner. He always illustrated his lectures at the piano, and of course demonstrated technique and interpretation to his piano students. I remember this one time with Mischa – the Paganini *24 Caprices* that Mischa had edited and added some even more difficult variations to; they were going over the engraver's proofs and Mischa wanted Albert's advice on some pianistic things and so they began by playing the whole thing through. There was another occasion when Mischa was working on something – not something he was playing on tour but something he was considering for the next season – that he and Albert went through; Mischa brought the music. It may have been something of Martinů's or Bartok's.

And there were other traveling musicians; Albert had spent some time in England and continental Europe, and he had become friends with Myra Hess when she was young, and their friendship kept up all of Myra's life. He was a devoted friend also of May Mukle, the cellist, whose tours brought her to San Francisco. Both Myra and May became very good friends with my mother, who was British. We usually saw Myra at the Hotel Whitcomb, where artists generally stayed when playing in the Opera House, where concerts were played then.

Among the perennially visiting people was the composer Frederick Jacobi who had been born in San Francisco and raised in New York. Fred was a distinguished composer who taught at Juilliard and was the brother of Mrs. I. W. Hellman, of whom a word a little bit later in this. Fred's wife Irene Schwarz Jacobi was a distinguished pianist and the sister of the sculptor Dorothea Schwarz Greenbaum, who was married to an attorney in New York. The Jacobis would come out at least once a year to stay with Mrs. Hellman and whatever other family was around at her estate in San Leandro called Oakdale, known now as Dunsmuir House. My parents, whenever they were going through New York on their way to England, would have dinner with the Greenbaums, and generally Irene and Fred would be there too. Fred was Albert's closest friend. Their correspondence is voluminous, and is at U.C. Berkeley along with Father's correspondence with Bloch, which is I think just as voluminous.

Father had very much to do with the young careers of Yehudi Menuhin and Isaac Stern. Father was awfully good at aligning younger artists with patrons. A lot of the people that we saw were patrons, and very good ones. I began with the Hellman family. Mrs. Hellman had been a patron of the New York Symphony when she was a resident of New York, before she married I.W. Hellman Junior and moved to San Francisco.

There were ever so many others; I remember particularly Helen and Ansley Salz. Ansley was a fine amateur violinist. Father's lifelong friend, the physician (surgeon) Leo Eloesser was a fine violinist. The amateur musicians figure almost as strongly in memory as the professional ones, and certainly the patrons as well. Among Father's and my mother's other friends were Alfred and Lilly Hertz. Alfred was very fond of my mother and would call her "Elisabetta" after the heroine in *Lohengrin*. Lilly was a good friend. We talked a lot in the family about Lilly's eccentricities, and Albert had a lot of Alfred and Lilly stories.

Carmel figures a lot in this, too. Carmel was the summer scene of music making, because the San Francisco Symphony members would go there in the summer. Rents were cheap and they were all together. Nobody else cared about going there then. The Hertzes were there for several weeks of the summer when they weren't in Europe, and the Jacobis sometimes stayed there. Fred had peace and quiet to write. Lots of musicians; Irene could play chamber music to her heart's content. It was a very nice scene. A special friend of Father's in the Symphony was Nathan Firestone, the principal violist. My mother and Nathan's wife Hilda were fast friends. Hilda had all the wonderful eccentricities that one should have. The family's Hilda stories are very much a part of my memories.

Allan and Marcy Bier. Allan Bier was a pianist – Father said nobody played Chopin the way Allan did. Allan was a reclusive teacher; he lived on Cherry Street in what Helen Salz called the Jewish Forest, and had two kids whom I grew up with, John and Alliene. John became, I think, a dentist, and Alliene a social worker. Marcy [Marcelle] and my mother were very, very close friends and confidants. Allan was, according to Father, a magnificent pianist who spent all day teaching and practicing and never gave a concert – was scared to death to give a concert, but practiced incessantly. Father, I think, envied Allan very much his constant practicing. Albert was very much out in the world, and Allan was at home all day every day practicing and teaching.

Through my great-uncle, Charles de Young Elkus, one of Albert's uncles, a lot of the artists and musicians we knew were Southwestern. They would come to San Francisco at Charlie's invitation. Charlie was one of the founders of the Indian Defense League. He and his wife Ruth Salinger Elkus were the first and certainly for their time the greatest collectors of Southwestern Native American art and crafts. It was not considered art then, it was considered mainly under the anthropological wing, which is why the collection went to the Academy of Sciences rather than, say, the de Young Museum. It's really a shame because it should be shown as art rather than as anthropological phenomenon. One of the people that Uncle Charlie worked closest with was the governor of Tesuque Pueblo, Martin Vigil. Martin was a singer and composer, and Sidney Cowell, Henry's wife, recorded – when Martin Vigil was at the 1939 New York World's Fair for the Native American exhibit – a number of his trail songs. Father and Martin would have long conversations about the Pueblo music. We would never go to the Southwest without seeing the Vigils. Martin was a very important part of my upbringing, and even more so of my brother's. When Mickey [Jonathan's wife] and I were driving across country one winter shortly after our son Ian was born we stopped at Tesuque to see Martin, and he took our child in his arms to a corner fireplace and sat with him. Amid the smell of burning pine logs he sang to Ian in his low voice for perhaps two hours. I really think that Martin put the spirit of life into the boy.

Among Father's friends were scholars.

Father was enormously fond of Shakespeare. He could recite, as could my mother, long passages from memory, partly through schooling, partly just because they had an affinity for memorizing. My mother knew passages from most of the Victorian poets, relished the reading of later poets, Steven Spender for example. Fred Jacobi's first cousin, Flora J. Arnstein, was a pupil of Ernest Bloch's at the Conservatory. I think her notes from Bloch's courses are at the Conservatory: she always signed up for Bloch's courses, for example on the Beethoven Quartets, and on the Bach 48 [*Preludes and Fugues*]. Forgie, as she was called, Forgie Arnstein, was a marvelous poet, as was her daughter Edith Jenkins. My mother took poetry courses from Forgie when Forgie opened her house to a weekly poetry reading and discussion which Forgie led. My mother loved those afternoons. This is all to say that the talk of the dinner table was not all about music. Father was quite learned in the British history of the Tudor age and some of Father's best friends were members of the history department and of course the English department, because Father was enormously interested in history and literature, as was my mother. One of their things was touring around England and seeing historical sites, most of which Father had read about and knew more about than my mother, who was after all the British one, but it was a learning thing for them both, and a very happy one.

One of Father's best friends in the artist world in San Francisco was Edwin Grabhorn, the printer. For a while Father's studio and the Grabhorn Press were in a building that no longer exists on Powell Street – there's a parking structure there now, but it was an artists' building, a quaint looking thing. They gave a reception once – I've seen the printed broadsides, the invitations, that Ed made – for Charles Erskine Scott Wood and Sarah Bard Field, both of those distinguished poets and socialists and people of all trades. The Woods and Fields are of interest because they bought the copy of *Leaves of Grass* (and helped pay for the binding) that was given by the Conservatory faculty to Ernest Bloch. It's through the generosity of the Bloch family that it's in the Conservatory Archives now. Sarah Bard Field and Charles Erskine Scott Wood were very, very close to our family, as was Sarah Bard Field's daughter Katherine Ergot. (Ergot was

Sarah's first husband, who was Katherine's biological father.) Katherine married the poet and scholar Jim Caldwell, James R. Caldwell, who was on the first of the reconstituted Conservatory board, so it's all very close.

This is really all to say that Father's social enjoyment was not only among fellow musicians but among fellow artists, scholars, and patrons – Father was just marvelous with patrons, and genuinely so. And with critics: among his friends also were Alfred Frankenstein, the music and art critic of the San Francisco Chronicle, and Alfred's wife, who was the violinist Sylvia Lent. Sylvia and my mother were good friends, and Alexander Fried, Al Fried – he and Frankenstein were called the two Al's. Al Fried was critic for many years of the San Francisco Examiner, the evening paper, then the Hearst paper.

Of the photographers there was of course Imogen [Cunningham], who was at our house a good deal. Imogen's sons all went to Cal, they were older and babysat my brother and me. Father had taught at Mills, and Roi Partridge, Imogen's husband, had been a colleague in the art department. I remember growing up with Roi Partridge's etchings of the High Sierras on our walls. Imogen was just marvelous. I mentioned that Ada and Lillian were not really conversant with my brother and me – Imogen was. There was not one bit of aloofness or patronizing. Dorothea Lange was a bit on the patronizing side. Both Dorothea and Imogen had boys of their own, but Imogen really understood growing boys and could speak with us on a mutually adult level, whereas Dorothea was to us – not to her peers of course like Albert and Elizabeth – but could be to us a bit on the formidable side. She had every right to be.

Another photographer was Cedric Wright, who was one of the Sierra clubbers, a Sierra Club friend of Albert's in the days before Albert's marriage. The mountaineering stopped soon after Albert's marriage and the Depression – the High Sierra part of it. With the growing family we spent Sundays on Tamalpais hiking – and sometimes with Ada and Lillian, and shorter hikes from their house. Cedric Wright kept up his Sierra pack trips and photographing. Cedric's wife Rhea Wright was a piano teacher in Berkeley and had a studio in a remodeled barn beside their Maybeck house on Etna Street in Berkeley. This was all very much interconnected. But once again, our family friends were scholars and artists and photographers. I remember, speaking of Bloch a heated discussion – and when we get to Bloch, for the sake of the record I'll give my favorite Bloch story in photography – but I do remember as a youngster that in all seriousness it was discussed at dinner table: is photography really an art? People actually discussed that in my living memory, believe it or not. One might as well discuss whether recording is really an art, whether electronic music is really an art. People really wondered about it, and now nobody cares! It would be freakish to bring up the question!

UPDIKE You mentioned Yehudi Menuhin and Isaac Stern briefly. Could you speak a little bit about Albert's relationship with them, and if you have any memories of them?

ELKUS Sure. Albert was a good friend of Louis Persinger's. Louis Persinger was one of the principals in the San Francisco Symphony and I think throughout his career was Yehudi's mentor. He toured with Yehudi as Yehudi's pianist. Persinger was not only a world-class violinist but a superb pianist. I've heard old Victor shellac recordings of Persinger and Menuhin. Persinger went back east and so I don't remember father ever seeing him or even corresponding. When father went to New York for conferences or on his way to England with Elizabeth, he may

very well have seen Persinger, but they had been good friends during the '20s and '30s. Persinger would seek Albert's advice on Menuhin's playing. The meeting between the Menuhins and Bloch is legendary. But Persinger and Albert probably consulted on matters of interpretation, expression, things like that, when Persinger was working with Yehudi on this sonata or that concerto, you know, that kind of thing. And the same with Stern. As I said, Albert did line both artists up with San Francisco patrons.

UPDIKE Do you remember who those patrons were?

ELKUS The Stern patrons were the Goldstein sisters. I remember visiting at their apartment in the Mark Hopkins Hotel. The Goldstein sisters invited my brother, mother, and me to their box at the Young Peoples Symphony Concerts, which were Saturday mornings. We once or twice went with the Goldstein sisters back to the Mark Hopkins in their chauffeur-driven limousine. I don't remember – this is terrible – I should remember who Menuhin's patrons were but it has slipped me. I remember one weekend day we went to Saratoga, near Los Gatos, to the Menuhin estate. Mr. Menuhin, Moshe was his name, was a Hebrew scholar. Moshe and his wife Marutha loved my mother, and my mother adored them. Father was to consult with Yehudi on an interpretive matter in something Yehudi was playing that year. We had a wonderful lunch, I remember. Either Hephzibah or Yaltah was there, I've forgotten which. Yehudi was very much aloof; he was a teenager then and felt cold disdain for anybody younger than he, so Yehudi had his lunch at the pool and would have none of this. But he dutifully went through his session with Albert. But I remember what a wonderful visit it was with Yehudi's parents and the one sister whom I remember was there.

UPDIKE Do you remember Isaac Stern when he was younger?

ELKUS No, I never knew him. I saw him years and years later, when he spoke at a conference I was at in Boston. And with fear and trepidation, I went up and introduced myself, and he gave me a huge hug and said how much he owed to Father. You know, it was just very, very nice. That was the only time I met him. This was after he had saved Carnegie Hall. He had long paid his dues forever and ever, and then some, to the musical world. I mean, if there was any artist who ever sent the elevator back down it was Isaac Stern. Mischa was quite the opposite. Mischa lived in a world entirely of his own, with really very little rapport with anybody or anything else outside his music.

SMITH I was a little bit confused by the Southwestern connection; I didn't quite understand how that became prominent to your family. It sounds like it was a relative or a friend.

ELKUS Right; it was father's uncle, Charles de Young Elkus, who took an interest in the Southwestern tribes and pueblos and villages, and in just how shamefully they had been treated by the Federal government from the beginning – from the eighteenth century – and resolved as an attorney to devote his *pro bono* efforts and those of his firm to rectifying as much of that treatment as he could. And in the process of going to the Southwest every summer he and his wife Ruth became fascinated with the art – the weaving, pottery, jewelry, painting. Charlie got Father in on the music. And Father was fascinated. I spoke of Father being of the nineteenth century German tradition, but part of the nineteenth century German tradition – which everybody forgets – is that it was German musicologists who began learning what we now know as world

music. You know, they had the recording devices, they had the electric generators, they had the will, they had the perseverance, they could document things, they really went off to Indonesia, they went off to North India, and wherever – and only one American, Mrs. Dinsmore, I think for the Library of Congress, had been to the Southwest. Albert knew her writings, and resolved to find out about this for himself. And did. And he encouraged his pupil at Cal, Sydney Robertson, as she was known then – later as Sydney Robertson Cowell – and hooked her up with the Library of Congress’s recording program. And she herself became fascinated with the various musics in the United States. It was she who made the acetate disc recordings of Martin Vigil in 1939.

Do you have memories of Ada Clement and Lillian Hodghead? What was your impression of each woman? What was Albert’s relationship with Ada and Lillian?

ELKUS Ada and Lillian, as I remember them, were not really interested in my brother and me. They wanted really to talk with Father, and Mom would usually, when my brother and I were children, take us on short walks, play games, or sit with us at our end of the picnic table and converse with us, and occasionally talk with Albert, Ada or Lillian. I think that my mother had a close rapport from time to time with Lillian, just talking between themselves about Father and about Bloch and people of mutual interest, maybe politics. As far as Father’s relationship with Ada and Lillian, it was certainly one of collegial respect, of affinity to the German romantic tradition, as it was understood then. Certainly their mutual admiration of Bloch was a tie, and of course their mutual interest in the workings and the future of the Conservatory were of deep concern to all three. I remember more of just the intent buzz of conversation between Ada, Lillian and Albert; very little of that was directed at my mother, or my brother and me.

SMITH Do you have distinct impressions of Ada and Lillian as separate individuals? What were the things you noticed that they shared in common and what were the differences between them?

ELKUS Ada was slower spoken in character. Lillian spoke more fluently than Ada. I should add that I remember Ada as a pianist. One of Father’s concerts with the University of California Symphony which he conducted during the war – this was back in the day when women played stringed instruments and men played woodwind and brass usually – the males were off doing military or other war work, and Father conducted several concerts of string orchestra music; of course he played the Bloch *Concerto Grosso* with Ada as the soloist, and I remember her as being an exceptional pianist. Albert had enormous respect for Ada’s musicianship, and Lillian’s too. I don’t think I ever heard Lillian play, but Ada’s playing I remember clearly to this day.

Do you remember any conversations between Ada, Lillian and Albert about the administration of the school?

ELKUS I remember, as I think I said before, I remember the three of them having serious conversations. Not intense conversations, but intent conversations. These conversations were at our dinner table, and on Sundays at Mill Valley, but I do not remember any of the content, because at those stages in my life it was not really meaningful for me.

How would you describe the relationship between Ernest Bloch and Albert Elkus? Did he visit often? Do you have specific memories of Ernest Bloch?

ELKUS Bloch would usually come for first summer session. He would drive down from Agate Beach [Oregon] in a Buick convertible, an immediately pre-war convertible. Dr. Eloesser had one too, they were marvelous cars. Bloch would stay at Cloyne Court which still stands; it's at North Gate [U.C. Berkeley], just beyond Hearst Avenue, a huge shingle structure. I think it's a student co-op now. Or he would stay at the Hotel Shattuck, which was called I think the Whitecotton then – that's in downtown Berkeley on Shattuck Avenue, by the BART station. I think the summer session was six weeks. The arrangement with the Haas family was that Bloch would receive from the family a certain stipend, I think some of which was to be earned by teaching a semester at Berkeley. Bloch taught an introduction to music, and it was open to anybody who was interested in enrolling, particularly public school teachers earning units for promotion. They loved this, they loved the Bloch course. After which – you can only take a course for credit once at U.C. – they audited it. He had quite a following of people. I audited it a few times, too; they were marvelous. He would begin each day with a different prelude and fugue of Bach's and play it at the piano. As my father did, he had instant recall at the piano – any piece you could name. He would lecture extemporaneously: hand gestures, smoking a pipe, typically, and speaking in this rapid high voice interspersed with phrases in French.

The person who could give the best imitation of Bloch was Sydney Cowell. During one of Albert's sabbaticals, he put Sydney in charge of Ernest Bloch, to see that he was at his lectures, to see that everything went fine. To see that everybody Bloch offended was put right, or if anybody offended Bloch, that was put right. Sydney's French was as good as anybody's, so it worked out very well. But Sydney could give a very good imitation of a Bloch public lecture – how he'd suddenly break off and address Sydney, who was in the audience – [speaking in French accent] “you know how the Bibliotheque nationale is, Sydney, how, they categorize things, and I could not find a thing to help me cure etleet's foot” – Bloch would digress – Finally there was an old gypsy woman on a transatlantic ship he was on who knew just the herbal cure for his athlete's foot. “All my work in the Bibliothque nationale was for nothing, but the gypsy woman knew.” It was just absolutely marvelous. No matter where he digressed it was fascinating and unforgettable. I only wish Sydney had made some kind of record of her imitation. Sydney could imitate people wickedly. With Bloch, with thorough affection.

Albert's relationship with Bloch was one of enormous admiration, enormous respect. They shared their love of mountains and music. I think it was Bloch that got Albert to understand the wealth and value of French music, which stood Albert in great stead later in understanding the music department at Berkeley, which had been basically French in training. Charles Cushing was a result of that. I think it was Bloch's guidance of Albert into the French repertoire that endeared Albert to Charles Cushing. They could talk intelligently and feelingly about it.

I want to insert here something that I should have mentioned before. Jim Schwabacher, who was very much a part of the Conservatory, was a pupil at U.C. Berkeley and took Charles's course in French music. Charles spent a good deal of time on the French song literature, and encouraged Jim, a tenor, to learn much of it, which Jim did. It was among his best. If you've ever heard Jim sing the Idiot's song in *Boris Godunov*, which the San Francisco Opera chose him to do, that's very much in the French tradition. The later French composers learned a lot from Mussorgsky.

This was the kind of thing Jim did in spades. That and his Evangelist in the *Saint John Passion* at the Carmel Bach Festival. The Auctioneer, in *The Rake's Progress*, for example, the beginning of the third act. A lot of Jim's ability was honed by Charles' coaching from the piano in the French song literature – the Debussy, the Duparc, the Chabrier songs. Jim commissioned from Charles an orchestration of three songs by Chausson, which Jim sang with chamber orchestra in San Francisco. I've talked a lot about Albert's British connection – there was indeed a long-seeded French connection of which Ernest Bloch was decidedly a part, having been born Swiss-French himself.

Even when Bloch had told a story before and you thought you knew where the story was going, there'd be entirely new digressions. It was unfailingly entertaining and unfailingly instructive. Bloch played as much to the kids as he did to anybody, and he'd look at us to make sure we understood. We nodded in agreement and Bloch would be pleased and go on, or digress more, whatever pleased him. And whatever pleased him pleased us.

UPDIKE Could you talk about Ernest Bloch's character, his appearance, his reputation?

ELKUS Bloch never wore a tie. He was one of the first adults on campus not to wear a tie. He always looked somewhat disheveled. But it was hard to tell – I don't think he ever had a haircut – he always looked not seedy, but slightly shabby, like many professors do. He could have been somewhere in theoretical physics just as well. A cousin of ours who was a staff member at U.C. then, was at Trader Vic's one night, waiting with some people for a table and Bloch came in with his then-girlfriend, one of the last long-term girlfriends, and they wouldn't seat Bloch without a tie, so Bloch and the girlfriend left in a huff. Cousin Edith went up to the maître d' and said "you know, you've turned away a very important person" and the waiter said "well, who is that?" and Edie said her heart just sank. She said, "Well that was Ernest Bloch" and the maître d' said "oh my god, why didn't you tell me? Of course we have plenty of ties here – please don't tell Vic I turned away Ernest Bloch!"

UPDIKE Could you tell your favorite Bloch story? I think you said it was with Alfred Stieglitz?

ELKUS Yes, that's my favorite and maybe the most instructive of his many, many stories and accounts of things. Ernie [Ernest Bloch's grandson] passed this on to a historian of photography at San Luis Obispo.

UPDIKE Eric Johnson?

ELKUS Yes, exactly. The story goes like this: It seems impossible in this day and age that this topic could have been discussed in any seriousness, but it was widely discussed in my parents' circle whether photography was an art. This was actually disputed then – some people claimed not, some people claimed it was – week after week this seemed to come up for quite some time. Bloch set it all to rest. I think in the late teens or early 20s in New York Bloch fell into the Stieglitz crowd at a Chinese restaurant – Eric knows all about this – Bloch got into this polemic with Stieglitz about whether photography was an art. Stieglitz just threw up his hands and said "look, if you're really interested, meet me in my studio at 7 o'clock tomorrow morning (a Sunday) and we'll go from there." So Bloch was there; it was one of these overcast misty

mornings in Manhattan – barely light, and Stieglitz said, “we’re going to take this camera and set up.” So they walked awhile, and they found an angle at a street corner with some building tops in this sort of silvery early morning light. Stieglitz set up the Graflex and invited Bloch to take some pictures, and Stieglitz took some pictures. Then they went back to his studio to develop them. They used the same chemical and timing, and Bloch saw right away that Stieglitz’s photographs were marvelous and said “well, how could this be? It is the same camera, the same shot, the same chemical, the same everything – what is this difference?” And Stieglitz said, “Mr. Bloch, it is because you do not love it, you do not believe in it.” Bloch from then on was a convert.

UPDIKE I’ve seen Bloch’s own photographs, they’re really beautiful.

ELKUS Yes, they are, aren’t they? They get better and better. These were all made after Stieglitz. Bloch was before, I guess, using the camera as a recording device. I can hear him saying this: “I used the camera only because I could not draw.”

UPDIKE Did you ever hear Ernest Bloch play?

ELKUS Only demonstrating in classrooms. I don’t think he ever played other than that, except his own scores.

UPDIKE Did you ever hear Ernest’s piece *America* performed?

ELKUS No, I never heard it performed. Only on a recording. Its first LP recording. A faculty friend of mine at Lehigh bought it and I went over to hear it.

UPDIKE Was Ernest Bloch at your parents’ house a lot?

ELKUS Yes, when he was in Berkeley for summer session; at least once a week he’d be at dinner. He loved coming to our house, he loved us all. My brother was the big athlete of the family, and outdoorsman. He and Bloch would talk learnedly about mountain climbing. Of course Bloch had grown up in the Alps.

UPDIKE You had told me before that Flora Jacobi Arnstein was a devoted pupil of Bloch’s. We have some of her notebooks in the Archives. Would you like to talk a little about that?

ELKUS Yes. She’s the only one I knew, other than Father, who attended Bloch’s classes. I attended a few he gave at Berkeley. I was sorry it was just a few. I remember riding my bicycle to campus and stopping in the lower classroom in the old music building and walking in as it was about to start. Forgie, as Flora J. Arnstein was called, was a Bloch devotee. It was one of the things that kept her interested and sane in her upper-middle-class San Francisco family life. She loved her husband, he was good at what he did – he was the public health administrator in San Francisco. They went to Carmel every summer; he’d play golf and she’d go to the Bach festival. She was devoted to both of their daughters. One of their daughters, Edith Jenkins, became as distinguished a poet as Forgie was. But I think the Bloch lectures were a very important part of Forgie’s life. One of Forgie’s first cousins was Mrs. I.W. Hellman, who was Ruth Hellman’s

mother-in-law. Mrs. Hellman's younger brother, also Forgie's first cousin, was Frederick Jacobi, the composer and pianist and teacher at Julliard. Fred was the earliest of Albert's lifelong friends. When Bloch first came to New York, Fred Jacobi immediately took up with him and they became fast friends. Jacobi was always called Bloch's shadow – and his compositions “second-rate Bloch” and all that, you know; it was inevitable. Jacobi was just fine in his own right.

UPDIKE Do you know where Albert met Ernest Bloch? I know that Ada and Lillian had gone to Cleveland to meet him.

ELKUS I don't know. Father could have stopped by Cleveland on a trip to New York and met him. He might have met him in New York through Fred Jacobi. Albert never would have gone to or through New York without seeing Fred. Fred could easily have introduced them, but I don't know where or how they first met. I think it was before Ada and Lillian went to Cleveland to meet him. What rings true is the thought that Albert insisted that Ada and Lillian, hearing that Bloch could easily be available, insisted that they go there. That sounds reasonable. I would suppose that [Alfred] Hertz would have played something of Bloch's – and that San Franciscans were certainly familiar with Bloch's music before he ever came here.

UPDIKE Do you have any early memories of Ernest Bloch?

ELKUS No. I'm told he carried me on his shoulders, because we lived not too many blocks away. Did they live on Scott Street?

UPDIKE I don't remember. Did Bloch live by himself?

ELKUS Oh, no. Marguerite and the kids were there. I don't think one ever saw Marguerite. I don't think she ever came to the Conservatory with him. Bloch spoke of her a lot, usually with a shrug. Marguerite had real troubles, I think. Bloch realized it was best to be in seclusion up in Agate Beach. Bloch could collect agates on these endless beach strolls of his, thinking out his day's composition and then going home by the fire and writing it down. Marguerite, as I imagine, kept her simple kitchen with a lot of good nourishing soups and things like that.

UPDIKE Did you ever go to Bloch's house?

ELKUS No, Albert and I were going to drive up the coast and visit the Blochs. Albert and Elizabeth, on a trip to Victoria, dropped in and stayed for a few hours. Albert and I were always going to visit, but never got around to it.

When Bloch died I remembered the wonderful description – I forget who said it – of when Theodore Roosevelt died: it was as though a brass band had suddenly stopped playing. It was like that in a way when Ernest Bloch died. This colossus, never to be seen again, is suddenly gone. And there won't be a next summer, and there won't be any more stories. It was sad. The ceremony at Hertz Hall in Berkeley – the presentation of the Bloch manuscripts to U.C. Berkeley – Suzanne spoke for the family – the administration spokesman had said all the due and dignified things, likewise the spokesman for the music department – and then Suzanne gets up there, and

says in this buoyant voice, “We were all so happy when father died. He was sick, he was morose, and it was time.” It was just like Bloch could have done for himself – with a theatrical effect.

I remember Elizabeth and I went to a noon concert where a student soloist played the rhapsody *Schelomo* and Lucienne [Ernest Bloch’s daughter] and her husband Steve Dimitrov was there – Sita’s parents. This was in Hertz Hall in Berkeley, the U.C. Berkeley Symphony. It was a marvelous performance, I think it was Michael Senturia who conducted the orchestra then, and Lucienne and Steve and mom and I went out for lunch and had a very nice couple of hours together. Lucienne and Steve and mom talked about old political times. It was just great. The Dimitrovs lived in Marin County then; they had an art and framing shop. Then they moved to Gualala.

What are your memories of the house in Mill Valley that was owned by the Conservatory?

ELKUS First, I had never known until I saw this topic, that the house had been owned by the Conservatory. Dimly I remember talk about Ada and Lillian bequeathing it to the Conservatory, but I had no idea what had happened. The house was on a road going along the hillside, a terraced road, and there was a shoulder where one could park. I remember steps going up for quite a ways. The house itself, being on a hill, had two levels. The main living area was the area you stepped into. The front door as I remember faced the hillside. There were inside stairs going down to a lower level which had a large deck overlooking the road and the mountain flanks beyond, and one or two guest-rooms. This is the area we stayed in when we stayed overnight, or maybe even a week or two in the summer when Ada and Lillian were gone. I remember the house smelling very, very strongly of redwood. The upstairs had their big parlor grand – the upright piano – and pictures; one of the framed items was the beginning of the chorus – a photostat full score page – of Bloch’s *America* Rhapsody – and there were paintings as well; I don’t remember whose. There were Southwestern blankets, which were in fashion at the time, and large round pillows on the floor to sit on, that kind of thing. Benches under the windows I remember. Then at the top of the lot, accessible from the house by going further uphill on a dirt trail, and accessible from the next terraced road above was another house that they had built in the early 1930s. This they called the Little Red House. Ada and Lillian had been to Soviet Russia, sometime I think in the 1920s, and had bought stock in some kind of industrial venture, and were quite surprised a few years later when a check came from the Soviet government buying back their shares. With it they built another house on the terraced road above them, to rent or to lend, and they called it among their friends the Little Red House. I remember the people living there were the daughter of [Gottardo] Piazzoni, the painter – her name was Mierelle Wood – and her husband Phil, who was an artist. They lived there during the years I remember visiting.

I’d like to mention also that the main house that I described was the second house that was built there. I never saw the first one, but evidently it had been destroyed in a hillside fire. Destroyed along with the house, father used to tell us, was a collection of antique silver, I think eighteenth century silver, that he and Ed Grabhorn had collected as an investment, and that all went to melt in the fire. I don’t remember any music there specifically; we usually went there late Sunday mornings and had a picnic outdoors. Ada and Lillian had an outdoor fire – a barbecue – they

weren't called that then, just an outdoor cooking fire – and a large wooden cabinet where they kept the skillets and all the things that you'd want for outdoor cooking. Inside, in addition to the paintings and the Bloch photostat I described, there was a photograph of Bloch in mountaineering clothes, and another one of his face – I would think both taken during the 1920s. Really, that's all I remember right now.

UPDIKE Did Ada and Lillian live there alone?

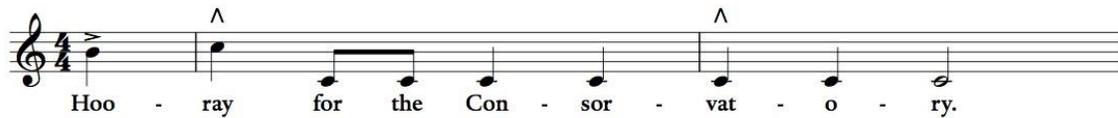
ELKUS Yes, I think they lived there during summer months pretty regularly. I think when school was in session they lived in San Francisco during the week, Monday through Friday, at the Conservatory. I think they had an apartment there. I've never been sure about that – I've never really thought of it, but they left San Francisco on Friday afternoons and came back Monday morning, that sort of thing. There was of course the Sausalito ferry that took them right from the Hyde Street Pier to Sausalito, then there was the interurban train, the orange Northwestern Pacific train, that took them to Mill Valley, where one could hire a jitney, a black sedan from the 1920s. I remember standing on the deck watching the taxi arrive from Mill Valley, bringing Marcy Bier and her two kids, John and Alline, to visit my mother and brother and me for lunch and play time.

Do you remember the Conservatory's first location on Sacramento Street? If so, how would you describe the building itself and the atmosphere of the school at that time? Do you go there often with your father?

ELKUS Yes, I do remember the Conservatory's location. The photographs that I've seen in the [Conservatory's] archives – exterior and interior – are exactly how I remember it all. I remember the interior shot of the stage and concert hall. You had to imagine it full of people on folding chairs. I imagine that Bloch's public lectures, and the courses that Forgie Arnstein took would have been in that place, with folding chairs and a lot of people, mostly women in the afternoon.

I can't describe the atmosphere of the school at the time – I was never really there when school was in session. I was there for the occasional concert or to see my father's office when he first began administering there. My brother described a potluck supper – this is when I was away for the summer – and it was evidently a joyous occasion. My brother had never seen anything quite like it. I imagine there was a lot of wine. My brother sang a song for me that they'd sung, imitating the accent of Ernest Bloch; it was some kind of strophic song with verse after verse but the refrain was “Hoo-ray for the Con-sor-vat-ory,” which is how Bloch pronounced Conservatory. That's how my brother sang it, and I'd give anything if you could unearth it, if somebody wrote down the old song.

Alla breve



UPDIKE Could you tell me what a walk through the Conservatory on Sacramento would be like? Could you describe the building as you walk through the front door?

ELKUS In most any house in San Francisco, you'd walk through the front door and the parlor would be to the right. And this parlor was to the right. And then the dining room would have continued to the back of the house. The hallway would have gone all the way back, so you could enter the dining room from it. But that was what the rest of the auditorium was like, and the stage. It was all open with no wall there then. When it was a residence there would have been a wall and the Irish maid would have come down the hall to answer the door and usher a visitor into the parlor where the lady of the house would serve hot chocolate, let's say. So the parlor, dining room, and hallway had all been opened up to create the auditorium and stage.

UPDIKE Can you describe your father's office?

ELKUS No, I can't remember just where it was in the building, except that it was upstairs. It was one of the former bedrooms, I guess. They'd all been made into studios.

What do you remember about the Conservatory's move to Ortega Street? What was your impression of the Ortega Street location? Did you attend performances there?

ELKUS So I was in my last year of graduate school down on the Peninsula, and all this happened; really, I don't remember anything about the move, but I dimly remember being at a dedication ceremony of some kind – there were probably several, probably a week of celebratory events and I'm sure I was at one of them. I remember my first impression of the location, the first look at the building: my gosh, what a marvelous funky thing this is, you know? I liked it, I think everybody did. It was really quaint, that Dutch revival. The performances I remember attending were in Hellman Hall, which was built somewhat later, one of the great acts of patronage by the Hellman family.

Did Albert have a difficult time with the decision to leave the University of California? Did they try to prevent his leaving?

ELKUS No, it was not a difficult decision. He was anxious to get along with things at the Conservatory and he still had some good years left in him. He did satisfy his needs as a teacher; he continued teaching graduate seminars at Berkeley for a while, anyway. He taught his favorite, the Wagner seminar, and – well, he had several favorites – one on the Beethoven Quartets. So he did teach the occasional graduate seminar. He still attended concerts at Berkeley. There's a

wonderful Dorothea Lange photograph of him at the dedication of Hertz Hall; the title is “Man Listening to Music,” and it’s Albert in evening dress listening to one of the performances.

Did they try to prevent his leaving? No, he was clearly at retirement age; I think U.C.’s mandatory retirement age then was 65. But Albert welcomed his very full and productive schedule at the Conservatory. There was the reorganization of the board, there was the acquirement of the building and the moving to Ortega Street, the reinforcing of the collegiate academic curriculum, the eventually aborted but infinitely complicated negotiations that did in fact go into the proposed alignment with U.C., things like that, and of course the nightly concerts and senior recitals, and the oversight of the Prep Division – which under May Kurka made leaps and bounds.

Did Albert enjoy teaching at the Conservatory? What were some of the differences between teaching at the Conservatory and the University of California, Berkeley?

ELKUS Well, the differences – at U.C. Berkeley, once a year, he alternated with his colleagues in teaching the big lecture course to non-majors – the musical equivalent of Physics 10 or Zoology 10; at Davis it’s Music 10, but at Berkeley it’s Music 27 – still is. There was nothing like that really at the Conservatory of that magnitude – with four teaching assistants and three-times weekly lecture to several hundred students. Neither was there anything the equivalent – then, anyway – of the graduate seminar, as it had been established for years at Berkeley as part of the Master of Arts Program, and then later on with the PhD Program that Albert and the provost and the faculty committees developed in the 1940s. So the difference was between his teaching on academic levels both to non-majors and aspiring scholars and composers and his teaching at the Conservatory, where whatever piano teaching Albert did was on a pretty formidable level. If Albert taught theory courses at the Conservatory they would likely have been compacted and maybe met with some indifference, because performers, especially young performers, don’t really like to be troubled with this sort of thing. And of course Albert would have understood that, even while stressing to students the importance of being broadly informed and well-grounded in all aspects of music.

Do you remember any of Albert’s students from the Conservatory?

ELKUS Sure. Two come to mind: Marcus Gordon and Edgar Sparks. Edgar had been a student of Albert’s long before, I think from the earlier ‘30s. I remember Edgar very well. He was an assistant professor at the music department at Cal by the time I got there or very soon after. Marcus Gordon – I should have mentioned Marcus among Father’s last pupils was definitely one of them. He was awfully good, and Albert was just terribly pleased with all of his work. Did Edgar and Marcus both teach at the Conservatory?

UPDIKE I’m almost positive Marcus did.

ELKUS Yes, I am too, but I’m not certain about Edgar Sparks. He might have. Edgar became a very fine scholar in medieval British music and he was definitely a protege of Manfred Bukofzer’s on that. Sparks did his best one summer to teach me piano, and I did learn a couple of pieces laboriously when they were at last memorized in my fingers and I didn’t have to look at the keyboard. Edgar was really kind and patient but, again, it was a hopeless task. Around this

time when people asked what instrument I played, I said I played the pencil and the eraser. I was fine on paper, but I just couldn't manage the keyboard coordination.

UPDIKE Marcus and Edgar were two of the students that you had mentioned to me before, but were there other students of Albert's that you remember?

ELKUS Well, I've mentioned Roy Bogas, I think. There were several others. Estelle, of course, from the even older days. Various names come to mind, people who became prominent members of the Berkeley Piano Club, that kind of thing. Father stayed out of private piano teacher politics in Berkeley and San Francisco, especially after he came to the University. He just didn't attend student concerts other than the ones at the University – those kept him busy enough. Albert attended more concerts at the University than anybody. Later, at the Conservatory, even with the commuting, Father would (this is parenthetical to what we'll talk about later) Father would leave the Conservatory in the afternoon before the worst of the rush hour and take a nap in Berkeley on the living room sofa, have a light supper at home, and then drive back to the Conservatory for the concert. He found that more restful than just staying on and working. In those days, believe it or not, he found the drive on the Bay Bridge and 19th Avenue restful.

How would you characterize Albert's relationship with the Conservatory's students? With the faculty and staff?

ELKUS I do know that both Ernst Bacon and Ray Green and some of the San Francisco Symphony players of the older generation – Nathan Firestone for example, Penha the cellist – were good solid friends of Albert's and chamber music friends. The relations with faculty and staff were always collegial, always cordial, except when prima donna-ness got in the way of smooth running and had the potential of causing jealousies and rifts among the faculty itself, which I think Father was very good at anticipating and smoothing over, and, you know, patting the folded wings, and so on.

UPDIKE Can you think of any specific examples?

ELKUS Yes, I do remember there was a question of one of Adolph Baller's pupils entering a competition and winning, tho' later it was found out that she was a year or two over the age. Albert had a very serious talk with Baller and said "you just can't do this" and he said "look, Albert, I have my real age, my legal age, and my professional age, we all do!" He just didn't understand the American way in which Father was brought up, in Bourgeois-mercantile Sacramento where one played by the rules. Then Baller would go around and say that Father was unsupportive, and the students would be up in arms because of course they wanted their classmate to win. You know, things like that would come up every so often. I think there were certainly jealousies among the faculty, as there were at Berkeley. Father did his best to keep everybody happy.

UPDIKE Do you think he liked his role as administrator?

ELKUS Yes, I think he did. I really do. He didn't have to do that, he could have taught. I think he enjoyed it. He enjoyed the routine, the associations, the daily challenges, the big challenges that took years to fulfill.

What do you remember about the Conservatory's attempted merger with the University of California?

ELKUS I was down on the Peninsula for graduate school for four of those years and I would see Albert maybe once every week or two weeks, something like that. Very often I'd drop in on my way to or from the National Guard band rehearsals which were always Monday nights. Depending on the state of negotiations, Albert would be up on the prospects or mildly depressed. He was really disappointed that it did not work out in the end. He worked terribly hard for it as I've said.

UPDIKE Could you talk a little bit about Albert's relationship with the Extension Division at U.C. Berkeley that they were trying to merge into?

ELKUS Right. The Extension Division gave correspondence courses in music theory, and I think there was one in music history, for which I think Albert wrote the syllabus originally. So, the Music Department was copacetic, friendly, with the Extension Division. There really was no problem with the Extension Division, nor with the provost. But with the university faculty's tradition and practice of shared government – that is, the faculty and the administration shared the governance of the University. In the end, the majority of the music faculty just did not want the merger. Tenuous though it might have been, it would have been a triumvirate with the Music Department, the Extension Division, and with the Conservatory, but I think what the Music Department feared was, for example, this: Manfred Bukofzer, within my memory, prepared the performances and conducted three early operas – all early music in those days – the 18th century, the comedy, the *Beggar's Opera*, the restoration opera *Dido and Aeneas*, and the 18th century German comedy, *The Village Barber* of Johann Schenk. Manfred was all for performance; he was interested that the music he studied got performed, all for getting to know the music through performance, and so forth. I think what Manfred feared – because he was such a thoroughly broad-minded and enlightened humanistic individual – he was afraid, I think, that everybody would go to a senior recital and find the usual Puccini arias – Puccini was performed ever so much in those days – and that the opera productions would be from the usual repertoire. Instead of the *Beggar's Opera* there would be *Die Fledermaus* or *The Merry Widow* and instead of *Dido and Aeneas* there'd be another *Tosca* or whatever. And that might have been exactly what would have happened. But the present day efforts of the Conservatory in world music and historical performance – I noticed Jeffrey Thomas' program – were unheard of then at any conservatory. It was simply places like Berkeley and Harvard where one might find anything like the operatic performances that Manfred gave.

UPDIKE Did Albert continue to try to merge the University of California and the Conservatory after the proposal was turned down?

ELKUS No, not to my knowledge.

Who were some of the prominent faculty members that Albert brought to the Conservatory?

ELKUS I'm not really sure. Of course, there were *always* prominent faculty members at the Conservatory. The most prominent of the San Francisco Symphony players taught at the Conservatory, I think from the very beginning. The very presence of Ernest Bloch brought Ernst Bacon and later on Ray Greene, just to mention two composers. I think there was more of a continuum of prominent people rather than a sudden influx as there was in Berkeley, for example, where there had simply been a handful of music faculty, all very good, terrific people. There had been people of international fame at Berkeley before Albert, but Albert and the rising tide of the economy then made it possible to get more than just a few people of international repute in their fields.

UPDIKE These aren't necessarily faculty members who Albert brought to the Conservatory, but they are faculty members who you might remember and have memories of that you'd like to share. I can list some names, and then afterwards I can give you a school catalog to browse through to see if you recognize more names.

ELKUS Sure.

UPDIKE We'll start with Rena Lazelle, who was a voice teacher at the Conservatory. Do you remember Rena?

ELKUS No.

UPDIKE Winifred Jones?

ELKUS By name. Father and others spoke of her, but I don't think we ever met.

UPDIKE Adolf Baller?

ELKUS Yes, he was the pianist in the Alma Trio. He was a distinguished pianist, teacher, and so forth. Father had across the board great respect for him as a musician and artist. They did have rocky times because Baller was what teenagers then called a prima donna. Albert never used the phrase, but Albert as an administrator both at Cal and at the Conservatory, had difficulty with prima donnas who were always knocking at the door wanting something or wanting exceptions. A lot of that is the way it goes; Father understood that, certainly. But it was an excessive attitude that Baller – and others – Baller was certainly not alone – had. I never met Baller, but I'm sure that once or twice I heard him play.

UPDIKE Do you remember the other members of the Alma Trio?

ELKUS Gábor Rejtő I think was the cellist, but I've forgotten the name of the violinist. The Alma Trio were neighbors and friendly with Colonel Wood and Sara Bard Field, of whom we've spoken. Their son-in-law, James Caldwell, was appointed to the reorganized Board of Trustees. He was a professor of English at U.C. Berkeley, and Father wanted him on the Board partly to represent his wife's family – and, more importantly, to advise the Board on the

academic curriculum outside of music, whose additions and strength were necessary for the Conservatory to join the national association of conservatories.

UPDIKE Do you remember Beulah Forbes?

ELKUS No.

UPDIKE Otto Schulman?

ELKUS No.

UPDIKE Kurt Herbert Adler?

ELKUS Yes, very well. I played in the U.C. Symphony as second bassoonist under [Kurt Herbert] Adler for more than one semester. Adler was one of these legendary dictatorial Germans and had a vein of sarcasm. We used to imitate him in the hallways during cigarette breaks – most people smoked cigarettes during those days; it's hard to imagine now. Later on the stories of Adler and the opera company were rampant and enjoyed great currency among musicians. Adler certainly had his great, great strengths. I don't remember Adler as a terribly good conductor but he certainly knew his stuff. Because of his very heavy sarcasm in this heavily German-laden English, he was, as they say in *Death of a Salesman*, not well liked. I did sit in a few times with the Conservatory orchestra, which met in that double room downstairs in the Sacramento Street building. We read through the orchestral score of Gounod's *Faust*. It was announced that Adler's first conducting opportunity with the San Francisco Opera would be Gounod's *Faust*, so this was the way Adler learned the score backwards and forwards – he used the Conservatory's orchestra. So it was win-win.

UPDIKE Was Adler friends with Albert?

ELKUS It was a mutually respectful collegial arrangement. Father of course had trained in Germany and they knew many of the same musicians from the pre-World War II days. Adler was another one of the prima donnas. Bloch was too, of course; Bloch's ego knew no bounds. But Bloch was an altogether likeable person – Bloch knew he was great and had no need to prove that to others.

UPDIKE Do you remember Sidney Griller?

ELKUS Yes, very well. Albert and the Grillers got along very, very well.

UPDIKE Do you remember other members of the Griller?

ELKUS Sidney Griller was leader of the Griller Quartet, Jack O'Brien was second violinist, Philip Burton was violist, and Colin Hampton was cellist. Colin Hampton's second wife was Bonnie Bell Hampton. Bonnie Bell was one of the, to use a phrase that was current then, star pupils of Margaret Rowell, who was a radio studio cellist in San Francisco, and had quite a studio of cello students in Berkeley. All the good cello kids in Berkeley studied with Margaret Rowell. She held recitals, cello ensembles, and so on. She was the mother of the late

Galen Rowell, the photographer. Her husband was a professor of speech and rhetoric at U.C. Berkeley. It was a remarkable family, and Margaret was a remarkable teacher. She had a wonderful rapport with the Griller Quartet. There was not one ounce of prima donna or professional jealousy anywhere in Margaret.

UPDIKE Do you remember Bonnie Hampton?

ELKUS Yes, very well. She and I were classmates – I was a little bit ahead of her – through high school, and we were at Interlochen National Music Camp in Michigan together one summer. Her mother was a counselor there. She was really responsible for Bonnie’s musical education and did everything she could to further it, without ever being the typical ballet mom. There was nothing like that with Bonnie’s mom; she was a thoroughly nice, reasonable, kindly, helpful person.

UPDIKE Would you like to talk about Sol Joseph?

ELKUS Yes. I don’t think I ever met Sol Joseph [Piano, Music History and Literature]. Father respected him enormously. The students at the Conservatory absolutely swore by him. If I’m thinking of the same person, he also taught at San Francisco State. Fellow members of the 49th Division National Guard Band that I played in for some years were students at San Francisco State – and if this is the person I’m thinking of, they at State swore by him too and were amazed at his ability to improvise on any musical subject you could name. He was one of these very quiet, kindly, thoroughly knowledgeable people and when he got to the keyboard evidently he just blossomed and it was all extroversion there.

UPDIKE Do you remember Madi Bacon?

ELKUS Yes, very, very well. She was the devoted sister of Ernst Bacon. Father brought Madi from Roosevelt University, then Roosevelt College, in Chicago, to head the music branch of the U.C. Extension division to succeed Estelle Caen, when Estelle moved on from there. I remember Madi’s arrival in Berkeley: she played tennis, and the Bacon family had been old friends of Albert’s. Madi just never got along with the music faculty at Berkeley. Madi was one of these thoroughly dynamic people; she was exhausting, absolutely exhausting. What mom called ‘a frigate in full-sail.’ She accomplished an enormous amount; she had a very active vocal studio in the house that she built on Keith Avenue in Berkeley. She spent a lot of time and energy promoting Ernst as a pianist and as a composer, especially when Ernst retired from Syracuse University and moved to Berkeley. Madi and Kurt Herbert Adler founded the San Francisco Boys Chorus, which started out as the Opera Boys Chorus – for those scenes in *Carmen* and *Tosca*. Madi commissioned from me an operetta, a musical play, *Tom Sawyer*, and then a second one several years later, *Treasure Island*, both of which she and the Boys Chorus staged. Madi played piano awfully well, but she shone as a choral conductor. Madi was thoroughly accomplished, practiced, always on the side of the true, the good and the beautiful, and was absolutely exhausting.

UPDIKE Could you talk about Ernst Bacon?

ELKUS Yes. Father always said that Ernst was his own worst enemy. There are chapters in Leta Miller's book about Ernst's stint as head of the WPA music project in San Francisco. I think Leta's book is the most valuable piece on Ernst. Ernst was here, of course, at the Conservatory, and then at U.C. Berkeley where he earned his Master of Arts. Ernst was then married to his first wife, Margaret Prentice Lillie Bacon Barrows – I gave you her childhood and adolescent memoirs. Bacon was like Bloch, quite active sexually. Mother told me once that when I was little, Penty [Ernst Bacon's wife] and the two children, Joey and Margo, were at our flat on Clay Street on Christmas Eve; Ernst had a studio downtown, I think in the Montgomery Block, and just didn't show up. We kids got more and more restless of course, and Penty and Elizabeth became anxious, and Albert had long since come home. And then finally Ernst showed up, and seemed totally oblivious that he'd been so late, and explained to Elizabeth, "It's not that I ever dread where I'm going, but I'm always having such a good time where I was."

Ernst I remember as a teacher, too. He was awfully casual but there'd be this occasional flash of wisdom and brilliance. It was a good experience knowing Ernst, I think, as long as you weren't a family member. Same to an extent with Bloch, but I think Bloch's children, being Europeans after all, accepted him the way he was. Penty was born into the Crane family, the plumbing hardware family in Chicago. I'm not sure where the Prentice name came from, but she was always called Penty.

UPDIKE Did Penty know about Ernst's lifestyle?

ELKUS I think so. Penty would download on my mother, and they'd have long cups of tea together sometimes. But I don't know any specifics of their conversations.

UPDIKE I am going to give you the 1952–1953 collegiate catalog. If you would like, scan through it to see if there are names I didn't mention of faculty or staff that you remember.

ELKUS Bernhard Abramowitsch was a remarkable person. Abramowitsch was the one marvelous pianist in the Bay Area who would play new music. He was the favorite pianist of the Composer's Forum concerts which took place in the Veterans Building in San Francisco. Abramowitsch would learn any new piece – he would take the time and the trouble – he lavished care and attention. He had a large studio of superb pupils in Berkeley. I met him mostly in the green room after concerts; he was always a thoroughly nice person, and an impeccable artist and musician.

Lev Shorr was blind. He was the pianist with the San Francisco Orchestra. I don't know how he learned his music, whether it was from Braille, or what. Estelle Caen talked about Lev Shore a lot. He was loved, respected – another one of these remarkable pianists. But I never understood, or really ever asked, just how he did it. How he could be the pianist with the San Francisco Orchestra, and be blind?

Tanya Ury I remember being often discussed. I don't think she and I ever met, but she had a piano studio in Berkeley, and an active one. She was, I think, Hungarian. She was one of these flamboyant people, prima donna-ish. There were all sorts of Tanya stories, mostly told with affection and understanding. I think she came to Berkeley during the late 30s. Evidently she was a fine pianist and teacher. She had a thoroughly loyal and productive following.

Ludwig Altman I don't think I ever met, but he and Albert were old friends. Altman was organist at Temple Emanuel, I think.

Armando Agnini – I saw his name on every opera program; he was the stage director for the San Francisco Opera. He was a very close colleague of [Gaetano] Merola, who was the musical and general director of the San Francisco Opera for many years and succeeded by Kurt Herbert Adler. Adler did a marvelous thing; he brought into the repertoire several of the Richard Strauss operas that none of us had ever heard – *Die Frau Ohne Schatten*, for example – and did brilliant productions of the *Rosenkavalier* with [Elisabeth] Schwartzkopf and Lilli Lehmann. Merola did Italian operas that we might never have heard – he revived Montemezzi's *Love of Three Kings*; Montemezzi I think was in retirement, living in the Peninsula, and he himself conducted that. I was there as a teenager. And one by one Merola revived the three one-acts of Puccini – *Il Trittico*. Once Merola was asked about his conducting with the San Francisco Opera, and he said “well, I only conduct the easy ones, and I leave the German ones to others.”

Paul Moses [Vocal Dynamics]. He was a physician, an M.D. I was a patient of his for allergies. Allergies were thought to be partly psychological then, and Moses had training in psychiatry. He may have been a licensed psychiatrist as well, but his thing was allergies. Just a couple of years ago when serving on a board of statewide senior care residents I found that Moses's son Stefan was a fellow member, so across seven decades Paul Moses has cropped up again. Moses was I think Viennese, and I'm sure was good at what he did.

Louis Ford [Teaching Methods], I've never met him but he was a member of the San Francisco Symphony, I'm pretty sure. Louis and Marian Ford, they were among the people talked about, respectfully and affectionately.

Julius Shanis on oboe and Merrill Jordan, the flutist, these were first chair members of the San Francisco Symphony. It was generally done for the Conservatory to engage whenever possible the Symphony players. Raymond Ojeda was second bassoonist in the Symphony.

Herman Trutner was one of an illustrious Oakland family of French horn players. They were involved with the Oakland Municipal Band, whose conductor was of one of the Trutners. There was Herman Trutner, senior, Herman Trutner, junior, Herman Trutner the third; they all seemed to play horn. They were big in musical politics and a very active and famous family of musicians.

Edward Haug [Trumpet] was the son of the violist Julius Haug, whose wife Alma was Librarian of the San Francisco Symphony. I think there was a junior Haug in the Library there too. Eddie Haug studied conducting with Pierre Monteux, and I think was one of the very early conductors and musical directors of the San Francisco Ballet.

Virginia Morgan was harpist with the San Francisco Symphony, another one of these flamboyant people. She had very well-coiffed blonde hair and wore long dresses and fronted the orchestra. She was the only woman in the Symphony then. It still raised eyebrows when Margaret Cunningham, one of Walter LaRue's best pupils, became timpanist. We were ready for a harpist, but not quite for a timpanist.

Peggy Cunningham was my timpani teacher, another one of these fine, fine musicians. She was no relation to Imogen. In those days, people asked Imogen if she was related to Peggy.

Do you have memories of Giulio Silva? What was his relationship with Albert?

ELKUS Giulio Silva. You and I talked earlier about Giulio. Did Bloch bring him? I think so. Giulio had an encyclopedic knowledge – I think that Giulio may have sung in the Sistine Chapel Choir as a boy – I mean, the old Renaissance polyphony was like mother’s milk to Giulio. Bloch brought him over to teach 16th century counterpoint. I’m going to talk about that aspect of Bloch’s and Albert’s musical experience when we talk about Bloch and Albert, and I’ve made a note to talk about that. Giulio was a magnificent choral conductor and knew the choral literature backward and forward from time immemorial to the present. He was a prodigious composer in his own right; Tessa, you and I have talked about the significance of Giulio’s manuscripts and how I’m trying to persuade his daughter Maria to give them to Berkeley.

I remember Giulio Silva as a totally pleasant and genial man who took interest in every member of our family, the four of us. His wife Evalina was the archetypical Italian hostess. We went there on a Sunday for lunch now and then to where they lived in Lagunitas, and sometimes Ada and Lillian would be there, but more often the visits were separate, we’d go either to Ada and Lillian’s or to Giulio and Evalina’s. These were very happy occasions. The Silvas had something of an acreage and one could wander around and look at the chicken coop and that sort of thing. They were right on Lagunitas, I think, right on the lake. It was a nice place and they were great people and everybody had the highest respect for Giulio as a practicing musician and teacher, and as a really lovable person.

How would you characterize Albert’s relationship with the Griller Quartet? Did you ever hear them play?

ELKUS Okay, part A. I think that the Griller Quartet was at the Conservatory already before Albert became director; they certainly had been at U.C. Berkeley when he was chair. It was really Bloch who brought them out here because Bloch was actually better known in England, more often performed in England than anywhere else. Bloch made a point once at dinner, waving his hands, how Boosey and Hawkes had hosted a reception for him in London when he had been there for a performance at the Albert Hall of the *Sacred Service* – and he said, [in French accent] “zey only had published my Violin Concerto! Only but von of my verks! Zey give me reception!”

The Griller Quartet was mentored politically in the musical life of London by none other than Myra Hess and her musical mentor, a younger man, Howard Ferguson. It was Myra and Howard and the Grillers that made sort of a six-some. The Grillers played during the Blitz in World War II, in the National Gallery noon concerts that Myra and Howard organized. These concerts were frequent, almost daily – so when the Grillers were the RAF Quartet during the war, they were fairly frequent performers at these concerts. So Albert, through his career-long friendship with Myra Hess, got to know of the Grillers – and Bloch was right there, of course. I don’t know

whether through correspondence or through a conversation with Albert or whether it was coincidence, but all signals were go for the Grillers to come to California. Albert was mightily impressed when he heard them play in London right after the war. I remember that being discussed, and I'm sure it was one of the things discussed with Ada and Lillian among the many, many Conservatory matters they talked about; I'm sure the Grillers were the subject of much conversation, but I didn't know who they were then. So the conversation didn't mean terribly much to me. Did I ever hear them play? Yes, many times when they were resident at Berkeley. I was an undergraduate and sometimes other music students and I and one or more of the Grillers would meet after their afternoon chamber music class at Jules Soda Fountain on Telegraph Avenue, on that first block between Sather Gate and Bancroft, where the student union is now. The Jules crowd with the Grillers was always very animated. Their performing was very animated too, and I remember their first West Coast performance of Bloch's Second Quartet in Wheeler Auditorium. It was sensational and they played it a second time. Father asked the Grillers if they would mind that and they said, "No, of course not, we'll try and get it right this time, won't we?" That sort of banter. Bloch, of course, was ecstatic. They recorded every concert then; I remember the microphone set up and I think they recorded the second performance, too. Those would be archival tapes at U.C. Berkeley. Then after that, I remember Bloch and the Grillers met in Room 11 Wheeler Hall, the basement room behind the stage of Wheeler Auditorium, which itself was nothing but a large lecture hall, the largest one on campus then. Bloch and the Grillers spent more than an hour going over Bloch's First Quartet, which the Grillers had not played publicly but may have rehearsed. Bloch was going through the First Quartet with them, phrase by phrase. They were all on a high from the tremendously successful set of performances they'd just given. I'm not sure which quartet was programmed with Bloch's Second, it was likely a Beethoven or a Haydn, and maybe one other. I've forgotten, but the printed program certainly exists.

UPDIKE So was your father good friends with the members of Griller Quartet?

ELKUS Oh, very good friends, yes. We were all good friends. My mother was right there with Mrs. Griller and, let's see, Elsbeth Hampton who was Colin Hampton's first wife; Hampton later married Bonnie Bell, the cellist, who's now teaching at Juilliard. Bonnie, after Colin died, married the pianist Nate Schwartz, who I think was associated with the Conservatory.

Early Music at the Conservatory

ELKUS Father was never really good at languages. He studied – he really worked. At the turn of the past century when he knew he was going to Europe for extended periods to study – he really made an effort to learn German, and he made a great effort to learn French. At high school too, but it just never worked really well. He was never conversational. He could read the dictionaries – I still have his German and French dictionaries – early 20th century dictionaries, marked and used. Since he knew the Bible in English translation and was thorough in Shakespeare, he bought German and French translations of the Bible and Shakespeare, and read those, so the phrases that he knew very well in English he would recognize in French and German. That was the best he could do. His musical friends internationally were mostly British because they could communicate, they could joke, they could laugh, they could be serious and make literary allusions, and so on. I think the British connection is very important. Once my

father told me that he knew he loved my mother once he heard her voice. It was a British voice, of course, and as a musician he was attuned to sound, and that is what really moved Father towards the relationship.

Among the British people that Albert knew – I mentioned May Mukle, the cellist, Myra Hess, the pianist – I'm sure that Myra gave master classes at the Conservatory when her tours brought her here. Flora Jacobi Arnstein, who was a pupil of Bloch's here – she and Myra got along wonderfully and Myra would always go to the Arnsteins for dinner when she was in town for a recital or an appearance with the Symphony. Albert and May and Myra were dear, dear friends.

Among the early music people that Albert met in England were Anselm Hughes, who was the scholar and plainsong authority for the High Church of England – Anglican Orthodox, they're called in the United States. So it was partly due to Albert's background in Hughe's work that enabled his understanding of so much that Giulio later offered at the Conservatory.

Another music friend of Father's was Arnold Dolmetsch, one of the very early scholars of Renaissance and Baroque music and the instruments on which it was played. Very early in the twentieth century, Albert and some other young musicians, I think Myra and May may have been among them, paid a visit to the Dolmetsch's country place where the instrument making went on and where Dolmetsch did his writing. Albert had Dolmetsch's books in his library. Still another one that Albert met and learned from in Germany, and whose concerts he attended, was Sam Franko, the violinist, who was actually American but settled in Germany and gave concerts of early music.

Early music in those days was pre-Mozart – Boccherini in the late eighteenth century, Bach and Vivaldi before that, and it kept on developing. The gaps between the Gregorian chant – the Anglican chant and the early eighteenth century – they all had to be filled in. Albert's friend Giulio knew the middle ground, the great Renaissance choral composers and lutenists. Also, Albert was friendly with the forefront of scholarship and early music performance through the works of his friend Sam Franko. Of course, Franko and his orchestras played on the modernized stringed instruments, as originals were rare and their copies expensive.

It was the study of modal counterpoint, counterpoint as the Renaissance masters had learned it, that Bloch was fascinated by. Bloch had studied free counterpoint, counterpoint in the Bach style, but had never studied modal counterpoint, and Father taught it to him. Giulio leapt right in there with it – Bloch was fascinated. He had these small notebooks of music staff paper and when he rode the cable car and the ferry and the interurban train to Mill Valley for his afternoons on Tamalpais he'd do modal counterpoint exercises. I told David Conte and Conrad Susa this once during the Bloch festival a couple of years ago here. So the Conservatory has had a long, long tradition of early music that really it never knew about, with Giulio and Albert and Bloch, and all the connections that the school had, especially Giulio's and Albert's.

It comes quite naturally that a person like Jeffrey Thomas should establish a music collegium here and that students at the Conservatory would become actively interested in early music, that they would learn to perform on early instruments when possible. That's another contribution that not only Albert made, but – with their great enthusiasm – Giulio and Bloch as well. And Ada and Lillian were fascinated by it, of course.

Albert taught piano and musical literature courses at Mills, but one of his favorite jobs was at Dominican College, now Dominican University. The president, Sister Dominic, encouraged Albert to teach the Gregorian chant literature at Dominican in his history of music class. Father bought a set of records, shellac 78s, of a French group, the monks of the Solesmes Abbey. They were recorded in two albums by RCA Victor, and Albert had a set of those which he used for classroom demonstrations. When I was little I called it monk music – it was a sort of eerie, echoey sounding; it was marvelous. The theory, I’ve heard, is that the whole interest in early music came about as a reaction to modernism, which nobody liked – but people could like early music. This attracted composers who just didn’t want to jump into modernism, and hence what came to be called neoclassicism all came from the interest in early music and this “back to Bach” thing. It’s an interesting way of looking at it, and it rings absolutely true – to me, anyway.

Another one of Albert’s British connections was Arthur Bliss, the composer who became, after a time, Master of the Queen’s Music. You’ve probably heard of the fanfares he wrote for Prince Charles’ investiture and for royal weddings and funerals and so on. Bliss wrote a lot; he had four ballets, one opera, lots of chamber music to his credit. But Bliss’s chamber music includes a quartet that he wrote for the Griller Quartet. Bliss was introduced to the Griller Quartet by Myra Hess, who was really their guardian angel, their patron and mentor. Bliss wrote his Second Quartet for the Grillers. Bliss had taught at Berkeley. In 1939 he and his family were stranded in New York when the war broke out, so Albert invited Bliss to U.C. Berkeley. Bliss was another of the connections between Albert and the Conservatory, and U.C. Berkeley and the Griller Quartet.

Albert’s piano teachers were, among others, Josef Lhevinne and Harold Bauer. Harold Bauer and Rosina Lhevinne were Estelle Caen’s teachers in New York.

UPDIKE Could you talk about Albert’s own relationship with Lhevinne and Bauer?

ELKUS I don’t know much, except a letter that Albert wrote home in 1912. He had had a long, long talk one afternoon in Paris with the British-born Harold Bauer. It was all about modernism, that Albert was going to have to really consider learning modernism. Like it or not, that’s the way it was going to be. But Albert chose early music. He was interested in modernism – Albert was always interested – like it or not he was interested, but as a composer he followed Brahms. Brahms, not Wagner, was the modernist of Brahms’ time, because people were already starting to get tired of Wagner, and Brahms represented neoclassicism.

UPDIKE Do you remember Albert talking about his studies with Lhevinne?

ELKUS No, I don’t. Probably the closest I got was hearing in our house in Berkeley through the doors, Albert teaching the occasional pupil – and coaching Estelle sometimes for her recitals. I imagine one could hear Lhevinne’s voice amid Albert’s own. Albert did speak with a stammer. That was one of his difficulties. When Albert gave lessons he was not a fluent speaker – he would stop and consider words.

UPDIKE Do you think that’s why he had a hard time learning languages?

ELKUS I don't know. Who knows how the brain is wired. It could be, certainly. One thing I did want to mention was Albert's roots with the German tradition – Oscar Weil, who was Albert's mentor in San Francisco, gave him a letter of introduction to Franz Ries, a partner of the German publishing firm of Ries and Erler, which still exists. Franz Ries was the nephew of Ferdinand Reis, who was Beethoven's pupil. He premiered several of the Beethoven piano concertos and composed prolifically, and arranged for and saw through, with others, the first performance of Beethoven's *Ninth*. He was the first biographer of Beethoven's. Albert wrote to Weil in San Francisco that he would have these long talks with Franz Ries, and Reis would lean back and say, "well, as Uncle Ferdinand said, Beethoven"

So that's the British connection and the early music connection which interact considerably, and which I think are essential to understanding the fullness of Albert's breadth and depth. When the troubles came in the 1930s, of course a lot of German and Austrian musicians came to the U.S., [Arnold] Schoenberg among them, and Albert was always friendly. There was a language barrier, as the German immigrants preferred to speak among themselves in fluent and artistic German. Their English was about the same as Albert's German. I remember Ernst Krenek visiting Berkeley, and how well he and Albert got along; Kolisch, too, the first violinist of the Kolisch Quartet – and on and on and on it went. Albert was instrumental in getting Schoenberg placed at UCLA.

Do you have any memories of former Conservatory president Robin Laufer? What was Albert's relationship with Robin?

ELKUS Yes, I do. They liked each other very much. Robin was French; his English was impeccable. Everything about Robin was impeccable. His wife, Eunice, who was British, told Elizabeth in my presence once that Robin had something like fifty-four suits – and Robin, who was across the room chimed in and said "Yes! But they never wear out that way." Robin was very physically active in the French Resistance, and was captured once by the Germans. Albert and Robin and I once had lunch near the Conservatory; around the corner from Ortega Street. I was in town so Albert invited me to come along, and we had a very, very pleasant lunch and Robin described how he'd been captured and Albert said he hoped that he had been treated decently and Robin said yes, but in Robin's words, "there was a lot of bullshit" and so we left it at that. But Robin had evidently been through quite an ordeal, as many, many had. Robin after the war took a post with the UN and came here following that.

Elizabeth and I and the Cushings and the Laufers spent a week at Fallen Leaf Lake. The Laufers had rented a big place and invited the Cushings, Charles and Piquette. Charles' wife had been educated in Paris and her nickname was Piquette because she looked like the French playing card – the Queen of Spades. So her classmates thought, and it stuck. And the youngest of their three kids, Caleb, was with them. Robin sort of unwound and he, Charles, and I talked music, and Caleb was always out fishing. It was a nice time.

Every evening Eunice and Elizabeth and the Cushings and I, we really just wanted to stay around the fire and drink and have a nice evening – Robin always wanted us to go to Reno and see the bright lights. He was a real Parisian. Robin was just plain uneasy out in the woods in this log cabin.

Could you describe your first meeting with Milton and Peggy Salkind? Do you have any memories of them to share? Did you see them perform together?

ELKUS I don't think I ever met Peggy. I met Milton only at receptions. After Albert died my mother would go to occasions at the Conservatory. She was a steady but modest donor and was on the invitation list. She introduced me to Milton once or twice.

UPDIKE Did you ever hear Milton perform?

ELKUS No, but I would see in the San Francisco Chronicle photographs of Milton and Peggy in duo piano, sometimes in the social page, and always good reviews. Evidently they were terrific, but I don't remember hearing either of them play.

UPDIKE What was Albert's relationship with Milton Salkind?

ELKUS I don't think they were close friends. I don't know anything about Milton – I don't know when he came to the city – all I know is that he succeeded Robin as president of the Conservatory. Milton and Peggy were always cordial to Elizabeth after Albert had died.

Do you remember any notable master classes or performances you saw at the Conservatory?

ELKUS I do know that Estelle Caen, when she was director of Music Extension, she brought to Berkeley for master classes Pablo Casals, no less, and her old teacher Rosina Lhevinne, who was Van Cliburn's teacher. I would imagine that they might also have given at least one master class at the Conservatory. Again, I was East during the seasons. When I visited it was for the summers, occasionally for Christmas, but then the Conservatory was on Christmas break, too. My main experience with going to the Conservatory for events was after Albert died, when mom wanted to go to receptions. When the Conservatory became a year-round thing and with the building of Hellman Hall there was a summer concert series on Ortega Street. But I don't have many memories myself. A lot of what I remember is from Elizabeth telling me about it, sometimes in her long letters to us in the East.

UPDIKE Do you remember when Hellman Hall was built?

ELKUS I think I went to one of the opening concerts but I'm not sure. I've been in the hall a number of times. It was built in memory of Ruth Hellman, who was Warren Hellman's and Nancy Bechtle's mother. Ruth was a Koshland; she was Dan Koshland's sister.

Why did Albert retire from the Conservatory?

ELKUS It was age and health; Albert became ill with prostate cancer, and it brought on fatigue. The commute from Berkeley began to be a little bit much; he just wasn't feeling well. The doctor said "You are getting old, and you do have this cancer that's not getting better," so

Albert gave a year or more notice, and there was a search and retirement parties and all of that. I think Albert died not long after. Do you know what his final year as director was?

UPDIKE 1957.

ELKUS 1957. So he died in 1962, so just five years. He and mom went to London every other summer, so they had two more trips to London, which father loved. They always rented the cellist May Mukle's apartment in downtown London. Well, not in downtown, that's vague. In the West End, the theater district. May had a very very nice seventh floor apartment and would go to the country for the summer, and would rent Albert and Elizabeth her studio apartment. A big studio – it was one of these places where you could play serious chamber music. She kept all her cellos there.

UPDIKE Did you keep any ties with the Conservatory after Albert retired? What is the basis of your own appreciation or allegiance to the Conservatory?

ELKUS My appreciation is certainly no less than any musician's. My allegiance to the Conservatory is one of family and friendships. Not to mention lifelong respect and admiration.

What do you perceive to be Albert's major accomplishments at the Conservatory?

ELKUS I think the reorganization of the Board, which led right away to the identification and move and reconditioning of the building on Ortega Street. It was certainly Albert who provided a transitional administration and development between the founding days of Ada and Lillian, to the present day. I think Albert was pivotal to the reorganization and the structuring of the governance of the Conservatory, and the development of the curriculum. It all stemmed from the necessity of accreditation. Of building on the Conservatory's strengths and establishing new ones. I think those were the transitional years and Albert was practical and visionary enough to lead in its accomplishment. Before "development" it was called "fundraising." I think the first staff development officer had come from then – Ada and Lillian had been the fundraisers in their day, and certainly Albert in his. In the early 1930s during the Depression when the Conservatory almost had to shut down, Albert wrote personal letters to people of means that he knew in San Francisco. Others did the same; Albert was not the only one, and they managed to keep the Conservatory afloat during those years. As a faculty member in the 20s and 30s Albert was already more than a colleague and a cheerleader. That's how I still see it. Albert's teaching was important too because he was really the institution's first musical scholar. With him and Bloch and Silva – all there at the same time – the Conservatory was very strong in what came to be called musicology, but what was really the history of music and literature of music: the history of musical style and the content of emotion in music, and the listening and analytical skills that were important in those days – and still are.

UPDIKE Could you talk about the move from Sacramento Street to Ortega Street and how the symbol of that move may have helped Albert's vision in transitioning it forward?

ELKUS I think it was not so much the symbol of the new location and added space, it was the reality of it that encouraged people. It meant more and larger classes, it meant the Prep division on Saturdays that May Kurka ran for so many years, and so well, so very very well.

Mom and May Kurka were very good friends and my mother, every time I came to visit, would be so happy with the way May had nurtured the Prep division to what it became on Ortega Street. Lots of kids went there. It turns out that one of my favorite cousins, who's younger than I, went Saturday mornings to the Prep program for recorder and piano. I think he and his sisters went together. It was a family thing, and they realized it. There were social things to do in the Prep division too – recitals, receptions, things like that. All this was partly of course through Albert's encouragement. He and others would find just the right patrons for the right programs, and May was good at this, too. May's husband had been Robert Kurka, the New York composer who had died young. Robert composed perhaps the most performed opera by the New York City Opera. It was called *The Good Soldier Schweik*. It's a wonderful score and still played now and then. There's a suite from it which is played by concert bands and wind ensembles. The opera's scored entirely for winds and percussion. Kurka wrote other fine things as well. May herself was an accomplished cellist.

UPDIKE Could you describe May's character?

ELKUS Yes, she was Asian, and effervescent, never a frigate in full sail; kindly, gracious, enthusiastic, all the qualities you'd want in a Conservatory department head.

UPDIKE Did you go to Prep recitals?

ELKUS No, I never did. My mother did occasionally. She was on the list – the mailing list, the reception list, and sometimes she would go. Between Berkeley and San Francisco she had lots of occasions to go to; she had a full, full calendar.

UPDIKE Is there anything else you'd like to add to this question?

ELKUS I wasn't around, really, I was already in the East full-time when the move occurred. One nice thing – they had the space – people were always leaving them grand pianos, and there was finally space to accept these pianos – you know, kids clearing out the big house on Pacific Heights; kids wanted to live in Marin or on the Peninsula, and they didn't want anything more to do with the grand piano – they already had one, so it went to the Conservatory.

One more thing about Ortega Street. I spoke of the Prep division – the Ortega Street facility was nearer where a lot of upper and middle class families lived. Sacramento Street was not really on their beat – the location near Golden Gate Park, Stern Grove, all of those family things, brought the Conservatory more into their neighborhood.

What do you remember about Albert's life as a composer?

ELKUS Albert, as I found out many years later, had stopped composing in the early 1920s. When Father died, Elizabeth and I and my brother took a stack maybe 18 inches high of manuscripts of Albert's pieces to the U.C. Berkeley music library. This didn't include printed copies, but unpublished scores or manuscript copies of pieces that had been published. They had been in a high closet in Albert's study, and as we were taking them downstairs, Mother broke into tears and said how good he was to us all. I had assumed that Albert had stopped composing because of the responsibilities of family life and providing for us all. But this turned out not to be

true at all. Estelle Caen told me that in the 1920 when she was taking piano lessons from Albert he did tell her – she'd asked about a composition or what he was writing – he said "I have laid down my pen. I am a devotee of Brahms and I can do nothing more." And that was it. It wasn't because of the family or added responsibility. He just decided that Brahms had spoken the last word of the music he was really interested in and interested in studying and writing, and although he was always curious about what everybody else was doing, as it turned out he was not interested in doing it himself. One thing sticks in mind – for one of the family vacations in Tahoe Meadows, he'd had an upright, a spinet, sent up from Sherman & Clay in San Francisco, and he was going to work on a string quartet. He had been thinking about this for some time, and he actually made some sketches. I asked him about the quartet because Albert would always work – whether it was reading or correspondence – when the rest of us were at the beach in the mornings, and he said that the quartet was going to be modern, and that he had learned a great deal from Schoenberg's first three or four quartets. But he never touched it again. That's all I know firsthand about Albert's life as a composer.

UPDIKE How many compositions did Albert write?

ELKUS Maybe a dozen songs, perhaps as many piano pieces, published and unpublished. Three orchestral works – one a realization that brings us to early music again. May Mukle had asked Albert to make a realization for string orchestra of one of the sonatas in Ariosti's self-described "lesson" book. May did the editing of the solo part, and Albert made a realization in the manner of Brahms for string orchestra with optional timpani, which May played on one of her worldwide tours with string orchestras when they were available. It was really a composition of his, not a reconstruction; it was a realization in the late nineteenth century style. It's awfully good. It was played at the Conservatory at the memorial concert given to Albert, and also at the dedication of Hertz Hall – both performances by Bonnie Bell Hampton.¹

UPDIKE Do you remember attending any performances of Albert's music?

ELKUS Yes. I attended the San Francisco Symphony when their then-resident conductor Enrique Jorda played his orchestral work *Impressions from a Greek Tragedy*, which had been played by the Symphony previously under Monteux and before him by Hertz – it was premiered by Hertz. They performed from the Symphony's set of marked parts, which are on deposit at special collections at U.C. Berkeley. The San Francisco Symphony librarian was very kind in giving me the set that I could pass on to the U.C. This is the set marked by the Symphony with a couple of minor cuts that Albert put in later for Jorda's performance. Mom said that Albert just loved going to Jorda's rehearsal and consulting with him on the piece. That was Albert's last experience as a participating composer. No, I'm confusing it, I was never there.² Mom sent me a duplicate copy of the tape – the Symphony members arranged with the union steward after a vote

¹ Albert's realization of the Ariosti sonata was published by Universal Edition in Vienna under the title *Concertino*.

Albert's last compositions were both for theatrical productions: music for the Family Club play *Traveled Roads* (early 1930s) and music for a U.C. Berkeley production of *Hamlet* (early 1950s).

² My confusion at first was in remembering Monteux's premiere of Roger Sessions's *Second Symphony*, which I did attend.

that the Symphony would be allowed to tape it for our family, which was a very nice thing of them to do.

How has the Conservatory evolved since your father was affiliated? What has changed, and what broader continuities do you notice? Is its essential character the same or has it changed fundamentally?

ELKUS I'm afraid I don't know, because I really don't know that much about the Conservatory. Certainly the library has expanded. Fortunately the library through the years since Helen LaPlante's day, has kept up very well with buying up books and scores and records, and going with the times with listening labs and so forth. It's just wonderful, now that there's officially an archive. That's certainly evolved, because it's nucleus was all there in the beginning – but evolved, yes it has, in spades, to mix a metaphor. Another expansion has been in the area of master classes.

As we've spoken before, the Conservatory's interest in early music was there in Giulio and Albert and Bloch, and the interest that the early music generated, particularly I would think among San Francisco's Roman Catholics. And with Bloch there were people in town who were interested in the Jewish sung liturgy which Bloch knew backwards and forwards from childhood, and which Albert knew from religious services in Sacramento when he was growing up. So in the area of early music at the Conservatory, it has certainly evolved. I don't see any fundamental change.

The Board of Trustees is still active and interested, and it was in place before Albert was director – because as you pointed out, Ada and Lillian had established a board of interested people before its later reorganization. When a thing is reorganized it's not usually changed fundamentally, and I don't think this has. Probably in your other interviews you'll get closer to that question – from people who have really been around.

I don't know about changes in the Conservatory's essential character – any architect will tell you that buildings dictate character. With three buildings there's bound to be some change in dynamics. Obviously in this building the faculty doesn't see each other as much anymore and with the proximity to Symphony Hall and the Opera House they don't come for a whole afternoon or a whole morning necessarily, let alone a whole day; so there's bound to be fundamental differences there, but whether that's a matter of evolution or fundamental change, I couldn't say.

Looking back on your own career, how do you think your father's career influenced your path? What did you learn from your father that helped shape your life?

ELKUS I learned an awful lot. As a matter of fact I owe my entire career to Albert's pupils; Leonard Ratner, for one. Edgar Sparks did his best to help me on piano. Not just Albert's pupils, but people he had mentored or encouraged, people like Charles Cushing, who was certainly my mentor. But I've been taught by other pupils of Albert's as well, and benefited just enormously. And I benefited from the music department at Berkeley which he helped shape.

Father's library of books and scores was marvelous. You had asked me how I got interested in Ives, it was from scores that Henry Cowell published in San Francisco of Ives's work that were in Father's collection and around the house. Henry Cowell's recordings that I heard as a kid. The music library at Berkeley; when I was around campus as a youngster; anybody could go into the music library and hear records as though it were the public library downtown.

I was thinking, with any extended family, there's the need for family ties and tolerance of other family members, and tolerance of colleagues. I think after a time I began to pick up on the live-and-let-live attitude which both my parents had. The only time I ever saw my father frustrated in personal relationships was when somebody had done something toward him or another member of the family that was undeserved, and that could raise Father's anger. But Father never judged people morally.³ Neither did my mother. That certainly became a backbone of my brother's and my upbringing, at least I like to think so.

Sticking to important things – I learned from Father's pupils and colleagues and the books and scores and musical instruments around the house. We always had a good piano, two of them for a long time. And the family ties and the attitude that one was expected to have at family occasions. In discussing family, Father went by the Latin proverb – I forget what it is in Latin – “one does not speak ill of the dead and one does not speak ill of the living.” It was a good way to grow up, so I'm grateful to both parents.

³ Afterword, September 8, 2015: The passage in Robert Commanday's oral history that I've just read poses a contradiction (Robert Commanday Oral History, SFCM Oral History Project, Session 3: Thursday, February 5, 2015). I do remember Albert's being judgmental over Lili's having preserved the transcripts – a violation, he felt, of basic discretion. I feel certain that Albert had known all along about her infidelities (and possibly any of Alfred's as well), and it would have been entirely uncharacteristic of him or my mother to have passed judgement on the affairs themselves. Albert was indeed born and raised Victorian, and his advice to me was not to kiss and tell.