Oral History Interview with Marilyn Aronberg Lavin,

03-06-2026

The following oral history is the result of a recorded interview with Marilyn Aronberg Lavin and Nancy Hodges conducted on March 06, 2026. The interview took place at the home of Marilyn Aronberg Lavin in Princeton, NJ as part of the Voices of Princeton Project.

VOICES
of Princeton

Marilyn Aronberg Lavin has reviewed, edited, and approved the following transcript. Their corrections and amendments appear below in brackets with initials. Readers are asked to bear in mind that they are reading a transcript of the spoken word, rather than written prose.

TRANSCRIPT

Cliff Robinson: [00:06] This is Cliff Robinson on March 6, 2026, at the home of Marilyn Aronberg Lavin as part of the Voices of Princeton project. I'm here today with Marilyn Aronberg Lavin and Nancy Hodges.

Marilyn Aronberg Lavin: [00:21] I am Marilyn Aronberg Lavin and I am the interviewee.

Nancy Hodges: [00:26] I am Nancy Hodges and I am the interviewer.

Nancy Hodges: [00:31] Okay, Marilyn, you were born one hundred years ago, and have had the most amazing and spectacular journey to bring you to this current, creative and productive part of your life. Talk, please, about where you were born and what your young life was like, and in sixty minutes we will travel with you to today in Princeton.

Marilyn Aronberg Lavin: [00:53] I was born in St Louis, Missouri on October the 27th and I was a daughter of a jewelry merchant named Charles Aronberg, who was married to a woman from Virginia whose name was Blanche Silverstone, and they met during the World's Fair in 1904, when Blanche's brother was working for Thomas Edison in his kiosk selling voice recorders. It was the beginning of the phonograph and her brother [... (MAL)] worked with Edison and went to St. Louis with him. And my mother went to visit her brother, and that is where she met my father and they married in 1910. The jewelry business was very prosperous at that point. My father made a lot of money during the 1920s and I was born in '25 and, as a baby, I received all kinds of help growing up with a full-time [housekeeper (MAL)]—who stayed with us until many years later—I got married. My father was also slightly peculiar in that he was from an Orthodox Jewish family, but he was a very devout Christian Scientist and

there had been an outbreak of [smallpox (MAL)] in 1921, [... (MAL)] for which we were vaccinated.

[*REDACTED* (MAL)]

Marilyn Aronberg Lavin: [3:21] The whole state of Missouri made a new law whereby you had to be vaccinated to go to public school. And because my father was a Christian Scientist, he wouldn't allow this. And therefore I went—my sister and I both went to private school, a very, very fancy private school named Mary Institute, where I stayed for twelve years and got an extremely good education. By the time I graduated from high school, the second world war had begun. I graduated in ’43 and the war had started in ’41 and there was no possibility of going any place or traveling at that point. And I went to college in St. Louis at Washington University, which was literally a straight drive from where we lived up Lydnell Boulevard, past Forest Park and onto the property of Washington University. By the time I got there, my older sister, whose name was Ina Mae, [...(MAL)]—she was six years older than I—and she had already graduated from Washington University, and she said to me, “If you’re going to Washington University, there's a professor that I had classes with.” His name was Horst W. Janson, who, in 1937 came to Washington University from the University of Iowa, and who became—unbeknownst to us at that point—became very famous for his book called *The History of Art*, which has [been (MAL)] translated into seventeen different languages and is still going. In any case, she said that [... (MAL)] although he looked something like a baby elephant, his courses were so wonderful, so revealing, so stimulating, that, if I had any brains, I would take his courses. This happened to be after I had had a course with a high school history teacher who always put around the classroom up on the wall pictures of works of art—architecture, sculpture, painting—of the periods that she was trying to get us to understand. And I was so impressed

with this that I came to realize that there was a lot to be learned just from looking at pictures. So those two things stimulated me to be an art historian, and by the time I signed up at Washington University, in my own mind, I was already an art history major. I had wonderful teachers at Washington U. and I learned many things from from all of them that were very, very specific. The classicist who taught the first part of the survey course. His name was George Mylonas, an archeologist, he taught me that being very well organized and clear and taking art as an offshoot of humanity, he would always take the position of classical sculpture to emphasize how Greek art was an extension of the life of Greece and a part of the social structure, along with [...(MAL)] physical activities and mental activities, that art was not separated from life. And from Janson, I learned that the idea of representing life in a realistic way was not the point. There were many aspects of naturalism that carried you into abstract art that, that is to say, art that may not look a lot like human being, but carried the values of humanity and the emotions of life. There was a third professor [Heydenrich (MAL)] who came from Germany, the first German officer to come to America after the war. It turned out that he had done a lot of underground business of saving art from being shipped away from Italy during the war by the Germans, and stopped them from stealing art, libraries, and everything they could get their hands on. He did a lot of secret activities. At any rate, he was a Leonardo da Vinci specialist, and he taught us that looking at works of art didn't take one second, didn't take five seconds. It could take you a week to see a work of art! In other words, long concentration, taking everything seriously, seeing everything the artist put down, because nothing got there without the artist's hand. And during [the… (MAL)]seminar that I had with him, that was about Leonardo da Vinci, I made an observation of a technique that no one else had ever discovered, which was that Leonardo used his own drawings as sources for his paintings that could be

twenty years later. In other words, from what I saw, you could be assured that Leonardo kept his drawings, used his drawings and benefited from this. So Heydenrich jumped up and say, "Good heavens, no one else ever [observed this …(MAL)]—so you must publish that immediately!" The rest of the class looked quite wide-eyed. But from then on, I knew I was going to study Renaissance Art, because I was committed. My first publication was going to be about Leonardo da Vinci and that did it. Anyway, I went on to graduate school, but I had been committed before that to writing my master's thesis on modern art, on twentieth century art, and I said I wanted to write on the iconography of the clown. Before the clowns had run around in everyday circuses, but, long before that, they developed out of street comedians and dramatists, who walked the streets and did theater on out in the open and interacted with the audience. And they [...(MAL)] came from the Commedia dell'Arte. It was [...(MAL)] recognized in all the European cities, and they were still operating in the nineteenth century, and then when Picasso—people like Picasso [...(MAL)]—a lot of the abstract artists met these people. They realized that they were parallel to their own position in society. They were literally outside the church. They were not allowed to take communion. They lived on what they made in the street, which, of course, is what the abstract artists were only getting money for because they were not allowed in the academies. So I wanted to write about this development from the seventeenth century to the twentieth century. And I remember one architectural historian said, "But you can't write on that! Abstract art doesn't have any iconography." So I said, "Well, we'll see." And of course, I did get there. Am I going beyond one of your questions?

Nancy Hodges: [12:05] So you've answered some of the questions I have.

Marilyn Aronberg Lavin: [12:07] Okay.

Nancy Hodges: [12:07] Now I'd like you to talk about—your love of art was certainly before the your time at Washington University. But this is also where you met Irving, your husband.

Marilyn Aronberg Lavin: [12:19] I'm not understanding you, Nancy.

Nancy Hodges: [12:20] I'm sorry! You also met your husband, your future husband, at Washington University. So maybe just talk a little bit about how you met him.

Marilyn Aronberg Lavin: [12:29] Okay, I met Irving Lavin when he was a lifeguard at Westwood Country Club, where my father had a membership. It was a big, a very fancy Jewish country club with an enormous golf course, tennis courts, swimming pools, and whatever. This was in the rich days of the 1920s. Somehow, my poor father lost a lot of money when the stock market broke, but—in 1929—but he managed to remain a member of this club. And Irving, who came from a very, very poor immigrant family, always had jobs over the summer, and he took a job as the lifeguard at Washington U. He was very handsome, and I thought rather unapproachable, because he was always when [...(MAL)] there weren't little kids that he had to take care of, teach swimming and watch. He was always reading, and he was always reading Plato. Now, a lifeguard that reads philosophy is relatively out of the ordinary. So, I never had any thought that he would ever look at me because he was so handsome. On the other hand, we did have conversations, and I think we went out a couple of times, but at the end of the summer, that was the end of the relationship. However, when I was in graduate school [...(MAL)] at Washington U. I was the TA, the teaching assistant to Janson, while he was teaching the survey course, and everyone at Washington U. had to take what we called a "couth course," either art history, the history of music, or some such [...(MAL)]. And I was taking attendance at a survey class that was beginning the second semester in January of 19—48. No, it was by then '49. And

I was taking attendance and checking people off, because they were, [...(MAL)] 350 students in the class, but they were all assigned seats. So, I'm checking them off, and suddenly I see the name of Lavin, and then I look over and there's somebody waving at me like this. And lo and behold, I said, "Oh, there's the lifeguard." And after class, he was hanging around, and he came over to talk to me and so on. And we started a new relationship. And he had just started Washington U., having tried to go to school to make his parents happy. They, of course, wanted him to be a doctor or a dentist or an engineer. He didn't want to be any of those things. But he did try engineering for [...(MAL)] a while, but he hated it, so that he finally said to his poor immigrant father, who barely spoke English, I'm going to study philosophy. And he did change his major. This took a lot of nerve and was very dangerous for him. In any case, he started coming around to me and wanted to meet my friends and wanted to meet the professor, and became interested in art history, it seemed to me, and, uh, did fairly well. After all, I graded his paper, his final, and [...(MAL)] because of some very minor thing, I gave him an A minus, for which he never forgave me, but he did learn about art history though he had never even thought about it before, and met Janson, and they—those two men really hit it off, and started having lots of discussions. And so when Irving said, "Well, I really want to study abstract philosophy, mathematical philosophy and logic, and I don't know where to go." and Peter—Peter was the name we were allowed to call Janson because we were on first name terms at that point—said, "Well, you're talking about Bertrand Russell, aren't you? Why don't you write to Russell and ask [...(MAL)] to whom to go." Which Irving did that night, and in less than two weeks, Russell wrote back and said, "There is nobody in America, come and study philosophy with me." And that's exactly what he did. He went off on a boat with $200 that I think one of my uncles gave to him, and spent a year with Russell while I was finishing this thesis and doing substitute

teaching and so on. And at the end of that year, with Russell, whom he saw twice a week by himself in a single seminar with them chatting, and was even invited to Russell's house and spent the spring break with him at his home in Wales. He said, "I'm too poor to be a philosopher," which is absolutely true. In England, if you didn't have money behind you, you didn't study such things, "I think I will go into something more practical, and that practicality was art history." And Russell said, apparently, "If I were going to write, if I were going to study art history, I would simply make it all up." And then Irving said, maybe seventy years later, "When I look back on what Russell told me, I realized that that's what I've been doing for the last seventy years." So it's kind of sweet.

Nancy Hodges: [19:24] Well, so your romance progressed and married life with Irving began in 1952 and solidified your traveling to homes between New York and Rome. How did this enhance your career?

Marilyn Aronberg Lavin: [19:41] Well, we joined, made a team when we got married, if Irving signed up or applied for a fellowship or a scholarship or grant, I did too. I actually had a Fulbright in 1950, '51 and spent a year in Rome, and was going on with my Leonardo project, and continuing that research while Irving moved to Harvard and started his graduate work, working on Gian Lorenzo Bernini, primarily because Harvard has a big collection of original bozzetti, which are studies in clay for large scale marble statues. And Harvard owns the largest collection of bozzetti in the world. [...(MAL)] Irving wanted to study firsthand works of art. So we went our own ways for that year, but by the end of the year, my father was falling into bankruptcy and needed my help at home, and I went home, and we decided that the easiest thing for the family and for ourselves, we were fooling around too long. [...(MAL)] We decided to get married and separate ourselves from [...(MAL)] our parents' responsibility for us, so we

would be on our own and out of their way. And that's when Irving and I moved to Cambridge, Massachusetts, and, in the summer, started going to Rome to do research with original objects.

Nancy Hodges: [21:36] It was a discovery in Rome that ultimately led you to Princeton. What was that initial move like for you? And what were your first impressions?

Marilyn Aronberg Lavin: [21:48] Starting to go to Rome in 1952, we had a few years of being stuck in the Army and being—not having jobs and stuff. But by 61 Irving was settled and had taught for two years at Vassar and didn't love the job, and applied for a Senior Fulbright, which is much fancier—rather more money than a student, Fulbright—and we, by then, had two kids, and we started to rent in an apartment, which ultimately we rented for the next twenty years. And went back and forth to this apartment, subletting whatever we had in America to academics who needed a temporary place, and then subletting grantees in Rome to save the apartment for us to come back the next year. And both of us were publishing. Both of us were being very successful, getting better jobs, getting better grants, getting recognition. And at one point—and I start my memoir with this adventure—Irving came home and said to me, "I want to date with you for two weeks from today, which is Saturday, and in two weeks, I will take you to a church in Rome where I will discover two Bernini sculptures that no one has ever heard of." And I said, "Good heavens, how do you do that?" And he explained to me that he had been in that church by chance, doing something, some research, completely other, looking up the architect Borromini, who was in Bernini's workshop. He worked for Bernini, but who actually designed the apse of a church called San Giovanni de Fiorentini, [...(MAL)] which is across the river from the Vatican, and where there's a lot of material on Borromini, who's very famous, because he had a fantastic Baroque architectural style. So Irving was looking in the handwritten catalog set up in boxes of cards. And he was looking at one box that had a "B" on the front for

"Borromini," and he's shuffling through the cards, when all of a sudden he sees a card with the name "Bernini" on it. Bernini had, as far as he was—he knew, had nothing whatsoever to do with his church, so it was very out of the ordinary to find his name there. And he looked at these cards, and they were references to documents that said Bernini has made two busts of contributors to the new hospital of San Giovanni—St. John the Baptist—and they were done in [...(MAL)] 1612, and 1622, two busts, never heard of him, never heard the names, never heard the dates. And if it were Gian Lorenzo Bernini, he would have been fourteen years old. There are many stories about Bernini being a child prodigy who started working on his father's commissions, doing details when he was eight and nine, and even—there's a story about the pope talking to him and him doing a drawing for the pope when he was eight years old and being recognized and so on. At any rate, the archive at this church of San Giovanni was open for one hour every other Saturday. So when he said, "In two weeks, I will take you," he had been pushed out of the church at twelve o'clock, because the archive was open at 11 and closed at 12, he knew that he was onto something, but he didn't know what, because there were no such busts that were on display. And [...(MAL)] the bell tolled at the church that it was closing, and he had gone out and looked for the sacristan in the church. And by then, Irving spoke very good Italian, and he asked the sacristan, Are there any busts around that aren't on display?" in this casual way. And he saw the man say, "Well, forse," "Maybe I have seen some sotto," underneath, in the basement of the church. But he—that was Saturday the church closed. That was the end of the story. He had to wait two weeks to go back. So when we went back, he explained to the archivist what was going on, and the group of us, Irving, me, the sacristan, and the archivist with flashlights down a very steep flight of steps, looking in these corridors underneath the building, when suddenly there was a bust at the end of a corridor covered with

plaster dust and soot and so on. And we all rushed down, and I took some snapshots, and Irving was dusting off the base of this bust when he saw in pencil the name of one of the busts that he had read on the card. The name was "Coppola, Antonio," Dr. Antonio Coppola. So, [...(MAL)] then went on looking for [...(MAL) that second bust, and it was right around the corner in another corridor, he knew the other bust must be the other name that was there, "Cheparelli." He must be the one that was dated '22, when Bernini was mature, grown up. He was then a Knight of the Vatican. The first bus of Coppola was stiff and abstract, and even that, people can't believe that a fourteen year old could have made it, but Irving, of course, is absolutely convinced that he did. At any rate, from this discovery, Irving became a celebrity in Rome, all of the newspapers, all of the American newspapers, the Italian newspapers. There was even a ceremony in the church with the head of the of the House of Representatives, who—Andreotti, was very famous, slightly left centrist politician—came and said that he was like a diviner who went around Rome with his divine sticks, and when it when it made a tap, he knew that he had discovered the source of life, water. In other words, so he got it. He was immediately appointed full professor at NYU. NYU paid—Janson got NYU to pay for the restoration and cleaning of these busts. Yes, he had a huge article in Life Magazine with pictures, and one of the pictures that I snapped, and he was appointed full professor as a result. And about a year and a half later, he got a call from the art historian, the professor of art history at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, and asked him, "Would you be interested in a job at the institute?" And Irving said something very polite, like, "You sure as hell believe I could come in a minute!" And now, a year later, we moved to Princeton.

Nancy Hodges: [30:47] And how was that move for you when settling here?

Marilyn Aronberg Lavin: [30:51] Well, the retiring art historian Millard Meise, very, very famous man. I should have said that this chair of art history was one of the first chairs made when, when the Institute was established in 1929-30, of the first professors was Erwin Panofsky, who was already a very famous professor in Germany who was fired by the Nazis and told to get out as fast as he could. He had already become—been coming to America and teaching at NYU and at Princeton on a very part time basis. And of course, when this tragedy started in Germany, he was very happy to have the jobs already, and he moved permanently to America and was one of the first professors at the Institute. And that's how art history got to the Institute, whereas most of the professors in the humanities were classicists [...(MAL)] but the majority of the professors were scientists, mathematicians, and physicists, but the chair of art history remained at our at the Institute, always, and when Panofsky retired, Millard Meise took his place. And when, when Millard Meise retired, Irving took his place. He was the third professor here for me, Millard Meise, who was a very wealthy man, his grandfather invented the Franklin stove. And he was like—we were talking about the philosophers in England—he was like the major art historians in America. No one was looking to make a professional career. The profession wasn't a money-making proposition—that's started later, as you will see. In any case, Millard Meise also knew my work already and admired it and condoned it and said something like, of course, we'll have a place for Marilyn when you come and made that a kind of attractive thing, although Irving didn't need to be—to find something attractive. So it sounded very attractive to both of us. The reason I'm talking about the wealth of Millard Meise is that it was always said that he also made contributions to the Department of Art and Archeology at Princeton University, and therefore had a lot of influence there. So I thought that he wasn't talking a lot of hot air that sounded like he knew what he was talking about. Well, it I

did teach at the at the Department, but I was not on the full staff. I was a visiting lecturer with rank of professor, and that meant that I wasn't really very powerful that I could have students, but I wouldn't have to. I would be on the low part of the totem pole getting my students support, although I could do it if I fought really hard, but it wasn't the same as a full professor, [...(MAL)]. But that's what I did, and had a hand in various things at the university, introduced computer—work with computers into art history, got the university to support a lot of my computer work. I developed a very elaborate program for a three dimen-, 3D model, real-time, movement and so on. But something that had never been done before, started digitizing the slides and so on. So, I played a role that is not recorded, but was extremely influential.

Nancy Hodges: [35:31] Yeah, and speaking of, excuse me, speaking of roles, you've talked about the intellectual function of the Institute for Advanced Study, as well as a significant and perhaps surprising social structure that was in place. Can you describe how you integrated your role in that social ethos with your own work of teaching and writing?

Marilyn Aronberg Lavin: [35:52] Yes, it was a triple—three-person job that I did. Ah, being a wife at the Institute when we came, which was '73: He was appointed in '73 we came in '74. You had a lot of social responsibility, being a wife. [...(MAL)] the Institute has about [...(MAL)] 220 guests every year. They're called members here. And there are four different schools, and each school has its own monetary support and [...(MAL)]the school of historical studies had classicists, medievalists, art history and [...(MAL)] modernist. 17th century and forward were the modernists. And there would be maybe twenty-five people that came from that school, and we were all pretty much responsible for the families that came—for setting them up, getting their kids into school, helping wives who may be professional or not professional, and the non-professionals had workshops and seminars and stuff, but they didn't much participate

directly in the Institute, and the professional ones were always disappointed because they couldn't get part-time jobs at the University, which they expected. But there was the "Princeton wife" that—in quotes—that was always a little unhappy, so I would have to console them and try to get them integrated in some other way than they expected. And then I had a lot of literal social life, of giving dinners and doing the social part of colloquia, which Irving was very active in and if anybody was sick, I had to get them doctors and get them into hospitals and so on and so forth. So that was one part of the job. The other part was supporting my dear husband, who was my partner, and that meant, anything he did, I read and typed. Anything I did, he read, he did not type. He did have a secretary, however, so [...(MAL)] wasn't full-time, but from a—from the point of view of efficiency and intellectual efficiency, it was me, it was I who did this. So that was another part. And the other part was to carry on my own research, which I did, and published many very elaborate articles that were very well received; when, all of a sudden, as we moved into Princeton, Peter Janson said to me, "You have an M.A. That's fine, but you know, Marilyn, the world has changed. Women with only an M.A. with—what if Irving disappeared, what would you do? Where would—how would you get a job commensurate with your level? You have to have a Ph.D. What can we do about it?" Says he. So, we thought about it for a while, and he dreamed up and I remembered all the courses I had sat in and that I had done reading for, and had reading classes, and I had classes at the University of Rome for my Fulbright and so on and so forth. We got to the point where if I had two reading courses with him, I would have enough credits for a Ph.D. and for my thesis. What did I have? I had two enormous, well received articles and one in-between sized article that linked those two articles, and that became my thesis. My thesis was all about works of art that were made in the city of Urbino in the market in Italy. And that was accepted, one of two

acceptances by NYU for a Ph.D. that was always already published material. So at 30 years after I got out of high school, I became a doctor.

Nancy Hodges: [40:56] While you're doing all your other social things as well. This is incredible.

Marilyn Aronberg Lavin: [41:01] So, carrying on those three after all, they were all interrelated. It isn't that they were, that I did one thing at a time, but it was very definitely a full-time job.

Nancy Hodges: [41:14] And when you moved from New York to Princeton, you still spent a great deal of time in Rome. How did you manage the transitions?

Marilyn Aronberg Lavin: [41:23] We went on doing exactly what we had been doing before, when we went. You have to understand that sometimes we went to Rome for just the summer, and sometimes we went for [...(MAL)] one or two years. The kids went to school in Italy when we did that. But as far as living is concerned, that one apartment that we started in in 1961 we retained and sublet that to people coming over, and it was very easy to do—oh, that made number four in my my job divisions of being the real estate agent and subletting the house here in Princeton when we went away for a year or two and going to Rome and being in that apartment, and then subletting the apartment in Rome when we were here. That's how I managed it. In the meantime, we also bought a house down at Cape May Point at the bottom of New Jersey, for which I was also the real estate agent, because Cape May Point is very crowded in the summer and not very attractive, but in the spring and the fall, it's marvelous. It's adorable. It's a wonderful place. So, we would be able to go down a little bit in the spring, a little more in the fall. And then I didn't sublet, but I rented, according to the rules of Cape May Point, the

house that we had we bought down in Cape May, so I was doing these two real estate jobs at the same time.

Nancy Hodges: [43:12] Well, your beloved Irving died in 2019. How did you make the decision to stay in Princeton when I am sure you had a multitude of friends and career options welcoming you from around the world?

Marilyn Aronberg Lavin: [43:26] Well, Irving had a rather long illness and started to decline, I would say, around 19—2015 or so, and, so, with several years of adjusting to the fact that he wasn't going to live forever, Irving retired, literally retired in 2001 and I think he had a final, an ending sabbatical, so that he no longer had any responsibilities by 2002. But he still had a lot of amenities. His secretary was still by then, she was called an academic assistant, and that went on for over 10 years. So he was he was working in his office all that time, but he had no responsibilities of choosing the members and going to faculty meetings and all the other things that he had been doing before. So, he had a kind of Renaissance at that point where he was really producing some of his best stuff, but by [...(MAL)] 2015 he was declining, and he was gathering his stuff, previously published, stuff for republication, and things of that sort that a lot of people do toward the end. So, by the time he passed away, I had—I came to realize what a wonderful place the Institute is. They are generous to a fault, and that anytime we were in terrible trouble, which happened when there were the great storms that turned out the lights and stopped the heat and so on, there was always someone who would call and say, "Come over and stay in one of the apartments and," you know, "we'll take care of you." "Do you need any food?" Blah, blah, blah, so that by the time I was left on my own, I didn't even think of moving away. I was in a community, and since I hadn't been teaching in over twenty years, [...(MAL)] I was in my 80s! I was beyond my 80s. Nobody's offered me any jobs, and I also didn't want to

move away. But the main thing was that the Institute treated me—and still does—like royalty. They see around corners, and when I need something, they're there, and I am forever grateful for that, although it's absolutely absurd, I'm sitting in a ten-room house. I could, I could sit in a one-room apartment, but we own the house. I don't want to move, and I can afford to stay, and that's what I do. And I am still working

Nancy Hodges: [46:41] Well, that is exactly going to be my next question that, I just met you two years ago, and your book was just accepted for publication, your most recent book, your memoir of your life with Irving and your careers. But you work every day. You say that you must get up and work every day. So what have you been working on since then?

Marilyn Aronberg Lavin: [47:06] Well [...(MAL)], I am collecting my own publications, and I decided on nine articles that I wrote at different times throughout my career, so they make a kind of chronological demonstration of what kind of art historian I am, and I've written a foreword that puts me into context of where I came from, on how I got educated, what kind of art history makes me happy, makes a contribution to the field, and the way art history has gone, that I have not gone, which I admire, but I consider parallel courses, not substitute—that art history as I knew it certainly still exists. And the new fields, which are wonderful, are different trajectories, and I am just editing the introductions to each one of the articles so that I try to put it into context of what the problems are and how I dealt with them and what my conclusions are.

Nancy Hodges: [48:22] Well, if this is okay, I'd like to just go back to the wonderful private school you went to, because I think that would tell people a lot about you, other than your significance as an art historian. You did amazing things in that school, skating, for example.

Marilyn Aronberg Lavin: [48:41] Oh, my goodness, yes. Throughout the time I was in high school. Well, again, my sister with whom I didn't get along very well, I was surprised when she even took an interest in my education, telling me what to take, what to major in. [She] had been an ice skater, or at least I thought she had been an ice skater, whatever she did. I always tried to do dancing, singing, whatever it was. And with skating,—it turned out that I had more native ability in skating than she had, and I took it much more seriously. So [...(MAL)] even while I was going to college, I [...(MAL)] skated, I would join the St. Louis finger skating club, and passed five tests of the eight that exist. And nobody did that without a lot of support from their parents, and I had none. Somehow,[...(MAL)] I did extra work and got a few pennies saved up, and was able to get some lessons and then pass these tests. But I made a fatal mistake, in that I didn't have lessons early enough to be told that when you figure skate, you must do your spins on one leg and your jumps landed on your other leg, so that you can retain your energy to balance your muscles, or [...(MAL)] in order to retain your energy. And I did what was just natural to me, and I did everything on my right leg. This is not good. And by the time I had grown up and realized I made this fatal error, I really couldn't change it, although I must say that [...(MAL)] I was better at spinning. I did a lot of things for the first time that are now absolutely routine, like leaning back while you're spinning, and getting your leg up over your head. So those didn't exist when I started. I don't think they would even have been accepted when I started, because [...(MAL)] anything that looked like acrobatics was not accepted. If it looked like ballet, that was fine, but not acrobatics. Now, just watching the Olympics. Just now, I see that a lot of the acrobatics have been accepted. Lots of things like cartwheels and a flip in a four-minute program would have been laughed off the ice, and now more than one person did it. So anyhow, I did skate every day into the night, and then I would go home and study at about

eleven o'clock I would start. And I think that's what started me off at being a night owl. I still do a lot of work at night. But then there came the moment when I had to choose. I mean, I was really offered a crazy job with the Ice Capades, but to be in the chorus just at the time that I would have been starting graduate school. So I didn't think very hard. I went to graduate school, because the life of professional skating was pretty drab.

Nancy Hodges: [52:23] And might I suggest, we're all glad that you chose to be an art historian of such renowned fame. It's really wonderful.

Cliff Robinson: [52:36] Okay, well, if that's everything, I want to thank you both for doing this interview and contributing it to the record. If there's anything else you want to add, we can do that, or I can say that's it. And Marilyn, Nancy, thank you so much.

Marilyn Aronberg Lavin: [52:52] Thank you, Nancy. Thank you very much for the hard work you put in on this.

Nancy Hodges: [52:57] It was hardly hard work, dear. I enjoyed every minute of talking with you.

Cliff Robinson: [53:03] Okay, well, then with all that said, this is the end of the recording.

[END OF INTERVIEW]