

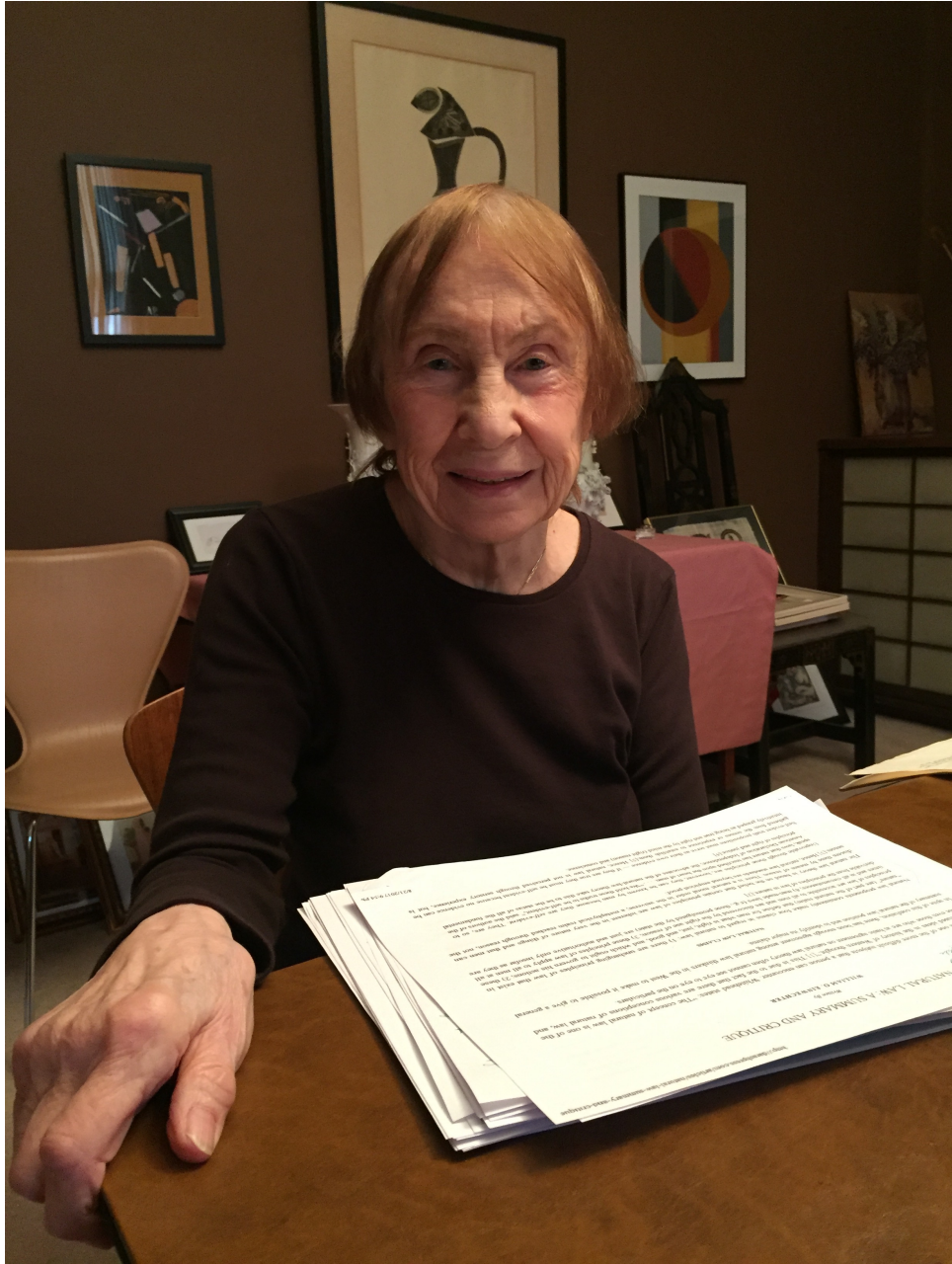
**GREENWICH VILLAGE SOCIETY FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT**

Oral History Interview
BEVERLY MOSS SPATT

By Sarah Dzedzic
Brooklyn, NY
August 24, 2017

Oral History Interview with Beverly Moss Spatt, August 24, 2017

Narrator(s)	Beverly Moss Spatt
Birthyear	1924
Birthplace	Brooklyn, NY
Narrator Age	93
Interviewer	Sarah Dziezic
Place of Interview	Spatt's home on Hicks Street in Brooklyn Heights
Date of Interview	August 24, 2017
Duration of Interview	148 mins
Number of Sessions	1
Waiver Signed/copy given	Y
Photographs	Y
Archival Format	.wav 44Hz/16bit
Archival File Names	Spatt_BeverlyMossGVHSPOralHistory_Archival_PortionsOmitted.wav [1.57 GB]
MP3 File Name	Spatt_BeverlyMossGVHSPOralHistory_Access_PortionsOmitted.mp3 [178 MB]
Portions Omitted from Recordings	11 discreet portions; silence inserted
Order in Oral Histories	32 [#2 2017]



Beverly Moss Spatt, Photo by Sarah Dziezic

Quotes from Oral History Interview with Beverly Moss Spatt

Sound-bite

“My name, Beverly. Where I was born, Brooklyn. Brooklyn, New York, lived here all my life.”... “The powers that be didn’t like me, but most people are not powers that be. And that was helpful when I was on, became Chairman of Landmarks. They knew that I was there for them.”... “When I dissented on the master plan, which caused me a lot of trouble, the regional planners’ association had a big meeting on the master plan, but of course they didn’t invite me to speak...I had dissented, and my dissent was in the *Times*, and everything like that.”... “And I had a thousand of these, and my husband and my children, we sat on the living room floor, and we collated it. And we brought it in his car, in fact the car practically collapsed, because a thousand of these things were in the back, and we brought it there, and the, after the meeting...they rushed like crazy. I think I made a speech once, like people at a wedding party, after the wedding, they rush to get the appetizers and things?”... “They rushed like crazy, and they all got the speech.”

Additional Quotes

“In those days, they had something called ‘Person of the Day.’ And in it I said that I was, not in these words, but I said that I was influenced by a teacher at Madison. His name was Philip Rothman and when I said that, afterwards got a lot of phone calls because he influenced a lot of people. He taught, not just plain English but humanities, philosophy, Thomas Moore’s *Utopia*, you know, we read all this. So he really, given the background of my own family, he really influenced me. And loads of other people.” (Moss Spatt pp. 6–7)

“When I was Chairman of the Landmarks Commission, I opened up the commission. Before that, it was closed commission. And anybody could come in. Walk in. And it was very, it wasn’t, I didn’t think about it that it was something I had to do, it just was part of me. And my staff, they had a, I mean, before you had to make appointments, or you can’t talk—Margaret Tuft was head of preservation, she was wonderful. I had a wonderful staff. Margaret was head of preservation, preserving the buildings, and the historic districts. And people were allowed to talk to her! And she was allowed to tell them, really. It doesn’t happen now. Hasn’t happened for a long time. I was very lucky to have her. Alan Burnham on the other hand was in charge of

designating landmarks and things, and the people were allowed to talk to him, too. In other words, people were allowed to walk into my Commission...” (Moss Spatt p. 9)

“Women’s City Club, I also belonged to that. In City Club, there was a vacancy in City Planning. Usually I tell everybody that I—they ask me how did I get on the City Planning Commission. I tell them I was sleeping with the mayor. But actually I heard at the meeting—Women’s City Club was different than the League of Women Voters. League of Women Voters was equal, we brought sandwiches. There, we got lunch and everything like that. And I heard there was a vacancy, and I said to myself, ‘Why not me?’” (Moss Spatt p. 12)

“What happened is we all joined together to fight. Planners came, civic organization, low-income housing people, the printing industry, fair housing, committees, community people, attorneys, and we, you needed a catalyst—I guess I was the catalyst—to develop a constituency. It requires factors, candor, and that’s where my dissents, I guess—they trusted me. And anyway, I was the catalyst, I understood the various roles that each one plays.” (Moss Spatt p. 19)

“Well, first of all, there wasn’t equal rights. I mean, politically, there was not equal rights. And certainly there was economic disparity. There was, just like here now, we’ve got ‘the 1%’ rich. Manhattan is all—Brooklyn Height is all—I mean, I know some of the people in Brooklyn Heights are unhappy with me because I worry about gentrification—I always worried about that, on Landmarks, when I was Chairman. What it would do to the community. Social disparity. I mean, Brooklyn Heights—I lived here before. I’m probably one of the oldest, longest-living persons in the Heights because my parents moved here while I was young. My father worked on Montague Street, his law firm. And we had all sorts of people here. We had homeless, we had poor, we had rich, all the old, the old Brooklyn Heights people—white Anglo-Saxon Protestant—you know what that is, WASP? Maybe you are a WASP, I don’t know. We had some Jews, we had some Blacks. We had rooming houses, we had artists. We had all sorts of people here.

And when I was growing up here, and left college, my friends were all like me. We were, we were all poor. I may have been Ivy League, and some of them may have been Ivy League, but we all felt the same. We were not the Women’s City Club... You know, they had clubs that you had to be recommended, or you had to be certain people. Anyway, as well as the churches, there were certain people there who ran things.

And we, my friends, we may have been Ivy League—one of them’s father was a federal judge, the law of “Hot Pursuit”—Jessup—very distinguished parents and everything. But we

were all young. And all believed that we could change the world. And some of them bought houses, and they redid—they were the early pioneers. Though I lived in an apartment, I couldn't afford, so I had to live with my parents, and husband. And my children! For years. And, same apartment. Some of them built houses very cheap, for three thousand, four thousand, and they fixed it up themselves.

In Brooklyn Heights. We were the early pioneers. And we didn't belong to the clubs that you should belong to and things like that. We were for the public schools, and we were for changing everything. And we set up the first Democratic—West Brooklyn Independent Democrats, the first Democratic reform group in Brooklyn. Now, there's still the West Brooklyn Independent Democrats, but it's totally different. It's very political. But we set it up. Phil Jessup was the chairman of it, I was the co-chairman, and all these people were in it. And we were all idealistic, we made rules, and we couldn't take any patronage even though my father was a surrogate at the time—we couldn't take any.” (Moss Spatt pp. 23–24)

“Of course, originally, the Landmarks Commission belonged to a small group of people: the Manhattan people, who were powerful, totally out of proportion to their numbers. That's till I came in.” (Moss Spatt p. 38)

“You know, if you do good for the people, and you believe in something, people trust you.” (Moss Spatt p. 47)

Summary of Oral History Interview with Beverly Moss Spatt

Beverly Moss Spatt is born and raised in Brooklyn, NY, and attended Pembroke, the women's college for Brown University. She credits the development of her leadership skills to her participation in the League of Women Voters, a chapter of which she helped to start in Brooklyn Heights where she still lives today. The League also led to her familiarity with city finances and city government, which proved to be an asset as she looked for work in public service, and as she pursued her graduate education in Urban Planning at New York University, earning her PhD in 1976.

Appointed to the City Planning Commission by Mayor Robert Wagner, Spatt served from 1966–1970. During her time on the Planning Commission, she became known for her frequent dissents, which the *New York Times* often printed, dubbing her a “maverick” who sided with local communities. Among other issues, she dissented on a city-wide Master Plan, as well as on a zoning change affecting areas of the East Village, accusing the city of “selling zoning.”

Spatt also served as the Chair of the Landmarks Preservation Commission from 1974–1978, appointed after proving her commitment to preservation issues and the public good. She strove to cultivate a Landmarks Commission comprised of professionals who would not be influenced by politics and politicians. She also had an open door policy—a first at the Landmarks Commission—that made her accessible to community members, students, and colleagues alike, and gave her the reputation as someone who was hands on, and willing to listen to the public's concerns. During her time as the Commissioner of Landmarks, she oversaw in the Village the protection of a section of the Grace Church Rectory, and the redesign of the Weatherman House on West 11th Street.

Following her service on the Landmarks Commission, Spatt was nominated for a position in Albany, which she declined, preferring to stay in Brooklyn and step out of the public limelight.

Spatt taught at Barnard College from 1970–1983, and worked for many years as a special assistant to Bishop Joseph Sullivan.

Compiled by Sarah Dziedzic

General Interview Notes

This is a transcription of an Oral History that was conducted by the Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation.

The GVSHP Oral History Project includes a collection of interviews with individuals involved in local businesses, culture, and preservation, to gather stories, observations, and insights concerning the changing Greenwich Village. These interviews elucidate the personal resonances of the neighborhood within the biographies of key individuals, and illustrate the evolving neighborhood.

Oral history is a method of collecting memories and histories through recorded interviews between a narrator with firsthand knowledge of historically significant events and a well-informed interviewer, with the goal of adding to the historical record.

The recording is transcribed, lightly edited for continuity and clarity, and reviewed by the interviewee. Oral history is not intended to present the absolute or complete narrative of events. Oral history is a spoken account by the interviewee in response to questioning. Whenever possible, we encourage readers to listen to the audio recordings to get a greater sense of this meaningful exchange.

The views expressed by the contributor(s) are solely those of the contributor(s) and do not necessarily reflect the opinions or endorsement of our organization.

THANK YOU!

Oral History Interview Transcript

Dziedzic: All right, today is August 24, 2017, and this is Sarah Dziedzic, interviewing Beverly Moss Spatt at her home in Brooklyn Heights for the Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation Oral History Project. And would you mind just introducing yourself, and saying your name and where you're from and when you were born?

Spatt: My name, Beverly. Where I was born, Brooklyn. Brooklyn, New York, lived here all my life.

Dziedzic: And when—

Spatt: Born, bred, wed, and I'll be dead. [laughs] My husband is in Greenwood Cemetery. That's where I'll be.

Dziedzic: Would you mind telling me, I just want to spend a little bit of time talking about your childhood, just your early—

Spatt: My what?

Dziedzic: Your childhood?

Spatt: I'm sorry, my problem.

Dziedzic: Childhood.

Spatt: My childhood.

Dziedzic: Yeah, so what neighborhood did you grow up in, and—

Spatt: Well, my mother and father were always involved. And I was the youngest, and life was easy for me. My father was president of the Board of Education, and he was very active, and he was active during the war, World War II. In terms of setting—they set up groups in terms of the Nazis. We're Jewish, and he set up a Jewish Community Council, and he was active in philanthropy, on the board of the Federation, so that's my legacy.

Anyway, I went to James Madison High School, I went to a local school that was a block away from our house, and then I went to James Madison High School, which was a good high school then—and actually, I decided that I wanted to go to boarding school, but then I left. I realized after a month there that I really wasn't the boarding school type. I guess I'm sort of an outsider. You know, I think differently about things. Which is sometimes difficult, but that's the way I am. And I'm also somewhat introverted.

Then I went to Pembroke, only two hundred people there, two hundred in the whole college, and, let's see the stuff I gave you.

Dziedzic: Okay.

Spatt: [shuffles papers] Where's—

Dziedzic: I think this is it.

Spatt: Oh, I'm sorry. Oh, here is. I thought, rather than going through the whole thing, I'm gonna give this to you. I was asked to speak at the fifteenth reunion, why Pembroke was important to me. And I happened to like a women's college—I'm a woman woman—and it was, here, I say [reading] "It was three or four years within a caring, value-oriented, intelligent, learning, nurturing environment with freedom and rights. And also responsibility and obligation." And we had a role model, Dean Morris and Dean Moore, and they were intelligent, very kind, and treated us as peers, and articulated for us the true genius of women. [reading] "Our acute special awareness of others and our authentic relationship based on being ourselves, not on our use or beauty...and our special professors forming our conscience while we dialogued with Shakespeare, Socrates, ancient philosophies, and shared universal experiences, and the primal search for meaning." And I treasured the friendship, and I really treasured it. Here is a picture of—those are my best friends.

Dziedzic: Oh, great. We're looking at a picture of five women in—are these your graduation gowns, or are you just dressed up?

Spatt: No, on Fridays we wore gowns. Here I am [indicating photo]. That's when I wore my hair up. Friday we wore gowns.

Dziedzic: You wore them to class, or out?

Spatt: No, we had—what do you call it? We convened in the hall, the alumni hall. So, we didn't wear it otherwise. And it wasn't a religious thing, but it was something we had to do. We wore our gowns there. [00:05:04]

Dziedzic: What were some of the other things that, maybe clubs that you were involved with?

Spatt: At Pembroke?

Dziedzic: Mmhmm.

Spatt: Well, it was wonderful, because it was a women's college. Actually, I did all the photography for the whole, all the classes, and, you know, when they had any affairs, or things like that, I did the photography. I had a Speed Graphic, and I had—my father sent an enlarger and a printer, and they gave me a room in the Sales Gym. I did my work there. And then they printed it, I gave it to them, or they printed it in the newspaper, our *Record*.

I also belonged to the ecumenical club, it was a Christian-Jewish organization, I belonged to that. I wasn't very active in sports or anything like that. But it was, it was great. A great experience.

Dziedzic: And did you also explore Providence, or, you know, any other, the town itself?

Spatt: I loved Providence. In fact, when I was married, I would have moved to Providence, but my husband didn't want to move there. But, it was a wonderful town. And we lived up the hill. It was in the city. We had a very small campus. Brown campus was larger, and we'd walk over to Brown, but we had also courses, because we were not a co-ed college till the 1950s, [19]56 I think. And we'd go down the hill. It was very, very interesting. It wasn't gentrified like it became gentrified. Antoinette Downing was one of the first preservationists, and the hill was all, was poverty. Actually, it was Black, also. Now it's probably very expensive, and probably mostly White. And Providence was a great place, small town, but you had a lot of things there. I loved Providence. And I had a lot of friends in Providence, and at Pembroke, we had a lot of day students, which was very good. My best friend was a day student and I used to go over to her

house and sleep there and her mother used to make tapioca for me, a whole jar, and I used to bring it back to school. So it was a great experience. Women!

Dziedzic: How did you [sneezes]—excuse me—how did you know you wanted to go to a women’s school?

Spatt: To Pembroke?

Dziedzic: Well, or to a women’s college.

Spatt: Actually, I was a horse woman too. I didn’t mentioned that. But I was a horse woman. I wanted—actually, the other college was Wellesley, but I wasn’t accepted to Wellesley. Pembroke, my sister was at Pembroke, and it was a women’s college, and in those days, we didn’t think about Ivy League or anything like that. Nowadays, you know, everybody wants to go to Ivy League. I never thought of it as Ivy League, but it was. I wasn’t accepted to Wellesley. In those days, there was also a religious count. In other words, a certain amount, percentage-wise, would be accepted of Jews. Not many Jews were accepted. Especially at Wellesley. Pembroke, my sister was there, and [laughs] I can’t say—they also knew my father, and he brought us up there when we were interviewing, and they liked him.

He was a southern gentleman. he came from Chattanooga, Tennessee. And, you know, it was very unusual, especially in New York. And he was with a prestigious law firm, and everything like that. So, I hate to say these things because I feel so many people were poor and everything like that, on welfare and things. So it makes me feel badly saying this, because we were well off. But I don’t like to talk about it.

Dziedzic: But you’re saying it in the context of, you were, perhaps that helped you get accepted certain places. Is that why you bring it up?

Spatt: Well, you know, a lot of my friends—I’m not talking about college—they didn’t have very much. They’re all great, but they didn’t have—and I realize, now, that we really were wealthy. So, you know, we went to camp, and things—I hated camp. But I was the youngest of three, so I automatically went. I hated it. [00:10:27]

Dziedzic: What did you hate about it?

Spatt: What did I do about it?

Dziedzic: What did you hate about it?

Spatt: I just went. I was young. One year I got the award for the best camper. I don't know how, because I hated it. But I think they had to give it to one of the Moss girls. We were Moss girls, the Moss girls. My family was, you know, very active, so everybody knew the Moss girls. I don't usually talk about this, because—

Dziedzic: Well, I want to bring it back to what you said about, you know, you said you were an outsider. But, you know, was your sister an outsider in the same way?

Spatt: No. And I realized—first, everything in my life has been serendipity. You know what serendipity is? I was born an accident. My mother was nursing my sister, and the thought was if you're nursing, you don't get pregnant. But she was nursing my sister, and I was born, I guess, nine, ten months afterwards. Which may have been hard on my sister. But, anyway, but it was not my fault! [Dziedzic laughs] But my whole life has been serendipity, and I never really planned what I would do. I used to tell my students at Barnard, perhaps they ought to plan what they want to do, where they want to go. I never planned. Everything that came to me was serendipity. It just so happened. I didn't plan. The only thing I planned was when I went to boarding school. That was a mistake! [Dziedzic laughs] There were diplomats children and things like that. I didn't fit in. I didn't smoke. I was really—we were a middle class family. That's who we were, and I was totally out of—not good there.

Dziedzic: How did your father go from Chattanooga to New York City?

Spatt: Excuse me?

Dziedzic: How did your father end up in New York City from Tennessee?

Spatt: He went to New York University Law School. In fact, if you go there, in the law school, there's a—it's engraved I guess—of the people who helped raise the—for the Vanderbilt Hall. That's the name of the law school. And his name is up there. So, he was very active. And also, he was very interested in cameras, too. My grandfather built—he didn't live with us, but he came there during the day, and he built me a darkroom downstairs.

Dziedzic: Wow!

Spatt: I was always interested in photography.

Dziedzic: And how did you end up with horses?

Spatt: Excuse me?

Dziedzic: You called yourself a horse woman. How did you end up riding horses in Brooklyn?

Spatt: Oh, well we had a horse place, Teevans. I used to take the trolley car. We lived on Avenue M, we had a house there, corner of Bedford Avenue, and five blocks, or maybe it was ten blocks, to Coney Island Avenue. I took the trolley by myself to Teevans, which was near Prospect Park. And I went in terms of—used to ride in the park, but I also stayed in Teevans, and rode around, and practiced, and things like that.

Dziedzic: That was the Midwood neighborhood, right?

Spatt: Midwood?

Dziedzic: Mmhmm.

Spatt: Well, we called it Flatbush in those days. Now it's called Kensington, I think. We called it Flatbush.

Dziedzic: So, what did you study when you were at Pembroke?

Spatt: Oh also, I should mention, I don't know whether you saw *The New York Times* the day I was sworn in?

Dziedzic: I'm not sure.

Spatt: You can look it up. I have it in the hallway, a copy. I was the person of the day. In those days, they had something called "Person of the Day." And in it I said that I was, not in these words, but I said that I was influenced by a teacher at Madison. His name was Philip Rothman and when I said that, afterwards got a lot of phone calls because he influenced a lot of people. He taught, not just plain English but humanities, philosophy, Thomas Moore's *Utopia*, you know,

we read all this. So he really, given the background of my own family, he really influenced me. And loads of other people. [00:15:18]

Dziedzic: Was philosophy something that you were talking about at home, too?

Spatt: No. No, but my family was involved—my mother went to Teacher’s College, which I guess was unusual for a woman that age in those days, and she taught. And she always used to go to the John Dewey lectures, and she’d take us to concerts, and, you know, so, I guess part of it was the influence of family, but not philosophy. He really started me on that.

Dziedzic: But you already had a sense of, maybe, responsibility, I guess, or public service, from your father’s work?

Spatt: Well, I didn’t have it at that time. My mother belonged to some girls’ club, and, you know, so it was a legacy.

Dziedzic: Did it surprise you that you—

Spatt: I never thought about it, necessarily, at that time. I wasn’t any different than anybody else. I never analyzed it. And pursuant to that—here, I’m gonna give you this [shares papers].

Dziedzic: Ok, thanks.

Spatt: Pursuant to that, when I worked for the Bishop later on, my last job, professional job, I had to write a lot of speeches. I did his speeches, I did the drafts for him. Even though I’m Jewish, if there is a god, there’s only one god. [laughs] There’s a god. But I did the draft of speeches. Which sounds peculiar, because he was Catholic.

Dziedzic: [laughs] I saw that on your resume, and I wondered.

Spatt: Anyway, I printed this out for you. My background, really, is in human rights for all. And that’s probably, partly, my family inheritance, and things like that. But I hadn’t thought about it at that time. But when I worked for the Bishop, and I had to do for him different stages, like Romantics—the different stages of philosophy. And one of the stages was Natural Law. You know what Natural Law is?

Dziedzic: Mm—

Spatt: I'm gonna give it to you. Natural Law is certain unchanging principles that are inherent in nature, and they are inherent in man, and the way man knows it is by reason. And they're universal, and they're for all men. It's equal rights, it's justice, what is good, and, you know, that's where philosophy comes in, too, but that's what it is. If you're Christian, you identify—I don't know whether you know Thomas Aquinas. Do you know Thomas Aquinas? Yeah, he talked about Natural Law being in terms of eternal law. And God is the head of all nature, and there are certain principles, and certain things in nature, and these are inherent in all men. And that really has influenced my life, even though I didn't think about it or write about it, till I worked for the Bishop. So I'm giving you something, for you, on Natural Law.

Dziedzic: Thank you.

Spatt: I thought it might be interesting for you. Also, the other factor in my life, and I didn't think about it until I worked for the Bishop and had to write speeches, is hermeneutics. You know what that is?

Dziedzic: Oh! I don't remember right now.

Spatt: It's interpretation of the text in terms of present-day conditions. In other words, in terms of historic, cultural conditions. And I hadn't thought about it till I started writing about it, and I realized, it's hermeneutics, it's called. I'm going to give it to you. In other words, you know, the Supreme Court, when they have to decide something, do they decide in terms of the Constitution? Does the terms of the present-day situation have any factors in it? And, the same thing with historic preservation, planning, everything, in terms of the culture, model cities, what was happening at the time. I don't know if you know about model cities. You know, I have a whole thing I wrote on it, but I didn't give it to you. You know—

Dziedzic: Now, is that with, like, Le Corbusier? [00:20:10]

Spatt: Excuse me? It was in the [19]60s.

Dziedzic: Oh, ok.

Spatt: And each place that had model cities, because it was so much chaos and everything, and the Blacks really were—it was, the whole thing was racist, and there was a lot of violence. And due to that, Congress, believe it or not, passed the model cities, to create model cities, where they would put in all kinds of services, and supposedly it was to be coordinated. It never got coordinated, but it was to be coordinated. And the reason it passed Congress was in terms of the times. In other words, a lot of things happen—Gaudium et Spes, I don't know if you know that, Vatican II. I don't know what religion you are, or if you are. You know Vatican II?

Dziedzic: Mmhmm.

Spatt: Yeah, G-A-U-D-I-A-M, I think, et S-P-E-S, Gaudiam et Spes. From that, the church changed, because they were supposed to interpret the gospel in terms of present-day situations. And that's true of, not just religion, but that's true of everything. Whether it be preservation, or it be planning, the social, all the demographic factors have to come into consideration. Architectural, etcetera. Ok?

Dziedzic: Mmhmm.

Spatt: So those are two factors in terms of me.

Dziedzic: Yeah, yeah, I can, I, thinking about them now, I can see how they tie into your work.

Spatt: Yeah, yeah. When I was Chairman of the Landmarks Commission, I opened up the commission. Before that, it was closed commission. And anybody could come in. Walk in. And it was very, it wasn't, I didn't think about it that it was something I had to do, it just was part of me. And my staff, they had a, I mean, before you had to make appointments, or you can't talk—Margaret Tuft was head of preservation, she was wonderful. I had a wonderful staff. Margaret was head of preservation, preserving the buildings, and the historic districts. And people were allowed to talk to her! And she was allowed to tell them, really. It doesn't happen now. Hasn't happened for a long time. I was very lucky to have her. Alan Burnham on the other hand was in charge of designating landmarks and things, and the people were allowed to talk to him, too. In other words, people were allowed to walk into my Commission, and—I'll give you an example.

I was sitting there one day, and all of a sudden, Ruth Wittenburg comes in. I have something on Ruth. Ruth Wittenburg comes in, with a group of women. Now, I don't remember

Jane Jacobs. Now, where she comes in, I don't know. Well, she comes in because she wrote the book. Well, Ruth didn't write the book, but there were several women with Ruth, and I can't remember all their names. I remember Ruth because she was sort of, like, closest. And we used meet at her house, before—here's her image [shares papers]—before we did the district. And they were really—Ruth and this group of women really pushed for the district. And here's her obituary. I have it right here.

Dziedzic: Thank you.

Spatt: I didn't know her background, but I realized when I read that. She had a background similar, you know, similar to mine, in some ways. There was a group of women. It was not Jane Jacobs—

Dziedzic: Right.

Spatt: —but there was another woman there who was very active, and I can't remember her name. I've seen it sometimes, in some reports, or newspapers or something. So, you might look up who the group around Ruth was. And they worked very, very hard.

Anyway, I was working at the Commission, in my office, my office was sort of to the side, and my secretary knew that, you know, I was open to people. I talked to them. And all of a sudden Ruth walks in, and starts talking to me. And I said to her, you know, I'm supposed to be at NYU, we're having the graduation for my doctorate. She says, "Beverly!" and she drags me, the other women, too, drag me out the door, into a taxi. We go to NYU, she goes upstairs at NYU, where they have the gowns, gets the gown, puts it on me, and I go to the graduation. This is who Ruth was. And this is, you know, how I ran my commission, my office. You know, she just walked in. [00:25:16]

Dziedzic: Yeah, and you listened to the things that people were saying, even if it was, "You gotta go to your graduation!"

Spatt: Well, I wasn't going to go to my graduation. I had my master's, I didn't go to that, so—

Dziedzic: So how did you decide to go into urban planning?

Spatt: Well, after that, and you'll see that in my speech to Pembroke, I—well, my youngest was ten. And I had three. My youngest was ten, and I was in the League of Women Voters, a member of the League of Women Voters. And actually we started in Brooklyn Heights, we started the Brooklyn Heights group, and it was very good. And they, the League of Women Voters I'm really in debt to. They trained us, we had speakers' training, discussion training, and it's very, very important. And when I sit on my board meetings and things, people don't really know how to run a discussion. And they really trained us. Actually, they met at my house, because I had the big—I was living at my parents'. We couldn't afford to live alone. My husband was making thirty-five dollars a month. He was a resident at the hospital, a doctor, and we moved in with my parents, in here. This is where I lived most of my life.

Dziedzic: Oh, wow.

Spatt: Yeah. So I had a big apartment. The other women had their own places, but they didn't have big apartments. So we would meet here, and then I heard they were setting up a temporary Commission on City Finances. I don't know whether it's mentioned there. It's mentioned in my resume. And I asked for a job. Actually, I must say, that's the only job I got through my father. Joe McGoldrick, who had been the controller, and—you know, everybody knew my father. He was president of the Board of Education. He was very active. He later became a surrogate, I don't know if you know what a surrogate is.

Dziedzic: No.

Spatt: When people die, they have to have their wills probated. And also, if you adopt children, the surrogate is the one who has to ok it. Anyway, but people knew him for other reasons, because he was very active. And in city things, too. And he called Joe McGoldrick, Joe had been controller, and I said, "I'd like to work on the commission, you know, on the staff." He appointed me his assistant because I had background in the League of Women Voters, and I knew a lot about city finances and city government. The League is a great place to learn. And it was a great job, and he took me—actually, he was a professor at Queens College, and he was also the past controller of New York City.

And he took me to the meetings, and the meetings were with big people, and he took me. I was in, I don't know, maybe I was forty, or maybe I was in my late thirties, and the presidents

of banks were there, you know, all the commissioners, presidents of banks, and Hoffman, Anna Hoffman Rosenberg. She had worked in Roosevelt's administration. And he let me talk. He kept quiet. Little did I know [laughs] that I wasn't supposed to talk! I would talk, and ask questions of all these big people, and later on, when I became Chairman of Landmarks, I went to all these people to raise money. And they gave me money. I raised over a million dollars. They gave me—I think it's in my, if you read the thing, I raised over a million for like eighteen programs or something, because I went to these bank people, and they knew me from the past. So, anyway, that's how I got into planning.

Women's City Club, I also belonged to that. In City Club, there was a vacancy in City Planning. Usually I tell everybody that I—they ask me how did I get on the City Planning Commission. I tell them I was sleeping with the mayor. But actually I heard at the meeting—Women's City Club was different than the League of Women Voters. League of Women Voters was equal, we brought sandwiches. There, we got lunch and everything like that. And I heard there was a vacancy, and I said to myself, "Why not me?"

My father was dead by then, and I was very—I wasn't friendly but—there were some older families, men and wives, and I was this young person in the League of Women Voters. I spoke out against surrogates, that we should eliminate the surrogate court. And here my father was a surrogate! My father didn't mind. He was very proud of me. But, you know, I sort of, they knew me from my speeches and things, and I sort of got close to this couple. Don't ask me why. Maybe I was like a daughter to them. And I said to them, you know, I'd like to be on the City Planning Commission. And evidently he knew [Mayor Robert] Wagner. This is the truth that I'm giving you. I don't tell anybody this, but the hell with it. And he asked, he told Wagner—he suggested my name to Wagner. That was the end of that.

Then one night, about twelve o'clock, I got a call from Wagner telling me the next morning he was appointing me to the commission. The commissioners didn't want me.

A League of Women Voter was like someone—they used to say you could put them all in a telephone booth and forget it, close the door. They didn't like them, the Women Votes, because we were very outspoken, you know. We talked on issues, like I spoke against the surrogate court because we wanted to see a reformed court system, and, who speaks against—certainly Ivanka Trump doesn't speak against her father. Her father's job. I didn't speak against my father, but I spoke against the court.

Anyway, seven o'clock the next morning, my husband drove me to Carlyle Hotel. He was in his second marriage, and his wife comes down the stairs in a dressing gown [laughing] seven o'clock in the morning! Anyway. And he appointed me. And my husband went home, and I went in, back to City Planning with the chairman—oh Jesus, what's his name? I'll think about it. Astor Channel. And they, the first item was tunnels, the water tunnels, then. And I knew about it because I was in the League of Voters and we had studied the water tunnels. So I knew how to vote, you know, I knew what was going on, I knew how to listen and to vote. [00:32:43]

Dziedzic: So what were some of the other issues—

Spatt: Excuse me?

Dziedzic: What were some of the other issues that the League of Women Voters—

Spatt: That's really what I remember that day.

Dziedzic: The tunnels and the surrogates.

Spatt: The water tunnels. Twenty years later, they're still doing the water tunnel. The third one, the third water tunnel. Which got done maybe twenty years later. So, that's how I got on the City Planning Commission.

It was hard. They really didn't want me. And I didn't want to become a dissenter, but, you know, I really believe that I was supposed to do what was good. The public will. The public good. And, you know, it's always been real estate oriented, and real estate has always had power over—even now. I mean, this is not something new in preservation. And preservation wasn't important then. But it was, it was very hard.

Dziedzic: So, when you were, I'm just trying to fill in—

Spatt: Excuse me?

Dziedzic: I'm trying to fill in some—

Spatt: Go ahead.

Dziedzic: —the timeline. So, you graduated from Brown, or from Pembroke, in [19]45?

Spatt: Actually, I graduated [19]44, because I made it three years. But I'm the class of [19]45.

Dziedzic: Ok. And so, it was about eight years before you joined the League of Women Voters?

Spatt: It must have been the mid-[19]50s.

Dziedzic: Mid-'50s?

Spatt: '50s.

Dziedzic: You were in your mid-thirties.

Spatt: No, the—oh. Sorry about that. [Dziedzic laughs] I was in my thirties, early thirties. And it was, yeah, I somehow or other, I got on the City Planning Committee. And I was very active, and I finally became the Chairman of the City Planning Committee. And then at some point, I must have decided, why not go for a master's? And that's how I got into my master's and PhD. So I went for the master's.

When I left City Planning, when I was no longer appointed—it was, you know, you have tenure at City Planning—I had finished my master's. I had just finished my master's. Sixty points, you needed. I went at night school. I would take the train, and my husband would pick me up.

So, ask the questions.

But they didn't—it was very hard, because I really felt that things were wrong.

[00:35:45]

Dziedzic: Yeah. Well, what drew you to become involved the way that you did with issues that involved the city?

Spatt: Well, I left the League of Women Voters at that point. Well, for instance, if someone wanted to add a floor, they didn't have any trouble. But if someone had a house and wanted to add a room for their elderly mother, or mother-in-law, they couldn't do it. Ok? Does that give you what I—

Dziedzic: You could see some injustice.

Spatt: Yeah, it was injustice. And somehow or other, you know, we got sort of portfolios. My portfolio was community boards, which was good for me, and—I'm not sure they liked it—and I was also in charge of Staten Island. And I was very much against those cookie cutter houses and what they were doing in Staten Island. They also wanted to take a cemetery and build on top a cemetery. You can't do that, because of state law. It's inviolable. So, you know, I had a whole pile of dissents. I'll show, if you want. Just look at the pile I have inside. In fact, people, when they write books, they use my dissents. You know, they give me credit, and they say, "acknowledgement." But I always gave away information.

Also, at that time, we were all young, and we're all—the newspapermen, the reporters for the *Times* and the other papers, we were all young. Kennedy was in—not that I like Kennedy, he was a womanizer—but we were trying to change the world. I don't know whether I said in my thing [indicates interview conducted in 2011 with the New York Preservation Archive Project], but the fulcrum wasn't strong enough, the lever wasn't long enough. The only thing I changed was me. I didn't change me, but it was very hard. But there was a whole group of people in *The New York Times* that were young. David Shipler, Steve Roberts, and who's the one who does autobiographies? Robert Reeves. Well, anyhow. There were about four or five—a couple of them are still there.

Dziedzic: Wow.

Spatt: And they all were, most of them were all young and we were all sort of wanting to see things differently. So, for some reason, they—well, I gave them information if they needed information, and even on City Planning, I did. When I was Chairman of Landmarks, I had a PR person that they could come to and get information. So, they got the information, and they knew I was honest and told them, you know, all the sides, and things like that. And somehow or other, when I say they adopted me, I was always in *The New York Times*.

I must say, when I saw my name in *The New York Times*, it scared me. It did scare me. You know, I'm not a—I'm sort of a private person. It scared me. But I was always in *The New York Times*. They had someone at *The New Yorker*, Andy Logan, and I have her thing in the room, too. She had a column every week, and every time we had a hearing, there'd be something going between Don Elliot and me, and I'd be reading my long dissent with philosophy in it,

Aristotle—anyway, she always had me in her column. So, you know, it was—some people got to know me.

Let's put it this way: the community people, they could call me at home. Every—people, not real estate—the real people, they had the right, and they did, they called me at home. You know, for help. And I once asked them, they said, “Well, you're the only one who listens.” So, but it didn't make my commissioners happy, and it didn't make [Mayor] Lindsay happy, and it didn't make Don Elliot happy. [00:40:03]

Dziedzic: Who was Don Elliot?

Spatt: He was the Chairman of City Planning, at the time. Before, the old—I must say, the old City Planning Commission, with James Felt, was a better commission. But that was the old days. And actually I replaced James Felt, and one of the first things he said to me is “Beverly, don't go full time. You've got fifteen thousand.” He said, “Just go in”—I went full time.

Dziedzic: It's hard to walk away from the things that you care about.

Spatt: Yeah, if you want to participate and know what's going on. So, that was it.

Dziedzic: So you said that when you got appointed to City Planning, that nobody was happy. Nobody else on the—

Spatt: They really weren't happy that I was there.

Dziedzic: So who else was on the Commission?

Spatt: Ellie Guggenheim was on it. Now, Ellie was a good person, she was very active in philanthropy, and women's things. She was a good person, but she was not like me, who would speak publically about, you know, things that were wrong, and dissent. I didn't mean to be dissenting, but I had to tell myself that dissent is in terms of something that you really believe in. It's not wrong. This is for progress. There've been a lot of dissenters in our American history. It's not easy. Who was the one who wrote, who showed those papers or something? Well, anyhow. It was hard.

But on the other hand, there was a whole group of people, the community people, and even the policemen at City Hall, they—when I say they love me, I'm not using the word love

me—because I was there, and I was different. And I guess that’s why *The New York Times* adopted me. They never had someone like this coming out and talking. She really, like a League of Women Voter! And this was unusual. But, you know, the powers that be didn’t like me, but most people are not powers that be. And that was helpful when I was on, became Chairman of Landmarks. They knew that I was there for them.

Dziedzic: Yeah, it sounds like you, you basically gave the reporters a headline, in a way—

Spatt: Excuse me?

Dziedzic: You gave the reporters a headline, because you were basically critiquing what had been the norm before, what would have passed.

Spatt: It never came out. And of course later on, when I tried to get a job, they thought I just—I forget the word—loose cannon! The establishment assumed I was a loose cannon. But on the other hand I was very friendly with Durst, Seymour Durst. In fact, I tried to get him on my Commission. He really was a preservationist, I don’t know whether you know that. He gave his, all his New York stuff to—well, you might call his son, Douglas, and see where all his stuff is. He gave all his stuff, I think, to the New York Library and he really was a preservationist. I tried to get him on the Commission, but the mayor wouldn’t appoint him. Don’t ask me why. Anyhow, where are we?

Dziedzic: Well, I wanted to ask about something that came up when you were on the City Planning Commission, which was, I just want to get into some of the neighborhood-related materials. So speaking of dissent, when there was the proposal to rezone part of—

Spatt: When there was what? I’m sorry, my problem.

Dziedzic: The proposal to rezone part of Third Avenue.

Spatt: Third Avenue?

Dziedzic: Mmhmm.

Spatt: Yeah. Well, that’s, you know, that’s that thing. [shuffles papers]

Dziedzic: Mmhmm, mmhmm. So if you could—

Spatt: Yeah.

Dziedzic: —describe what the proposal was aiming to do.

Spatt: Yeah, let me just—this, the American Association of University Women asked me, out of the clear blue sky, to come and speak. I'm not the kind who goes around to different places. I like my own bathroom [laughter]. Anyway, it was some place, I don't know, it was not in New York, and evidently they had been studying the human use of urban space, and you'll read this, and I don't have to tell you, but this is—I told them—well, let me just read some of it here. [reading] “The first few months were euphoric, but the euphoria was short-lived. I experienced a rude awakening”—this is when I spoke to them—“approximately six months after my appointment I learned that government was totally different, totally foreign to anything I'd ever known or imagined. It's extremely complicated with a unique morality all its own. Nothing I had experienced would prepare me for the shock. Contributing to the awakening was a new administration”—that was Lindsay, and he really was no good. He may have been, you know, for human rights or something, but he really put us in a debt. But that's beside the point. He tried to get rid of me, but he couldn't, because I had tenure. [00:45:41]

Anyway, my background told me that things are supposed to be decided in terms of the public interest. But I found out that they weren't. And you could read this, and put this in, but I'll read. “Much to my dismay, I discovered that the public interest, like the vestal virgins of antiquity, while worshipped, is also the first to be sacrificed. Decisions are based more off—I'm just going through, I'm not saying all the words—“on accommodation, influence, power brokerage, any number of issues completely separate from the substantive issues facing the city. Every decision's permeated with politics, and what is its political impact. And City Planning should not be based on this,” it should be based on attention to fact and views, alternatives, etcetera, etcetera. And, you know, how it relates to the people. I'm just ad-libbing, I'm not really—in other words, decision-making has to be based on what is really good for the people.

Anyway, I spoke to them, and I really used what happened in this thing, in Greenwich Village. One of the things I learned—[reading] “Given the situation, subject to great pressure to conform, I realized it was necessary to assume a very painful and unpleasant role, if I remained

true to my principles. I had to publically stand up and be counted.” One of the things I learned—and this is very important for you, when you go on professionally—“that power”—I’m always a professor. [Dziedzic laughs] I always feel, well, Joe McGoldrick handed me, and I feel an obligation to hand it on to other people. “One of the first things I learned is that power’s very diffused, and on every issue it’s necessary to unite different groups into a functioning coalition. Very frequently, groups which are opposed on one issue may find themselves aligned on another.” And this all relates to what you’re talking about. “Members of the coalition play different roles, bring various skills, which should be utilized. Individual groups may be concerned with only one facet of the issue”—like architecture, or a social issue, whatever—“but these distinct issues are harnessed by the central issue. It becomes incumbent to understand and utilize this phenomenon—phenomenon of diffusion—in order to maximize the strength of the coalition. Fractal division of power is evidently—evident”—anyway.

“The first lesson involves the development of a constituency of support, a counter-pressure to rid the issue to be decided on objective, substantive issues. Frequently that may result in a negative effect, in defeating something.” In other words, something is passed—we may want to defeat something in City Planning, or Landmarks, yes? “But stopping something may be very positive in itself, whether it’s negative or positive.” [00:49:07]

[OMITTED] [00:50:04]

Spatt: What happened is we all joined together to fight. Planners came, civic organization, low-income housing people, the printing industry, fair housing, committees, community people, attorneys, and we, you needed a catalyst—I guess I was the catalyst—to develop a constituency. It requires facts, candor, and that’s where my dissents, I guess—they trusted me. And anyway, I was the catalyst, I understood the various roles that each one plays. Now, the architects weren’t necessarily for the other people, but anyhow. And actually, it was, I think I say in this, that one of the real estate groups, Commerce and Industry, came out for it, yes? I don’t remember which one.

[reading] “Only when we have an aroused, informed citizenry, willing to make the tedious investment in government, shall we affect change. This is the role the coalition played.” Politicians are very sensitive to the good of people if they think they are votes. Now, we did all our work beforehand, and you had to do all your work beforehand. We worked beforehand, and

there were very responsible—Walter Thabit, the group in Cooper Square. They were very much involved. And, you know, it wasn't just I. They were very much involved. So what we did is, individually, we approached the elected officials with a different voice, but it was a unified voice. This is the first time I ever wrote about it, but I wrote about it because I had to speak before them, and I had just done this. "It was the art of confrontation. It's based on the fact that politicians do not know how to deal with an aroused but peaceful citizenry, and do not know what it's capable of exacting. Mark Twain said the best swordsman in the world doesn't need to fear the second-best swordsman in the world. The person for him to be afraid of is the one who's totally ignorant!" Did you know that Mark Twain? It's a great verse. Anyway, he isn't prepared for him, he doesn't know that the other guy doesn't know the rules!

Dziedzic: Right.

Spatt: I—"Since during the past five years, I've been tutored in the art, and I pass it on to you what has been taught to me." And I have been tutored by being—you know, because I had to be tutored. I tutored myself. And you never admit a weakness. We never admitted we were weak. I mean, here we were against the Board of Estimate. And you always assume the other side is uncertain of your strength. You work and bargain for only the objectives that really are realistic. I don't work for something I can't win. And if we were defeated—which, I've been defeated—you don't concede that the loss is personal or that it's permanent. You're always very positive about the outcome. And, I talk about frustration and things, but that's, you know, you don't have to—that was what happened there. Now, you read this.

Dziedzic: Yes, thank you so much.

Spatt: I'm not talking about all—that's in there.

Dziedzic: Yeah, yeah.

Spatt: But this is the first time I put down what was what. Do I have a date there? I don't know.

Dziedzic: 1970. November 1970.

Spatt: 1971?

Dziedzic: [19]70.

Spatt: So it's right after that. That's really what, then the AAUW asked me to speak, and I really encapsulated what I was doing at City Planning. We were facing the Board of Estimate. Board of Estimate was, consisted of five borough presidents, the comptroller, who was Abe Beame, and the mayor, who was Lindsay. The mayor was for it. The Board of Estimate, in some ways, was much easier than the City Council, because if you got one borough president, and it was his borough, chances are the other borough presidents would go along with it. And the City Council's totally different. And also they all get funds and things like that from real estate and things like that. Anyway, we went there, a whole room full of people, different people, and each person spoke on, you know, their area of expertise, and also—I don't know whether you know, but it isn't the head of an agency or organization that you should know. It's the staff. Do you know that? [00:55:20]

Dziedzic: Mmhmm.

Spatt: Well, Beame's staff used to come to me for help. Not on that issue, but on issues. A lot of staff came to me, just like *The New York Times* fellas used to come to me for help. And I, when we went before the Board of Estimate, they must have talked to—should I continue?

Dziedzic: Mmhmm.

Spatt: They must have talked to Beame about it. And Beame voted against it. I don't remember who was the borough president, but I remember Beame voted against it. Then all the borough presidents voted against it. Lindsay was the only one who voted for it. And he lost. And we won. Of course, now, they've—you know what they've done on the Lower East Side. But then, we were—we stopped them.

Dziedzic: That's tremendous.

Spatt: Yeah, and I think that's how I got appointed to the Landmarks Commission. Beame got a lot of publicity out of that, and when I was—when they needed somebody, I guess his staff must have said, you know, she's got her degree and she's a preservationist and everything. And he

appointed me—of course, I told everybody I'm sleeping with the mayor. [Dziedzic laughs] I'm always sleeping with the mayor.

Dziedzic: Why was that your story?

Spatt: Excuse me?

Dziedzic: Why was that your story?

Spatt: Why was that?

Dziedzic: Your story. That you were sleeping with the mayor.

Spatt: Well, for instance, when I became Chairman of Landmarks—Otis Pearsall lives in the neighborhood, I don't know if you know of Otis. Yeah, he's very good, he's the one who helped get the first historic district, Brooklyn Heights. He worked very hard on it. And I met Otis at the corner. We were both going to the subway, and he said, "How did you get to be Chairman?" You know, I wasn't part of the preservation elite group. So I said I was sleeping with the mayor. So, from then on, people wondered. That was a good answer. [Dziedzic laughs]

Dziedzic: So some of the things that you brought up in your dissent—

Spatt: Sorry?

Dziedzic: Some of the things that you brought up in your dissent—

Spatt: Yeah.

Dziedzic: —I thought were really forward-looking, I guess.

Spatt: About what?

Dziedzic: You brought up, basically you brought up economic disparity, you brought that into the conversation, and I was just wondering if you could talk about what other neighborhoods were there similar issues going on—

Spatt: Besides economic disparity? Well—

Dziedzic: Well, what other areas in the city were there active campaigns?

Spatt: Well, first of all, there wasn't equal rights. I mean, politically, there was not equal rights. And certainly there was economic disparity. There was, just like here now, we've got "the 1%" rich. Manhattan is all—Brooklyn Heights is all—I mean, I know some of the people in Brooklyn Heights are unhappy with me because I worry about gentrification—I always worried about that, on Landmarks, when I was Chairman. What it would do to the community. Social disparity. I mean, Brooklyn Heights—I lived here before. I'm probably one of the oldest, longest-living persons in the Heights because my parents moved here while I was young. My father worked on Montague Street, his law firm. And we had all sorts of people here. We had homeless, we had poor, we had rich, all the old, the old Brooklyn Heights people—white Anglo-Saxon Protestant—you know what that is, WASP? Maybe you are a WASP, I don't know. We had some Jews, we had some Blacks. We had rooming houses, we had artists. We had all sorts of people here.

And when I was growing up here, and left college, my friends were all like me. We were, we were all poor. I may have been Ivy League, and some of them may have been Ivy League, but we all felt the same. We were not the Women's City Club. What is the group, that luncheon place they have? It's all over the country. It's on Pierpont Street. I'll remember. It takes a little time to chattle. You know, they had clubs that you had to be recommended, or you had to be certain people. Anyway, as well as the churches, there were certain people there who ran things.

And we, my friends, we may have been Ivy League—one of them's father was a federal judge, the law of "Hot Pursuit"—Jessup—very distinguished parents and everything. But we were all young. And all believed that we could change the world. And some of them bought houses, and they redid—they were the early pioneers. Though I lived in an apartment, I couldn't afford, so I had to live with my parents, and husband. And my children! For years. And, same apartment. Some of them built houses very cheap, for three thousand, four thousand, and they fixed it up themselves. [01:01:26]

Dziedzic: In Brooklyn.

Spatt: In Brooklyn Heights. We were the early pioneers. And we didn't belong to the clubs that you should belong to and things like that. We were for the public schools, and we were for changing everything. And we set up the first Democratic—West Brooklyn Independent

Democrats, the first Democratic reform group in Brooklyn. Now, there's still the West Brooklyn Independent Democrats, but it's totally different. It's very political. But we set it up. Phil Jessup was the chairman of it, I was the co-chairman, and all these people were in it. And we were all idealistic, we made rules, and we couldn't take any patronage even though my father was a surrogate at the time—we couldn't take any. [01:02:19]

[OMITTED] [01:02:23]

Spatt: We made such stiff rules that we never won. [laughs] And besides, we didn't have money. But we tried. We tried to change things. And then I went on the City Planning Commission, and of course I couldn't stay on that, in politics. What am I gonna say?

Dziedzic: In your other interview—

Spatt: Excuse me?

Dziedzic: In your interview with NYPAP—

Spatt: I'm sorry.

Dziedzic: The interview you did with, for the—

Spatt: My problem.

Dziedzic: That's ok. The interview you did with the New York Preservation Archive Project—

Spatt: Yeah.

Dziedzic: —you mentioned a distinction between public service and politicians.

Spatt: Public service and what?

Dziedzic: Politicians. You know, people in politics.

Spatt: Yeah, there are some good people in politics and government. There are some good. Mario Cuomo was good—not his son! He's ruthless. I don't know if you know that. He actually got his father elected, though. Mario was good. There are some good people. I, you know, there were some good people in City Council, there were some good people in the state assembly, and

there probably still are, but they're in the minority. And they have, it's hard to speak out. If you speak out, in politics, you're not going places. Every time, the mayor put me out, the next mayor put me in, the next mayor put me out, the next mayor put me in. And then when the last mayor put me out, the governor offered me a job, to head all preservation. I don't know if I mentioned that in the thing—I did? And that was Mario. And I refused it. Because it was a paper-pushing job. The man who was in charge in Albany, Phil Jessup¹, he was really not for preservation, and I would, even though I would be the SHPO. You know what a SHPO is?

Dziedzic: I can guess—.

Spatt: State Historic Preservation Officer.

Dziedzic: [laughs] Oh, ok.

Spatt: I'm in charge of all preservation, but my budget and everything would be under him. And also, I didn't want to leave my husband. My children were gone, but I didn't want to leave my husband.

Dziedzic: So you'd have to move up to Albany.

Spatt: Albany.

Dziedzic: I see.

Spatt: So I refused the job. A lot of people thought I was crazy, and when people used to send me Christmas cards, and everything, when they heard I refused the job, I stopped getting Christmas cards. [laughs] But I learned, with my father, when the king is dead, the king is dead. That's the past. In other words, I'm no longer the Chairman of Landmarks, I'm no longer—I'm Beverly Spatt. When people introduce me, they say, "Beverly Moss Spatt." I cringe. [01:05:22]

¹ Also Joe Broadwin, etc.

² James Marston Fitch

³ The printer called me and alerted me that the dissent copy was all mixed up.

⁴ I called my Third Avenue–St. Marks dissent "A Mess of Pottage" because the city was selling zoning for \$18/foot.

⁵ The following are portions from a redacted section of the audio recording that Beverly Moss Spatt wishes to retain in the transcript: "But I did have it all my life, because, I was ~~Moss Spatt~~ ^{Moss Spatt}—25 they didn't tell me what to do, they never told me what to do, I did whatever I wanted...I think

Dziedzic: Because you're just Beverly?

Spatt: I'm Beverly.

Dziedzic: I see. Well, I—

Spatt: I'm telling you personal things that I've never talked about.

Dziedzic: Well, I appreciate it, and it ties into your career, I think, too, so, it's—

Spatt: Well, as I said, everything was serendipity. I didn't plan to be on the City Planning. And then when I was offered, I did not plan to be at Landmarks. Beame knew me through, because of what I'd done in New York's Greenwich Village, and his staff knew me because they used to come to me for help, and I didn't plan to be Chairman of Landmarks.

It was wonderful because I had a wonderful staff, and being Chairman, I could do what I pleased. And Beame never, never told me no. He never—he sent a couple of—nowadays, the mayor appoints the commissioners, I don't know if you know that. The mayor sent me one, and he actually was Black. I refused him. Not because he was Black, but because he was so political. All of my commissioners were professionals, and were, Harmon—actually, before me, Harmon actually had a professional commission. Well, it was the beginning, you know, it was after—so he was really the first commissioner. And he, it was, the people were professional on the commission, and that sort of—I kept that up. They had to be professional. They had George Collins, and who's, who was the head of preservation again, I keep forgetting his name? I'm ninety-three. Yeah, he's head of preservation at Columbia. He was head of preservation.²

Dziedzic: Dolkart?

Spatt: What?

Dziedzic: Dolkart?

Spatt: Who?

Dziedzic: Andrew Dolkart?

² James Marston Fitch

Spatt: No, not Andrew. Before Andrew.

Dziedzic: Oh, I don't know. I don't remember.

Spatt: Look it up.

Dziedzic: Yeah.

Spatt: I asked him to be on my commission. He was head of preservation at Columbia's preservation program. I think he was the first. And they still have affairs with, in his name. And I asked him to be on the commission. I asked George Collins from Columbia, I had Morris Ketchum, I had—here. Did I give you this?

Dziedzic: No.

Spatt: [shuffles papers] Margaret Beyer. Elisabeth Coit, she did the federal housing program, public housing. George Collins was from Columbia. Bill Conklin I had on. It was a mistake. I really asked—largely, his partner. And his partner really was good, and I knew that he was good. And Bill called me, and he said, "You know, you really should have me instead of so-and-so." And like a dope—I was new, I went along with it. My big mistake. He was a good architect, but he wasn't helpful when I was chairman, or when I went off the commission. I was still a member, because I had tenure, and he was difficult. Barbaralee Diamonstein, who really is excellent. However, she was so busy writing her books and things, and doing her work at the commission. But she really was an excellent person. But she was busy working on the other things. But she was excellent. She was a professional. Steve Lash. Steve had worked as a—under Alan Burnham. Alan was wonderful. He's world renowned. And Steve had been a volunteer and worked on research—that was Alan's division, research—and he was so great, and I asked him to be a commissioner. He is now head of Christie's. He says I started him. He really was—he isn't political. He was very good, and he was already involved in Landmarks Commission. Gave all his time. He was there all the time. Hawthorne Lee, who was Black. Hawthorne was from Queens, and he was a preservationist. Marie McGovern. Paul Parker was—a lot of these people came from Harmon's group. I took them. I kept them on.

The only person—I won't tell you his name—I put off is because he objected to the fact that, when I designated the Metropolitan Historic District—we were being sued by 84th or 86th

Street because they wanted to be designated, just that one block. But that block was no better than some of the blocks in Bedford-Stuyvesant, but they had pull. And I wouldn't do it.

And Paul was great, even though he was retired at that point, and he was on Harmon's commission, and I kept him on. I don't know what he did before. He may have been in PR. Because he did my radio comments. I had all the commissioners working, and he did my radio spots. We got five-minute radio spots. That was one of my eighteen programs. And Morris Ketchum was in Harmon's group, and I made him the vice chairman. And the former vice chairman from Harmon was this person who, as I said, objected to my writing a report about why we did not designate—cause we had a hearing—why we didn't designate 84th Street. The one near the Metropolitan Museum. [01:11:35]

Dziedzic: Mmhmm.

Spatt: And he objected to it. He was a lawyer. He said, "You don't tell them why. You never put it on paper." So, he was not re-appointed.

Dziedzic: Now, when you say that certain people were too political, is that an example of what you mean by political?

Spatt: Yes. He was concerned with other issues, other than preservation. And also, I felt you owed these people—I felt you owed them why we didn't designate them. They had put so much in. They had also sued us, too. Article 78, is it? I just felt that—did I ever do it again? No, but I did talk about things, to the newspaper and things.

Here is, when I—one of the things I did, I did a survey of all of Brooklyn. If you're head of an agency—people don't do it but—you have to read the *Federal Record*. I found out all the money that was available, all the programs. The Transportation Act had a clause in it that they had to—they couldn't run a highway, or run on an issue, where there was preservation. They had to ameliorate it, or they couldn't do it. I only knew that because I read the act, and I read the act in the *Federal Record*. So you have to be very—I don't think very many people do it because it takes a lot of time. You have to read the *Federal Record*.

Dziedzic: And that also led you to getting some federal funding.

Spatt: Yes, I read the Community Development Act, and the Community Development Act said that the money could be given to preservation and neighborhoods. I don't remember the exact thing. I told John Zucotti—City Planning was in charge of the money. I said, “John, you have to give us the money.” So, he gave us the money. I was really [laughing] very terrible. I can't tell you what I said to him. [Dziedzic laughs]

Beame's—I'm going off on an aside. When, you know, Grand Central—even though Jackie Onassis and the MAS [Municipal Art Society] gets all the credit, actually we at Landmarks, the city did not want to appeal the case. They didn't want to because it'd cost a lot of money if we lost. So Dorothy Miner, who doesn't get a lot of credit—Dorothy and I thought about it a lot, and I met with his deputy mayor, who was an old politician, who knew Beame, and I went down there, and I told him all the reasons why they have to appeal it. But we didn't get credit for it. And he said to me, he said, “You and your assistant sure got balls.” Well, you know, as a feminist, I might object to that, but I didn't object. I was happy that [laughing] they were going to appeal it. We don't get credit for it. And, actually, it was Leonard Koerner, of the Corporation Council's office, and I was very friendly with the—Richmond, who was the head of the Corporation—

That's another thing: when you're chairman of an agency, you have to relate to the chairmen of the other agencies: housing and development, corporation council's office, economic development, and I became close—not close, but friends—with Robbins, head of public housing. We used to go to lunch together. You have to relate to the others, so that your programs go through. And they coordinated with them. And I knew Richmond, I was friendly with him—you know, like I was with the others, and Richmond was head of the Corporation Council. And Leonard Koerner, he appointed Leonard Koerner to run the case. Leonard ran the case all the way up to the Supreme Court. He's the one who should get the credit. I don't know if you heard this from anybody else. Leonard Koerner. I don't know whether he's still there. And Dorothy Miner. They don't get the credit. It's Jackie Onassis, and MAS. I asked them, why is it they get the credit all the time? And they said, well, they sound their own horn, and we never did. We would give away to the *Times* everything, information, but we didn't say it has to come back to us.

Anyway, here, I'm gonna give you this—

Dziedzic: Ok.

Spatt: We—oh, so for the Community Development Act, we got money. John, I don't know if John wanted to give it to us but he gave it to us. Henry Ludder used to be on the commission, he became the projects director, and [Edwin] Friedman—I don't know why Walter Thabit's name's not here. Walter Thabit, from the Village, and I'm sure that you people in the Village know of him—do you know his name?

Dziedzic: I don't know it.

Spatt: Walter Thabit.

Dziedzic: Mmhmm.

Spatt: And he really headed—he was the one who liaised with the federal government. He wrote—I don't have a copy of it.

Dziedzic: Did you mention his name in relation to Cooper Square?

Spatt: How to spell it? W-A-L-T-E-R T-H-A-B-B-I-T.

Dziedzic: Did you mention—

Spatt: He lived in the East Village.

Dziedzic: And was he involved with the Cooper Square—

Spatt: Yes.

Dziedzic: —group? Ok.

Spatt: Very involved. When I had to write reports to the federal government, Walter was in charge of that. All my reports, which I wrote, and all my public statements, are at the New York City Archives. They asked me for it; I didn't ask them. And there would be the report that we had on community development, because we had to report back to the federal government all the time.

And we had a staff, and it wasn't a political staff, if you look at the names of the staff. Andrew. Once I went to a conference that Andrew was speaking, with others, and I said, "Mr. Dolkart," and he said, "What? Are you calling me Mr. Dolkart? You gave me my first job!" They're all people who were involved in preservation.

Dziedzic: Well, like you said, it was a professional community.

Spatt: Yeah, here, you can have this.

Dziedzic: Thank you.

Spatt: Well, could you get me a copy of this?

Dziedzic: Yes.

Spatt: That you could get me a copy of. The others I'm giving you.

Dziedzic: I wanted to go back to the Third Avenue.

Spatt: The Third Avenue? Yeah, you want a cookie or a strawberry? [Indicates plate on table.]

Dziedzic: Mm—

Spatt: If you don't, don't.

Dziedzic: —I'll have a strawberry.

Spatt: Yeah.

Dziedzic: Thank you.

Spatt: Here, you could put the stuff in here.

Dziedzic: I wanted to ask about, you mentioned how many groups there were—

Spatt: How many what?

Dziedzic: How many civic groups there were that you were coordinating with, and the ones that I came across were the Third Avenue Businessmen's Artists and Tenants Association. And then also this group around Cooper Square.

Spatt: Yeah, and community groups.

Dziedzic: And what, and so—

Spatt: There was a community board. It must have been the community board.

Dziedzic: And so what were the, I mean, do you recall the particular issues that those organizations were advocating for? Or do you recall any groups that were notably active around this issue?

Spatt: The persons?

Dziedzic: The names of the groups or the people that were involved.

Spatt: Well, I think the AIA [American Institute of Architects] was there. And individual architects. I don't know if you know, recently, Inwood, they want to rezone Inwood. Do you know about it?

Dziedzic: Yes. [01:19:56]

Spatt: And Pat Courtney and the others in Inwood did a wonderful job. And I told Pat, I told her how we won this. And they did the same thing: they had architects in Inwood, they had real estate people in Inwood, they had lawyers in Inwood, they had a planner there. I don't remember the particular people in the thing. No, I don't. This [laughing] was in 1970. I know Walter was there, and there was a woman there, who was very active. And there was somebody down from Columbia. And we had the housing group—what's the name of the housing group that's been there for a long, long time? It's for low-income housing. They all came down.

Dziedzic: I read also that there was—that there had been a squatters' park in what would become Cooper Square. Did you remember that at all?

Spatt: The squatters' park?

Dziedzic: Yes.

Spatt: I don't think I was involved in that. Was that part of the rezoning? No.

Dziedzic: No, it was just describing the neighborhood, basically, that there was this push to build luxury housing in a place where people were squatting—people had no homes.

Spatt: Well, there was a lot of squatting down there, because I remember, I had a friend who later became the head of the *Amsterdam News*, and he lived there, but he wasn't squatting. But he said to me, you know, there are drunk people living next door to me, and squatters on the side streets. I know that, but I don't know that particularly, and I don't—in other words, part of the coalition, I don't think they were a part of the coalition.

Dziedzic: Yeah, I think that people really started to have whole blocks full of squatters a little bit later in the decade.

Spatt: Yes, there were a lot of squatters there, in the side streets. This friend of mine lived there. He later became head of the *Amsterdam News*. And I remember, we went there for dinner, my husband and I, and he said, "Look, I've got drunk people living next to me," and this—yeah, the side streets. But that wasn't necessarily part of our—

Dziedzic: Not on Third Avenue.

Spatt: —our presentation.

Dziedzic: Mmhmm.

Spatt: Here's something my grandson wrote. I thought you might be interested. He had to write—you know when you go to college, you have to write—I don't remember if I did, had to. Did you have to write it for college?

Dziedzic: You mean an—

Spatt: An essay?

Dziedzic: —admission essay? Yeah.

Spatt: It was [reads] “Tell us an important influence on you. What qualities”—I didn’t know about this—“you most admire, and how have you grown from knowing that person?” And he wrote about me. You know, about how, learning, well, here, you could look at it.

Dziedzic: Mmhmm. [Reads, laughs] I mean, I’m just skimming it, but—

Spatt: Yeah, he barely knew that I—it was hard for me. It was hard for me.

Dziedzic: Mmhmm.

Spatt: Did it pass on to him? Well, he does do karate, and he does train people free, and he runs the school. He’s head of it, he doesn’t charge, he doesn’t take a salary. So, maybe. And he got into Cornell [laughs]. Not based on that, he’s very bright. I’m very fortunate to have him as a grandson.

Dziedzic: Yeah, that sounds amazing. Does he do that in New York City?

Spatt: What, my grandson?

Dziedzic: Run the school?

Spatt: He went to public school, but it was in Narragansett. Narragansett people think was a very wealthy community, because they had what they called—the wealthy people had what they called “cottages.” Mansions. But my son lived in a middle class, working class neighborhood, and he went to public school. He was not brought up—that was the people on Narragansett Bay.

Dziedzic: And does he live in the city?

Spatt: He lives in Boston. He went to Cornell. They gave him a job at the lab, and he worked there for maybe eight years, five years, and he decided—he got bored. Then they offered him an increase, but he didn’t want to stay. So he went to Boston, and he asked for a job at Harvard, and they made him head of a lab, just like that. He heads the genetic lab. Everybody’s got masters and PhD’s under him, but he doesn’t. He only has a bachelor degree. He doesn’t want it. And evidently he doesn’t need it. [01:25:01]

Dziedzic: Right, right. So, I wanted to ask you about two other issues that came up, I think when you were—

Spatt: I'm sure you have this, you know when I got—

Dziedzic: Oh yes.

Spatt: It took them a long time to give me an award.

Dziedzic: [laughs] It did take them a long time!

Spatt: I had got already an award from New York State Preservation Group, from every place I got awards. From architect—everyplace! Not real estate. [01:25:32]

[OMITTED] [01:27:40]

Dziedzic: All right, let's go back on the record. There are two things that came up while you were chair of Landmarks, so I wanted to make sure we got a chance to talk about those, and that's the house on West 11th Street, the Weatherman House, and then—

Spatt: Wait, the one that was bombed?

Dziedzic: Yes.

Spatt: I wasn't the Chairman then, Harmon was.

Dziedzic: But you, you—

Spatt: I wasn't on the commission.

Dziedzic: Well, what I read was that the first time—

Spatt: Oh, you mean when they had to re-do it.

Dziedzic: The re-do, yes.

Spatt: Oh, yeah.

Dziedzic: And then also about the gothic revival row houses on Fourth Avenue by Grace Church.

Spatt: The row houses on Fourth Avenue?

Dziedzic: By Grace Church.

Spatt: By where?

Dziedzic: Grace Church?

Spatt: Oh yeah, that I know.

Dziedzic: So those are the two things that we should talk about before—

Spatt: Yeah, it was very hard, it was like the seaport. Do you go back and do a copy? A reproduction? Or do you do something that's in terms of the present day? It was a very hard decision, it was just not I. My commissioners participated, every decision. You know, sometimes we disagreed, I disagreed with them. But I listened to them, and they participated in decision-making. So did the staff. It was a very hard decision, and the same thing with the seaport. Do you put in a modern building, or do you put in a reproduction as a sort of phony. And I think everybody was involved in that. Jesus, I can't remember his name, the head of preservationists, at, it'll come, at Columbia [James Marston Fitch]. I think he was for a modern. I don't know. The big fight was over do you do a reproduction, because the original's not there, or do you do something different. That's the big question that preservation always has. And, with that, that was the question with that. And we finally went to a different one, to a different kind of a house.

Dziedzic: And, but Harmon had approved this more modern kind of design, is that right?

[01:30:05]

Spatt: Who had approved? We did.

Dziedzic: Harmon. The first time around.

Spatt: Oh, no, Harmon was there—Harmon wasn't there then. Harmon was very gracious. He, when I was appointed, he asked me to come to a meeting, and he introduced me, and he said—

we had both been on City Planning, and I liked him; you know, I made socks for him. And he was good. And he introduced me, and he said some nice things about me, you know, about my background, and then he left. And then I ran the meeting. [laughs] But thanks to the League of Women Voters, I knew how to run meetings. Harmon was there for the destruction—what had happened. He wasn't there when we did that.

Dziedzic: That's right, he wasn't there for, in 1971.

Spatt: He was there in [19]71?

Dziedzic: I think so, right? You were there [19]74 through [19]78.

Spatt: Oh, yeah. I'm thinking of City Planning. Yeah, I guess so. But he wasn't there when we had the problem.

Dziedzic: But for the re-do.

Spatt: Yeah, redoing.

Dziedzic: Right.

Spatt: I'm sorry.

Dziedzic: That's ok.

Spatt: Grace Church. Grace Church was very difficult. I didn't believe—I had one experience where I made a terrible mistake, it was in the beginning, with Steinway Houses in Queens. We wanted to designate them, and, but we didn't discuss it with the people. We never went there, to tell them, and we lost at the Board of Estimate, and I think we were right in losing. And from then on—for instance, that thing I gave you about this, the East New York? [Indicates a survey document for a proposed historic district.] Yeah, from then on, when we were going to designate, we went into the community first.

First of all, the staff did studies: demographic studies, economic studies, social studies, architectural studies, they did all sorts of studies. We had census figures, everything. I'm a planner. And we did complete—Walter Thabit was really the head of it—and we did complete studies. And Eddie Friedman was involved. Eddie, they both came from City Planning,

incidentally. They both were planners. And from then on, before we did anything, we went into the community, and first we did the studies, to see whether it was even eligible to be designated. And we would also want to know whether they could afford, what the makeup of the neighborhood was. And we then did this, the survey group did these, they were very good. And we gave it to the community, and then we had a meeting, with the community. They had copies of these. We had meeting, we invited real estate people, business people, everybody who was concerned with the community. And several of our commissions and my staff, Margaret and Alan went with me, and we spoke with them. This was in the evening. And we did this with every community. Every survey that we did.

Dziedzic: And so the residents were able to—

Spatt: Understand.

Dziedzic: Understand, and—

Spatt: In fact, when they saw this—we also put pictures up, they said, “Oh, that’s my house!” Yes, they understood it. And I also felt that the banks, and the real estate people, they had to be involved. It was better for them!

Dziedzic: And were there any cases where the residents would argue that they didn’t want designation?

Spatt: The surveys, those that we designated, they wanted. Yeah, they liked their neighborhood, you know, and we showed them what it was, and why, and yes. And then when it came to the City Planning—was it the City Planning or the Board of Estimate?—we had a whole group behind us. Unlike Steinway Houses. So, that was one thing. I made a mistake, and, you know, from then on I did differently.

I was also worried about people who are immigrants who live in a neighborhood, and their idea of architecture is not necessarily what the American idea of architecture is. They might want the house to look different. And this always worried me. I didn’t solve the problem, but it always worried me.

Dziedzic: So you were worried that there would be some demolition of things that were very precious to New York City architecture? [01:35:05]

Spatt: Well, you know, it's a difficult problem. And I think it's—now, people who oppose designation don't oppose it for that reason. Most of them are not immigrants. Of course, originally, the Landmarks Commission belonged to a small group of people: the Manhattan people, who were powerful, totally out of proportion to their numbers. That's till I came in. Actually, some of that group never liked me. In fact, MAS, when they, Gene Norman, who I'm friendly with, when Gene became chairman, and they had a party for him—they didn't have a party for me—they had a luncheon, and Kent put me on a table in the hallway. I've never been—I mean, it's like Otis Pearsall said to me, Otis said, you know, “How did you get to be chairman?” You know, they, they knew me from City Planning, and they knew I believed in the public good. And, why, I don't know how to explain it.

Dziedzic: Mmhmm.

Spatt: It's—

Dziedzic: You had different credentials from the other people that were on these commissions, and their credentials sometimes were just being wealthy, or—

Spatt: Well, there were other people on the commission that I inherited from Harmon very good. And they went along. They were for the—they really were preservationists, so there was no problem.

Grace Church, which you asked about, Grace Church had a big problem. Half the group wanted to build new, and half the group wanted to preserve. And the minister, or whatever he might be called, was involved in this. And I don't remember which side he was on, but it was terrible for him. And Whitney North Seymour, Sr.—and, you know, I didn't know these people, but I must have called Whitney and discussed it with him. I knew what the problem was, and it was a very serious problem. And this was a church! You know, not for profit. And we talked about it, and we had a lot of meetings, and we finally decided, I said, “Whitney, if you're going to”—they didn't bring a, they didn't sue us—I said, “If you're gonna designate it, you tell me.” [phone rings] Just take it and hang up.

Dziedzic: Oh, you're still connected to the recorder, so— [laughs]

Spatt: I'll let it go—is that for you?

Dziedzic: No, it's not for me.

Spatt: I said, “If you're gonna designate it”—because it was a big fight, it was a destructive fight. I don't know if you know that. The two sides were just up in arms. And Whitney was for preservation, but he was also a church member—he was probably on the whatever. And I said, “If you're gonna designate it, let me know immediately.” I mean, “If you're going to re-do it, let me know immediately, and I will designate it.” We made a gentlemen's agreement, if I may call it that, though a gentlemen's agreement doesn't refer to that. But we made a gentlemen's agreement. I felt better. You know, I—we would designate it, but they were having such a hard time. And they needed to—you know, this went on. And I knew that, you know, we would designate it, because I have the power to designate but I didn't want to cause more problems. I didn't want us to be sued again. I always worried about our law. It's a very difficult law. And I'm—Dorothy and I, Dorothy Miner, it's very important. Dorothy and I are always very worried about the law: you don't do anything that's gonna hurt your law. And we agreed, and I trusted him, and he trusted me. And we designated it.

Dziedzic: And so by that you mean setting a precedent.

Spatt: And by that what?

Dziedzic: Respecting the law meant that you didn't want to set a precedent—

Spatt: Yeah, and I did the same thing with Rockefeller Center. I didn't get any credit for it, everybody else gets it, but we—what was his name—Alton Marshall was the head of Rockefeller Center, and we talked, and I said, “Alton, if you're going to change Radio City Music Hall”—the inside—I said, “I want to know.” And some people were unhappy with me because I didn't immediately designate it. But one day he called me up and he said, “Beverly, we're going to change it.” At that point, I had a hearing, and we designated it. So, we preserved, but at the same time, when I was raising money, I didn't ask Rockefeller Brothers, but they gave me money to

do a study. You don't antagonize, but you keep—you do what's right in terms of preservation, but you don't just [makes sweeping sound]—you get what I'm saying? [01:40:48]

Dziedzic: Yes.

Spatt: It's very important.

Dziedzic: So you're saying that it's important to be selective.

Spatt: Well, and I think preservation wins in terms of that. Wins in terms of—after me it wins in terms of, that you're not trying to just uproot, and you're listening to people. I didn't have any trouble with Alton after that. And the same thing with the warehouse, Brooklyn Heights. The warehouse, the designation of the historic district.

Dziedzic: The Navy Yard?

Spatt: No, not the Navy Yard, the waterfront, with the warehouses.

Dziedzic: Oh, uh-huh.

Spatt: I wanted to designate that. And it should be designated, the warehouse, and the area. And actually, this is an aside, my husband's family owned the warehouses. But like my father, they never pushed me. I was very fortunate. They never pushed me, in terms of it, not to designate. And they—Con Edison was on the other side of it, and I communicated with them, and we established a relationship. Somebody—maybe it was the PR person, or a lawyer, somebody—we established a relationship. And they were very helpful. [01:42:29]

[OMITTED] [01:43:48]

Dziedzic: Well this, this is in line with what you were, you know, when you were at Landmarks, you had a team of professionals. You really kind of were in dialogue with other organizations in the city. This to me sounds like it's an extension of that, that you were also in dialogue with some, you know, private companies and—

Spatt: Yeah, we—

Dziedzic: —and individuals, and it was part of this open door policy. Is that, am I understanding correctly?

Spatt: Yeah, in fact, I think I spoke at someplace—I don't know which it was, I think it was the ballrooms in one of the hotels. I spoke for the real estate person. So I felt it should be done, whatever he was doing; I don't remember. So, yeah, it was—but the mayor [Lindsay] hated me. I mean, he didn't hate me. On the other hand, and this is for the record, when the mayor wanted to be reelected, they called me. And he called me in, and I went in. **[01:44:50]**

[OMITTED] [01:46:06]

Spatt: Getting back to the record, I never supported him. I felt, it had nothing to do with preservation; he really ruined our financial situation. You don't want to hear about that, but I got very close with what is called Citizen Budget Commission, not because I was for—John Leavans was the head of it—and the whole staff was young professionals, and we got very close, we used to go out to lunch together—I paid my own way, always, I learned that from my father—but I was very much against Lindsay's—he used our capital budget, City Planning, for operational things. You know the difference between operational budget and capital budget? He used us for everyday things. And I dissented on them. So Citizen Budget became my allies, and they became very friendly with me. They weren't involved in preservation, and they weren't involved in planning, but they were involved in finance. And I was, you know, capital budget is different, because we had to pay twice as much if they used us for operation. You had to pay the debt! So, it was an interesting life. [laughter] **[01:47:26]**

Dziedzic: But then, Beame was mayor when you were in Landmarks.

Spatt: Beame wasn't mayor—well, when—but Beame then appointed me afterwards. But, I'll tell you, it was hard in between getting a job. Ed Logue. I don't know if you ever heard of Ed Logue, he was really head of Boston Redevelopment, but he did the preservation. Boston's beautiful. Has height limitations. And I went to Ed. I knew him, and—well, I didn't know him, but I knew of him—and I spent a lot of time with him. He said, “Beverly, I'd love to hire you.” And he said, “You know, I'm a planner, too,” and he showed me his reports, and he wasn't a planner, but he was, he did a great job in Boston. And he showed, he said, “I'd love to hire you,”

he said, “but I can’t.” He said, “I have to deal with the mayor.” I had a hard time. I didn’t go to real estate to get a job; I went to those kinds of places to get a job. But I couldn’t get it, because they had a deal with the mayor. This is after City Planning.

Dziedzic: Ah, ok.

Spatt: It was very hard.

Dziedzic: Wow.

Spatt: After Landmarks, well, I went to work for the Bishop, because I heard him—I was a little, not depressed, but it was hard, and we had a country home. Actually, it was my father’s place, and we three girls, we had houses on it, and I got up early—I guess I couldn’t sleep—and I switched the television to a debate between Romney’s father, who was head of Housing and Development in federal government, and Bishop Sullivan. I don’t know who the hell he was. You can eliminate my language. And the Bishop was running rings around him. Actually, probably at the time he was for—you know, he was in charge of housing and everything but the Bishop was for, really for the public good. Low-income housing, equality, everything. And after I heard him—I didn’t have a job, this was after I refused the governor, and I said to myself, “Gee, I’d like to work for him.”

So I went to someone who was sort of a protégé of my father’s at the law firm. He was the first Brooklyn College law student who got a job at this prestigious law firm; my father hired him. He became a partner, eventually. So he was a partner, my father was gone, and I went to Mr. Merriam and I said, “You know”—I knew he was a good Catholic, and I said, “You know Bishop Sullivan?” He said yes. Because the Brooklyn Diocese was also the Brooklyn-Queens Diocese. I said, “I’d love to work for him.” So he asked him, but nothing happened, but I got an interview, and he thought I was, got a good brain [laughs]—nothing happened. He told me he didn’t have any money. The church is property rich. He said he didn’t have a budget, he didn’t have any money—he himself. And I didn’t hear from him in a long time, another year, and I went to Bill Shea, who was the Shea Field. I knew Bill through my father, and he, you know, he knew I wasn’t a kook.

Dziedzic: Mmhmm. [01:51:25]

Spatt: You know, I was a League of Women Voter, and actually I think I went to Bill Shea to get a job, to go to law school. I asked for some advice. He says, “Beverly, don’t go to law school. Nobody would ever hire you.” You know, I wouldn’t clock. They clock—you know lawyers clock? The time? If you spend an hour, they clock every minute? He said, “Nobody’s ever gonna hire you as a lawyer.” Anyway, that’s how I knew him, because I went to him for a job. To whether I should—advice, because he had been a friend of my father’s. [phone rings] Let’s see. And he—it wouldn’t be my children. I’ll just hang up then.

Dziedzic: Oh, sure. Watch out for your microphone.

Spatt: Hello? Today is Thursday. June, I’ll call you back. My sister has a memory problem.

Dziedzic: Oh.

Spatt: Anyway, I guess that’s how I knew him. So, I liked him, and I knew he was a good Catholic.

Dziedzic: Uh-oh, I think you’re twisted [fixes microphone].

Spatt: He was a real good Catholic.

Dziedzic: There we go.

Spatt: And he called the Bishop. And because nothing happened—but then I got another interview, and this is maybe a year or so later? [laughs] And he said he had no money. I said, “All right, I’ll work for free.” So, in the beginning, I worked for free. And then I went—and I was working very hard. I was doing his speeches, everything. And research. And I said to him, “You know my husband has to pay for my car fare, my subway fare.” He says, “I don’t have any money.” He says, “How much do you want?” So, like a dope—you could take out some of the language—like a dope, I was an adjunct assistant at Barnard—I haven’t talked about Barnard yet—I was really full time there. I had four courses, but I was not tenured or anything. And I was—they kept promoting me, and raising my salary, but I was still an adjunct, even though I worked several, four courses.

Dziedzic: Four courses a semester?

Spatt: Yeah, but I didn't, I was still an adjunct, ok? I'll tell you how I got to Barnard. And I, where am I?

Dziedzic: You're teaching at Barnard, you're making very little money, or working for free. And the Bishop asks you, "How much do you need?"

Spatt: Oh, yeah. So, I was making twenty-four thousand. They were very fair. They gave me exactly what people, you know, full time, supposedly. Not adjunct. So I figured, well, it's gonna be part time. I said twenty-four—uh, twelve thousand. I figured it was a part time job. So, for twenty-five years, that's all I got was twelve thousand dollars a year. No perks, no insurance, nothing. But that's ok. It was a great job. He was very bright; he actually had his master's in public service. And he was more liberal than I.

I don't know whether you know, people think the Catholic Church is monolithic—it's not. He was very, he was more liberal than I. He was also for the public good. When the federal government passed the welfare bill, which Clinton did, the church was the only people who spoke out against it. Moynihan spoke out against it. You know, they do come out on immigration, on poverty, things like that. And I never had to work for abortion or any of those things. He never asked me. And I don't think he did work on that. But all the issues that he worked on were very important issues. I think I did more planning there than I did at City Planning Commission. And I had him to run the problems. He was the front man. So if anybody didn't like anything, they could talk to the Bishop. Not to me. And they don't talk to the Bishop.
[01:55:48]

Dziedzic: I see.

Spatt: So he wasn't a dissenter in that sense.

Dziedzic: Mmhmm, mmhmm.

Spatt: It was a great job. Really. Barnard, I had taught at lunchtime. City Planning was supposed to be a part time job, and it paid part time. Fifteen thousand. And therefore I was allowed to teach, because it was part time, except I worked full time. [Dziedzic laughs] So the head of the geography department must have read about me. He called me up and asked if I'd like to work at Barnard. And I couldn't make my mind up because I was teaching a course at the New School. It

was a course for people—retired, or seniors, or something—it was a seminar on planning. I got them all the jobs afterwards, and—because I had an intern, etcetera. And I couldn't make up my mind. I'd have to leave New School, which was part time, and I went for my interview, and they said they don't want me yapping, what's the word people use, just talking?

Dziedzic: Mmhmm.

Spatt: They wanted professionalism. I said, "I don't yap." [Dziedzic laughs] And anyway, they hired me. But I didn't ask for the job. They hired me, and I worked there until they closed our department. And luckily, since Landmarks was a part time job, though I worked full time, I was able to take two hours off during the day and go to Barnard. My lunch hour.

Dziedzic: That's a lot of jobs! [01:57:37]

[OMITTED] [01:59:05]

Spatt: When I dissented on the master plan, which caused me a lot of trouble, the Regional Planners' Association had a big meeting on the master plan, but of course they didn't invite me to speak, and the head of the master plan, the head of regional plans, said to me—I didn't really know him. He called me, he said, "Beverly, if you would do your report, we will put it on a table outside." And everybody was on the panel, Don Elliot, all the establishment people except me. I had dissented, and my dissent was in the *Times*, and everything like that.

Anyway, so I, you know, you make friends. One of the priests who was active in South Brooklyn, and they were involved in City Planning, and we got close. And he knew who I was—you know, I talked with him. And he said he would have it printed and published, if I wrote it. And he did it. Believe it or not. He didn't charge me. And I had a thousand of these, and my husband and my children, we sat on the living room floor, and we collated it. And we brought it in his car, in fact the car practically collapsed, because a thousand of these things were in the back, and we brought it there, and then after the meeting—he told them at the meeting, that there was my dissent. Very good of him, really. He didn't have to. He was an establishment, he didn't have to—I guess he believed it. And he told them all, and they rushed like crazy. I think I made a speech once, like people at a wedding party, after the wedding, they rush to get the appetizers and things? But I, it was, Eddie Friedman gave me the words. I'm not good on these aphorisms.

But Eddie had given me certain words, and that's what it was like. They rushed like crazy, and they all got the speech. This. Here. [Indicates copy of dissent] [02:01:21]

Dziedzic: Thank you.

Spatt: That's on the record.

Dziedzic: Yeah. And this was well received?

Spatt: If you think anything is wrong, you know, you could take it off.

Dziedzic: Mmhmm. Yeah, I haven't read this.

Spatt: You never read the dissent?

Dziedzic: No, I never read this dissent—

Spatt: Really.

Dziedzic: —but I knew that you had dissented.

Spatt: Well, you know, they came out with a book, the master plan. They came out with big things, maps and everything, then they came out with a master plan book. My dissent was in the back, they did. But no one signed it. They didn't have the names of the people, because no one wanted to sign it. But they didn't want to compose it. No one signed it, it just had the commission, the City Planning Commission. I forget what it had. You could look it up someplace. But it also had my dissent in the back.³ [02:02:19]

[OMITTED] [02:02:47]

Spatt: But it was very good of the printers. You know, if you do good for the people, and you believe in something, people trust you. You know, I didn't know the printing people.

Dziedzic: Mmhmm.

³ The printer called me and alerted me that the dissent copy was all mixed up.

Spatt: Though I had opposed—and one of the other commissioners did too, in City Planning, I had opposed the rezoning of Broadway where all the printing was, and that they were gonna chase printing out, which they did. We chased printing out. We chased manufacturing out.

Dziedzic: Yeah, and—

Spatt: That's on the record.

Dziedzic: —and we're chasing low-income people, medium income, out, too. There's so much continuity—

Spatt: What time is it?

Dziedzic: Oh, it's seven thirty.

Spatt: Oh Jesus, you have to go.

Dziedzic: [laughs] Well, I was gonna say, there's so much continuity with—

Spatt: Are there any other questions?

Dziedzic: Yeah, I see so much—

Spatt: I use this thing—“Selling Zoning” [indicates article]—I used this for all my other speeches. In other words, I've used this for the zoning for, I think it was for Vanderbilt Avenue, Vanderbilt Corridor—I used, I prefaced it with this. In other words, it was the first thing on zoning. Though there were professional people who wrote books on it, but nobody in the city. And Midtown East plan, I used this for, I used this, as an example. So, it was, you know, for me it was the start of the thing, I mean Mess of Pottage⁴. You know what the mess of pottage is, from the bible?

Dziedzic: No.

⁴ I called my Third Avenue–St. Marks dissent “A Mess of Pottage” because the city was selling zoning for \$18/foot.

Spatt: Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Jacob was not the first son, and, but he gave his brother—who was his brother? Ishmael—he gave his brother cereal so he would go for his father’s blessing. So his father, who was half-blind, Isaac—touched him, and thought it was his first son, Ishmael, and he gave him the blessing. And the Jewish—if you call it a race, or what—was founded by Jacob. And it was a mess of pottage that he gave to Ishmael. I knew my bible. [02:05:33]

Dziedzic: Mmhmm!

Spatt: Also had taken classes on the bible at NYU. I knew my bible. Anyway, this is another one that gives you a felling of who I am. “The Public Square is No Longer Meaningful” [indicates article]. I sent it to *The New York Times*, I’m always sending them an op-ed. They refused it. The person’s who’s head of Landmark Conservancy thought it was very good; she sent it to *The Wall Street Journal*, but they didn’t print it either. But I didn’t, I should have sent it around to the preservationists, but I didn’t do that. But I’m giving it to you so you get a feeling. It’s very—it probably was too academic. I went back to Greece—how Greece, the public sphere started, and I quoted somebody who wrote a book on the public sphere. You know, the public sphere started in Greece. Do you know that? Yeah. And inclusiveness, and everything like that. And then, there was somebody, his name is in there, who wrote a book on it. And actually it began in England. They started, you know, the pubs and everything, people were involved. But we weren’t. We were a certain amount here. And I guess we were in America, the early days. Massachusetts, you know, in some of the early colonies—I don’t think in New York City—they had meetings.

Dziedzic: Well, I wanted to ask you about, you know, is there anything—

Spatt: Do you want something to eat?

Dziedzic: Oh, I’m ok, I’m ok.

Spatt: I have hummus and crackers.

Dziedzic: Oh, I’m fine, actually; I had a late lunch.

Spatt: You want some crackers?

Dziedzic: I’ll eat some of those, I think, when we’re done.

Spatt: I'm put them in a bag for you, too, when you go; you can eat them on your way.

Dziedzic: [Laughs] Oh, thank you! I wanted to ask if there was anything that you were, you know, fighting for or dissenting when you were involved with the City Planning Commission or the Landmarks Preservation Commission, that you feel that you don't have to fight for anymore. Is there anything that you were—

Spatt: No, I think that what I did, I opened it to the public people. Till then, especially in preservation, preservation was run by a small, elite group in Manhattan. As I said, you know, with power out of proportion with their numbers. And I opened it up to the people. Now, I'm sure they were unhappy with me, those early people. It's, you know, Kent Barwick is one of them, but he, and he was a preservationist. He did a good job, but he was part of them. It's like Lindsay once said in a hearing, "even if you have to go to Brooklyn"—he was talking about the, something in Brooklyn—"even if you have to go to Brooklyn". This was there, do you know what I'm saying? The outer boroughs were totally insignificant. And—

Dziedzic: I think that's—that has changed. That's one thing that has changed.

Spatt: That has changed, and I think that's the one thing I accomplished. I opened up the boroughs, the government, City Planning and preservation, or by the time I got to historic preservation, they knew that I was opening it up, and they were all welcome, but I think that's what City Planning—that's probably why the others took me up. I mean, the *The New York Times* called me a maverick. You know, off the record, what the hell is this person doing? You don't do this!

But I think, I don't know if this is off the record or on the record, finding the security from my parents, and the love they gave me, following the security they gave me.⁵ [02:09:33]

⁵ The following are portions from a redacted section of the audio recording that Beverly Moss Spatt wishes to retain in the transcript: "But I did have it all my life, because, I was loved, and they didn't tell me what to do, they never told me what to do, I did whatever I wanted...I think that probably has something to do with it. And then, going to Pembroke, where we were allowed to express ourselves...And I was on the honors list, and I'd go to lunch with the dean. So, you know, women were important."

[OMITTED] [02:10:58]

Dziedzic: And you were able to speak your opinions, and encouraged.

Spatt: Women were important. It's something that's passed on, and I think I got it from my parents, too. That women were important, but that, you know, they never told me what to do. Luckily, I didn't make too many mistakes. [laughter]

Dziedzic: Well, I mean, I think—do you think that how you opened up these commissions, has that stayed? Are they still—

Spatt: I think that's the one thing I contributed, that I opened it up to the community people. Till then, it was a closed thing. And also with historic preservation. **[02:11:40]**

[OMITTED] [02:12:01]

Spatt: Yeah, they could tell me—I would talk to them, they could come talk to my staff. They didn't have to have permission to talk to the staff. They'd call and make an appointment, and my staff all knew. I had a great staff. I inherited it from Harmon. Harmon was a great person, but he wasn't an outspoken person like me. But he was a great person. **[02:12:26]**

[OMITTED] [02:13:07]

Dziedzic: Right. Well, just to wrap up, I don't want to keep you longer—

Spatt: No, you could keep me as long as you want, it's you who'll have problems.

Dziedzic: Oh, thank you. Well, I guess, are there any other, any other issues that you dealt with that had to do with Greenwich Village or the East Village or NoHo that we haven't talked about? That I didn't come across in—

Spatt: No, except I think it's very important to work with, establish relationships. Like I had with Citizen Budget Commission. Some of the people [real estate and politicians] hated me. In fact, I dedicated my book to John Leavens. Not to my husband. I feel a little badly—everybody dedicates to their wives, or their children; I dedicated to John Leavens. Because he, emotionally, the Citizen Budget, the staff was very good. They all supported me emotionally. In other words, I

wasn't a kook to them. And that was because of the capital budget, things like that. And, you know, I, they agreed with me on those things. So it was nice to have, I mean, it was difficult for me on City Planning. What am I gonna say—oh, the Planning staff supported me.

Dziedzic: Mmhmm.

Spatt: Staff was wonderful to me. When I had to write my dissents, and I have a whole pile of dissents—and I loan them to people when they do books. I don't get much credit, but I feel it's important. Anyhow, it's, you know, I get involved with this thing. You're bringing back memories that are, some of them, you know, are difficult for me. But, it was a hard time.

Dziedzic: Well I can see why having the support where you had it was—

Spatt: It was very important.

Dziedzic: —special. [02:14:55]

Spatt: It's important to have, and I didn't especially establish those relationships. But it's very important to establish relationships with people, or other agencies, or the federal government, or—the federal government wanted to run a highway through Ocean Parkway—this is on the record—and we don't want them to, because Ocean Parkway really, well, we're designating it. But I knew about the Transportation Act, that they had to be concerned with what was preservation. And down came two people from—I don't remember which department, all I remember is tall men, two tall men. You know, you have the feeling they're the Secret Service? What they look like. And there I was, and Adele and I and Margaret Tuff and Alan, and we told them they couldn't do it. And they didn't.

So, it's very important to communicate, to know things, and to inter-relate. Like they, we designated First Houses, but I.D. Robbins and I had gotten friendly then. He was head of public housing, so he didn't object. First Houses was the first—First Houses we designated. So, you know, that's it. [02:16:31]

[OMITTED] [02:24:19]

Dziedzic: Mmhhh, yeah. I mean, it sounds like you were hoping to vocalize some of the opposition to the powers that be, to the mayor, to the, you know, the people that were making these decisions about the city, you were vocalizing some of the people's dissents in your—

Spatt: I didn't have a problem with Beame because—I don't know, maybe because I was a woman, he never opposed anything. He never, I appointed my own commissioners, which they don't do now. The mayor appoints the commissioners. I recommended someone to the present commission who was great, but he never—he was interviewed four times, he never got it. Interviewed by the mayor's people, by Landmarks, never got it. The mayor appoints. But I appointed all my own people. And Beame was very good that way. He never interfered with anything I did, and he went and appealed, you know, Grand Central. Even though he doesn't get any credit for it, we don't either.

Yeah, it's—politics is very complex. And it's very difficult. You have to be, I guess, I wasn't—I'm too introverted, and that's probably why I got so overloaded. Some people could go through for twenty-five, thirty years and, you know, even though there were people who liked me, like *The New York Times*, and the community people, it was too much. Everyone had a piece of me. [02:25:57]

Dziedzic: Yeah, some people really feed on that feeling of being in the public eye, and other people, I think, feel it takes away.

Spatt: Well, how did I do it, I was a good actress. I did what I had to do. Interesting, huh?

Dziedzic: Well, it was, it seems like you may have had to act when you were in public, but what you were doing behind the scenes was truly what you felt was important. You know, your dissents weren't part of the—

Spatt: Yeah. I didn't consciously think about, you know, my own personal self. It's only later that I realized that my whole life I've been, I'm an introvert, I'm an outsider. I was an Existentialist in the, well—you can put this on the record, I don't care. During the '60s and '70s, the Existentialists, you weren't born then, but Camus, and Colin Wilson. I've given away most of my books, but I've kept a lot of the Existentialists. They were very important to me. Life was absurd. And the only thing that you could do is, Camus, in the *The Plague* and other of his

books—I don't know if you read them—is be true to yourself. Because otherwise it's absurd. I don't mean nonsense, but it's absurd. And the only thing—and that's the way that the Existentialists were very important to me at that time. They really were very supportive to me. Not personally, but their writings. Which is very interesting. Anyway, here's a book. If you read it, maybe return it to me.

Dziedzic: Yes. Yes, yes.

Spatt: Ok?

Dziedzic: Well I think that—

Spatt: No hurry.

Dziedzic: Ok.

Spatt: No hurry.

Dziedzic: I think that to be true to yourself is maybe a good place for us to end tonight.

Spatt: Ok. Would you like something to drink, and I'll put these in a bag for you? [02:28:03]

[END OF INTERVIEW]