

Jack Lenor Larsen Oral History Project: Interview with Paul Gedeohn

Stephanie Zollinger: It's May 20, 2009, and I'm here with Paul Gedeohn. Paul was a fabric designer with the Larsen Design Studio. We're going to start, Paul, by asking you to talk about your years at Cranbrook and your interaction there with Jack and, if you have any stories to tell us, we'd love to hear them.

Paul Gedeohn: Well, I was at Cranbrook before Jack came. I started there in 1950. I was there in 1950, '51, and '52. Then in '53, since I wanted to get a degree, I went back to Rochester, New York. I went to the university there for one year to get the academic credits. You had to have English and certain other things. You couldn't get a Bachelor's degree without that. Then I went back to Cranbrook at the end of 1953 and the beginning of 1954. I'm not sure when Jack was there. In the beginning I didn't really know him very well. I had friends in the Weaving Department and that's how I got connected.

Stephanie Zollinger: So your paths really never crossed when you were at Cranbrook?

Paul Gedeohn: Very little. At the time I was involved with people who were in the Weaving Department. Jeanne McIntyre and Ruben Eshkanian were two of my very best friends. I was often in the studio sitting around as they were weaving, so that was the connection. But as far as Jack goes, no, I really didn't know him that well. I couldn't tell you any stories that would connect to Jack, actually.

Stephanie Zollinger: Prior to arriving at Cranbrook, when you were growing up, did you know that you wanted to become a painter?

Paul Gedeohn: I knew I wanted to be a painter by the time I was in the eighth grade. I went to Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT) when I graduated from high school, which was more commercial. It was geared towards commercial art. I went there for three years and I loved it. One of the teachers had gone to Cranbrook over one summer. She said she thought that I was very good and that I should go to Cranbrook. She's the one that got me connected to Cranbrook. I didn't know about it otherwise.

I worked for a year after I graduated from RIT. I did fashion illustration for a department store to save up money so I could go to Cranbrook. I went to Cranbrook in 1950.

Stephanie Zollinger: Were your parents involved in the arts at all?

Paul Gedeohn: Not really. My father was an engineer. My mother was artistic. She made hats before she got married so she had an artistic nature, but I just stumbled into it. I just liked it. I started early in my grade school copying out Mickey Mouse and things like that.

Stephanie Zollinger: So you were always drawing?

Paul Gedeohn: I always loved to draw. RIT got me much further into that but Cranbrook really steered me into fine art.

Stephanie Zollinger: So you went to Cranbrook then you went on to Rochester to finish up your degree requirements?

Paul Gedeohn: Yes. Then I came back in 1954.

Stephanie Zollinger: Came back to New York?

Paul Gedeohn: No, I came back to Cranbrook because you had to get the academic credits. Then you could return to Cranbrook. I went for one semester. That would be the end of 1953 and the beginning of '54, until the spring of '54. That's when I graduated and then the army got me.

Stephanie Zollinger: So you were in the army then?

Paul Gedeohn: They were drafting people back in those days. Luckily there were no wars at that time, it was between wars, but they still drafted. The minute I got my Bachelor's degree they drafted me.

Stephanie Zollinger: And so where did you go?

Paul Gedeohn: I went to Germany, to Heidelberg, which had been the headquarters for the Germans, the Nazis. The United States took over all their buildings and that was their headquarters in Europe. I worked there. They taught me how to type as I didn't know how to type. I was there for two years. I typed on IBM machines. I typed coded messages about what was going on, where the Russian movements were, not that I knew what I was doing, it was all in code, but that's what I did.

Stephanie Zollinger: So you did that for two years and then?

Paul Gedeohn: I came back. Then I decided to go back to Cranbrook to get my Master's. I went back in 1956. I went for a year. With the painting that I did and the show they gave me a Master's degree at the end of that year.

Stephanie Zollinger: Wonderful.

Paul Gedeohn: So that brings me up to 1957. Now, Jack, by that time had already gone to New York and established his company. I think it was mostly weaving in the beginning. I think he established it in 1955 but I'm not sure of the date. You could probably check.

Stephanie Zollinger: Yes, I think it was a little bit earlier. I have it in my records somewhere. I think it was in the early '50s.

Paul Gedeohn: Then he just developed. He got much more renowned in a few years. He became quite well-known.

Stephanie Zollinger: He was lucky to get some good commissions, wasn't he?

Paul Gedeohn: Yes. He somehow met a lot of wealthy women who loved and wanted to learn weaving and they backed him. That's where he got most of his money but I really don't know the history. You could probably get it from somewhere else.

Stephanie Zollinger: Actually I'm going to visit with him tomorrow so I'll find out.

Paul Gedeohn: Really? He's mostly out in East Hampton, isn't he?

Stephanie Zollinger: He is, but tomorrow he'll be in the city, in his apartment.

Paul Gedeohn: I see. He still has an apartment?

Stephanie Zollinger: Yes.

Paul Gedeohn: I didn't even know that. I knew he had one and it was in this vicinity. It's probably changed.

Stephanie Zollinger: His is down on Park Avenue.

Paul Gedeohn: Yes, he's changed it. Now, where were we?

Stephanie Zollinger: So, when you finished your Master's degree, did you contact Jack?

Paul Gedeohn: No. One of my very best friends, Jeanne McIntyre, was working for Jack in New York. She was mostly a weaver, but she did some art. Larsen was only just beginning to get into printed textiles. I think they bought two designs in those early days. I got here in New York, as I said, in 1957. I worked for a short while. Then I went on unemployment to paint. Jeanne left for San Francisco or Los Angeles, I'm not sure which, in 1960. That's when Jack hired me. It was only through my connection with Jeanne McIntyre, who was working at Larsen, that I became a fabric designer. I minored in printing at Cranbrook but my major was basically painting.

Stephanie Zollinger: So you knew the vocabulary, you knew what it was about?

Paul Gedeohn: Yes, but I had to learn a lot.

Stephanie Zollinger: Right.

Paul Gedeohn: I just learned on my own more or less. Jack, of course, could tell me what was going on but he couldn't really show me because, as I say, he was basically a weaver. He was not an artist.

Stephanie Zollinger: When you were hired, were you one of the first painters that he hired?

Paul Gedeohn: Yes. Jeanne was a weaver. When I got hired in 1960 they had purchased two designs from artists.

Stephanie Zollinger: Was it *Spice Garden*?

Paul Gedeohn: That was one. Ballatore is the one name.

Stephanie Zollinger: Tony Ballatore?

Paul Gedeohn: Tony Ballatore and there was another name in the beginning there.

Stephanie Zollinger: June Groff who created *Spice Garden*?

Paul Gedeohn: June came later. There was another person but I've forgotten his name. Anyway, it was Tony Ballatore and one other. They were the first painters that Jack hired and that he bought designs from. He bought several designs. Basically Jeanne McIntyre, although not really an artist, tried to color them, because once they had the design they had to transform it into a printed form, which had to repeat a design.

Stephanie Zollinger: So, when you say color, you're talking about the yarns? They had to choose the color of the yarns?

Paul Gedeohn: No. This was the beginning of the printed fabrics. The woven fabrics Jack knew all about. I was only involved as the head of the printed fabric. They had only begun to do that a few years before I arrived. As I said, they had two painters.

Stephanie Zollinger: When you talk about printed fabrics, are you talking about fabrics like *Primavera*?

Paul Gedeohn: Yes.

Stephanie Zollinger: The printed velvets?

Paul Gedeohn: Yes.

Stephanie Zollinger: *Caravan*?

Paul Gedeohn: Yes, those came later. I developed all of those. The first two were *Primavera* and I don't know the name of the other one now. There were two prints that had been purchased. Jeanne McIntyre worked with the printers to do those first designs but she really didn't have a background in painting because she was a weaver. So there was Jack, a weaver, and Jeanne McIntyre, a weaver. When I came in, since my background was painting, I was much more able to pick up that whole side, the printed fabrics.

Stephanie Zollinger: So you took an inspiration, maybe Gustav Klimt, that became the inspiration for *Primavera*?

Paul Gedeohn: Yes.

Stephanie Zollinger: Then you came up with the translation and the design?

Paul Gedeohn: Yes. The way this developed was that I would have a meeting with Jack in his office and the weaver would be there, too. He would say, "I have this concept of Gustav Klimt." I then had to go back,

look at all the sources, then I had to try to develop prints that would have that artwork.

Stephanie Zollinger: The artistic flair.

Paul Gedeohn: Yes, let's say that the period Art Deco was one of the first. Always, when we had a group of designs, both printed and woven, Jack would come up with a concept. We would have meetings and he would give us the whole concept. For example, there was the American Indian collection of much later.

Stephanie Zollinger: The Terra Nova Collection?

Paul Gedeohn: Yes. Jack did all the naming too, by the way. He was a weaver but he came up with the whole concept. He was behind it.

Stephanie Zollinger: Behind the scenes?

Paul Gedeohn: Yes, behind the scenes, and he had the concepts.

Stephanie Zollinger: The ideas?

Paul Gedeohn: Yes, the overall concept, which sold the whole group of designs. He worked with advertising. He worked with everyone. I only did the art. I did not have anything to do with advertising. That was all Jack.

Stephanie Zollinger: When he traveled would he come back with photos and say, "I want to create an Irish Awakening Collection, here are my photos, go and do it?"

Paul Gedeohn: Yes, you got it. He was really the promoter of the entire concept and then he oversaw the weaving. He was much more involved with the weaver because he knew about weaving. For me it was just the concept Jack was involved with. I would do the art and sketches. Jack would say, "Great. I like that idea" or, "No, this is not the way I want to conceive it." He guided it.

Stephanie Zollinger: Did you work with colorways or work with color development?

Paul Gedeohn: That came later. First, there was the original art, which would be designed so that it could be sent out. It had to be in repeat. First, I did sketches. Then I did the original art that had to work both in repeat this way and repeat that way.

Stephanie Zollinger: Vertically and horizontally?

Paul Gedeohn: Yes. Then that art went to the screen man and we got the original print. From there I had to then do colorways. You see, when they did the original print, the color range is right on the side of the fabric. I would work with the printers. I knew that number one was this color which was used in such and such places in the design, do you see?

Stephanie Zollinger: Yes.

Paul Gedeohn: I would go down through all the colors that were in the design and then I would translate them into a blue color range. I would then translate it so that we got three or four printed colorways.

Stephanie Zollinger: When you did your original art work, did the color that you use have to be exact with the color on the fabric?

Paul Gedeohn: Well, the first original piece of art I just painted it. I had no idea. I just painted a pretty picture. I got all the ideas and put them down in paint. I learned very early on that if my artwork spread all over the color range it was very difficult to try to do colorways. I learned that my artwork had to be within a certain color range. It could not range all over the place or I wouldn't be able to do any colorway. So I did all the artwork, both the design and one of the colors, say all yellows with some oranges, and then there might be an opposed color like oranges and blues. When that was done, I had to translate that into other colorways but it had to be a limited range or there was no way to do other colorways.

Stephanie Zollinger: At what point in this process did the colors that you worked with on paper have to match the color that ended up on the fabric?

Paul Gedeohn: In the very beginning I didn't really know all that. I just did a piece of artwork but very soon I learned that, if I was going to do any other colors, I had to do artwork that the printers could translate. It would be limited in colors. It could be just yellow, for example.

Stephanie Zollinger: So your yellow ocher would end up matching their yellow ocher?

Paul Gedeohn: Yes. They would then take my art and translate it into printed screens. They would do the first strike. They were called "strike offs." From there, I would take the strike off that was in the original colorway, say red. Often there was also an opposed color in the design, such as reds with some green.

Stephanie Zollinger: Complementary color schemes?

Paul Gedeohn: Yes, it could be. That's simplifying it but that's the idea. Then I would take the fabric back. The printer had made all these color bars on the side of the fabric that I would then translate. There would be the original color that they had interpreted. I now had all the colors and all the screens. It was complicated.

Stephanie Zollinger: Because every color had to have its own screen?

Paul Gedeohn: Its own screen, yes. If it was flowers it would start out with the pale color scheme first. Then they would go to the darker because that's the way they screen-printed. In America we did hand screening in the very beginning. Later it became mechanical and the colors would go on, boom, boom, boom, boom, so you had to lay down. The first screens had to be light so that the next screen, which was darker, could cover some of it but leave the rest. That's the way. Does that make sense? Am I explaining it well enough?

Stephanie Zollinger: Yes. So what happened if you went from a yellow? If you put a blue on top of a yellow would it ever turn green?

Paul Gedeohn: In parts, yes, but that was only when we did hand screen in the beginning because there was not enough drying time. When we got to printing, which is what most of the work is now, it didn't work like that. I don't know when we started printing. I would say by 1963 or '64 we weren't doing hand screening because you know how expensive that was.

Stephanie Zollinger: Time intensive.

Paul Gedeohn: Yes, with people actually screening it. No, that all disappeared.

Stephanie Zollinger: In terms of your company, did you help Jack? You were the first in America to print on cut velvet.

Paul Gedeohn: Yes, that was Jack's idea.

Stephanie Zollinger: Did you help him develop it with your background as a painter?

Paul Gedeohn: With the printer too. Yes, that was very innovative for Jack. He really got that started. Basically he was a gambler and a little bit crazy. He got ideas because nobody else would touch it. First of all, the dyes were not the same dyes for velvet.

Stephanie Zollinger: They didn't penetrate in the same way?

Paul Gedeohn: Not in the same way. I had to go to the printing plant and work with the men when we started printing velvets. It was a bit of a disaster in the beginning because we were feeling our way along. The fact is that the chemicals were different for velvet. As you said, they had to penetrate somewhat, while a cotton fabric just prints, sits on the surface. We had to really develop things with the printers who had not done this either.

Stephanie Zollinger: So what was the advantage of having a fabric made of cut velvet over that cotton fabric? Was it the lushness?

Paul Gedeohn: Yes. It was just the idea that you could do something new. In the beginning there were only cotton prints that were chintz mostly. He really started the whole concept of velvet prints and discharge prints, and people were slow to copy him but all those things are now so common.

Stephanie Zollinger: Are you to blame for the black velvet prints that we see on the street corners of Elvis?

Paul Gedeohn: No, that's totally different because, first of all, that's synthetic. These were real cotton velvets. They were meant for upholstery but I suppose they learned from us although the chemicals, as I said, were different to penetrate into velvet. You couldn't use the same thing.

Stephanie Zollinger: Right. I read that it took a couple of years to develop this technique to where you could finally use it and develop other lines like *Caravan*, another early fabric.

Paul Gedeohn: Yes, and here was another thing, when they printed velvet, the dyes didn't look like what they came as. They had to be processed so you would have a screaming green which turned out to be rose, do you see?

Stephanie Zollinger: Yes.

Paul Gedeohn: It was a whole chemical process that I had to learn.

Stephanie Zollinger: They oxidize differently or something?

Paul Gedeohn: Yes. I don't know how they chemically changed, all I know is what I had to do to get one.

Stephanie Zollinger: It went in green and it came out as something else?

Paul Gedeohn: Yes and then I knew what to do with it.

Stephanie Zollinger: Right.

Paul Gedeohn: It was a bit of a touch-and-go thing in the very beginning.

Stephanie Zollinger: Did you find this fun and challenging?

Paul Gedeohn: I loved it, all of it, I really did. I really enjoyed my job. I'm a painter and I love to come home and do paintings but this job really absorbed me because there was always a new problem to solve. It wasn't tediously just doing the same old thing over and over again.

Stephanie Zollinger: Did Jack give you lots of latitude?

Paul Gedeohn: Yes, he did.

Stephanie Zollinger: But ultimately he was the one that then approved your strike offs and your colorways?

Paul Gedeohn: Yes. We would get the first strike offs. First I did the artwork and he approved the artwork. Then it would be sent to the printer who would do screens of all the different colors. Then we would get a printout, a blotter it was called. It was on paper in the very first stage. I would analyze that. That would be for cotton as well as velvet. There were only certain printers that could print on cotton and velvet. Here's why, another point, a very big point, we had to go to Europe because America developed how to print fabric quickly but they did not have time to tinker around with it. All the experimentation was done in Europe because there was no American printer. They just threw up their hands and said, "No, we can't do this."

Stephanie Zollinger: How did you know where to go in Europe?

Paul Gedeohn: Jack went over to Europe and scouted it all out. We had a very good printer in Switzerland. We had two printers in Germany. We

had one printer in the north of Italy. What he scouted out, where this was coming from, was fashion. He found companies that were willing to work with us because, you see, the difference between printing for fashion, a dress, is that it didn't really have to match. It could be in the same category but there was a lot of leeway. This was not true if you were selling upholstery and the lady wanted to redo her couch with the same thing as the sample.

Stephanie Zollinger: I see.

Paul Gedeohn: You had to be very consistent. Jack did all of that. He scouted out printers and talked them into doing this, which was a little risky in the beginning because, as I say, the consistency was one of the difficulties. You had to be consistent if you were going to sell a sample to a woman in Arkansas. The fabric she gets has got to match the sample exactly. It can't just be close.

Stephanie Zollinger: Once he established that relationship, did you then work with these mills through the years?

Paul Gedeohn: Yes, in the beginning. Later I didn't really have to go there. There were two. Should I mention printers' names?

Stephanie Zollinger: Sure.

Paul Gedeohn: Heberlein is one of the big ones in Switzerland. In Germany we had several that were good. Switzerland was Heberlein and there was another one but I don't remember the name.

Stephanie Zollinger: I'm sure it's going to come to you.

Paul Gedeohn: Jack is going to give you that kind of information much better than I. A good thing to ask him about is the printing plants in Switzerland, Germany, and Italy, because I don't really remember as well. I went along with him but I didn't have to be concerned about those kinds of facts. Those are questions you definitely want to ask Jack.

Stephanie Zollinger: I will ask him.

Paul Gedeohn: We also had one printer in the north of England. Jack found this discharge printer. He wanted to do that because nobody had done discharge. Of course, now they do it all the time. I was sent to the north of England. It was so cold you cannot believe it.

Stephanie Zollinger: In the dead of winter?

Paul Gedeohn: It was sort of winter. I had everything on that I had, a pair of pants, a coat, a jacket, and I was still freezing. There were secretaries in little sweaters typing because they were used to it. It was a kind of damp cold that just went right through you. At any rate, we didn't continue. It lasted for a few years then we stopped doing discharge printing in the north of England. Again, I don't remember the name. Our best printers were the two in Switzerland, one in Germany, and a couple in the north of Italy that did really special things. Italy was known for fashion and did fashion printing so they weren't set up to do the kind of consistent printing quality that we needed.

Stephanie Zollinger: Did you work at all with the Larsen carpet line?

Paul Gedeohn: No, that was the weaver, whoever the weaver was at that time. I hope you're going to interview Mark Pollack? Is he on your list?

Stephanie Zollinger: He's on my list, yes.

Paul Gedeohn: He's very well-known at this time. Whether he has time or not I don't know but he would be able to give you information.

Stephanie Zollinger: So that fell under his jurisdiction?

Paul Gedeohn: That did. I did some coloring for the carpets, but that's about it. I just picked out swatches. Now the weaving also developed and got very much more complex. In the beginning, with Jeanne and Jack

there, it was fairly simplified. They had jacquard but, as the years went by, weaving really developed.

Stephanie Zollinger: You did some paintings or designs for the jacquards?

Paul Gedeohn: Sometimes. Once in a while I did a whole design but most of the time I did coloring for the weave. You see with jacquard, the little that I know about it, the computer was ideal for designing woven fabrics because they could be synchronized. Little by little weaving developed very far. We have gone a long way. Now there you've got to talk to Mark Pollack because, of course, he knows all about that.

Stephanie Zollinger: Does he do it all on the computer today?

Paul Gedeohn: I don't know but I do know that that's where all the jacquards and all those types of weaves started out in the beginning, through the idea of the computer. What it has advanced to on the weaving side, I have no idea.

Stephanie Zollinger: In terms of painting your cartoons and your designs, you worked mainly with watercolor and acrylics?

Paul Gedeohn: I worked with acrylics, yes. It was water-based but acrylics are much more consistent. Watercolor is a little too diluted. They're lovely washes but printers couldn't pick up that kind of thing. There had to be a color, not twenty different gradations, so I worked with acrylic.

Stephanie Zollinger: Was there ever a concept that was given to you by Jack that you took and you thought, "What am I going to do with this?"

Paul Gedeohn: Yes, many, many times because he would sit in those offices and come up with these grand schemes, the Irish Collection, for example. Then I would have to go back and somehow work out how I was going to do designs that related to this overall concept. He would then be like a promoter and work with advertising. He worked with everyone so,

when a whole group of fabrics came out each year, there was a whole big production. But I had to somehow come up with designs.

Stephanie Zollinger: I'm thinking about that collection, in terms of printed textiles, do you remember what you were responsible for?

Paul Gedeohn: I've got a bag of prints. It might help me to get them. Once we figured out how to do it, many, many companies copied us, yes.

Stephanie Zollinger: I'm sure that didn't set well with Jack.

Paul Gedeohn: I don't know. You'll find out tomorrow. <Laughs> I'm sure it didn't.

Stephanie Zollinger: Do you have a collection or a line that you've developed that you're most proud of?

Paul Gedeohn: I don't think so. I enjoyed all of them. I can't think of one particularly.

Stephanie Zollinger: You worked with Jack for close to 30 years?

Paul Gedeohn: Yes.

Stephanie Zollinger: During that time, did you ever think that you wanted to go out on your own and start your own company?

Paul Gedeohn: No, mainly because I really thought of myself as an artist and it was my paintings that I was interested in. What kept me there was I enjoyed the work very much. Although I was interested in the work I did it because it was fun to go there. I didn't want to advance myself in the fabric industry.

Stephanie Zollinger: You went home to paint?

Paul Gedeohn: I wanted to be an artist, which I never quite got to be. I was in the gallery for a while. It's a tough business.

Stephanie Zollinger: So your goal, when you started out, was, this is a steady job?

Paul Gedeohn: This is a job.

Stephanie Zollinger: I'll do this during the day.

Paul Gedeohn: Yes.

Stephanie Zollinger: I'll work on my art at night and maybe then transfer into the art world?

Paul Gedeohn: Yes.

Stephanie Zollinger: And leave textiles behind?

Paul Gedeohn: Absolutely. In the early days, around 1965, I was in the Stable Gallery and I showed. I had exhibitions there. Then it got tougher and tougher. Eleanor Ward owned the Stable Gallery and she wanted me to stay the same but I started changing. My paintings changed. She didn't want me to change. <Laughs> She was selling what I had done. She wanted me to continue doing pretty much what I was doing in 1965 and I refused to do that. I didn't have a gallery after that. It is very difficult in New York.

Stephanie Zollinger: Did your work evolve or change because you began to venture out and see different parts of the world? Do you think that had something to do with your painting style?

Paul Gedeohn: My painting style, how it evolved? That's a good question. One thing led to another, but I don't know quite how to tell you about it. It wasn't so much influences from outside. Of course, they must have entered in, as one painting would start, and it would lead me in a

slightly different direction for the next one. Somehow, little by little, I changed. That's a mystery to tell you the truth.

Stephanie Zollinger: Well, it certainly sounds like you led an exciting lifestyle.

Paul Gedeohn: I enjoyed it. I was sent abroad through those years, to Germany, and Switzerland, and Thailand.

Stephanie Zollinger: Were you there when Larsen had his show at the Louvre? Were you able to go?

Paul Gedeohn: I was there. I did go, yes.

Stephanie Zollinger: What about other innovations? I'm not sure if you were there at the time when he developed the stretch fabrics?

Paul Gedeohn: I didn't have anything to do with that. I remember he did have some prints. I didn't design those prints, either. The stretch fabrics were a separate project. Jack, of course, will know. He will also probably know where to direct you for that development. That was not anything to do with me.

Stephanie Zollinger: Did you have any involvement at all with the marketing or advertising departments?

Paul Gedeohn: I sat by my desk and I did my art. Jack was the genius at that.

Stephanie Zollinger: You said you also had an assistant?

Paul Gedeohn: Yes.

Stephanie Zollinger: What would that assistant do for you?

Paul Gedeohn: Often I would tell them to paint up the colorings, for instance, because we had to see if it would really work. I would have the main piece of art. Then I would pick out what I thought would be good colors to substitute for that to make a new colorway, to make a blue colorway or a gold colorway. Then my assistant would paint those up. We would look at it and see where the flaws were, whether we needed to change this or that. That's where my assistant came in.

Stephanie Zollinger: Over the years, were you the only painter on staff besides your assistant or were there other painters?

Paul Gedeohn: No, there weren't. I was the only one with whoever my assistant was. There was a weaver and the weaver usually had an assistant. Usually there were four people but I was the only one involved with the printed fabrics. I was, I guess, the head of the printing department.

Stephanie Zollinger: The genius behind the painting!

Paul Gedeohn: The painting department, yes.

Stephanie Zollinger: Just a few more questions. Could give us some stories or tell us some of your fondest memories from working in the studio?

Paul Gedeohn: That's a tough one because I enjoyed it. As I said, I went into work and I basically enjoyed every day. I sat back there and painted and designed.

Stephanie Zollinger: Was it an 8:00 to 5:00 job?

Paul Gedeohn: Yes, it was an 8:00 to 5:00 job, 9:00 to 5:00 actually.

Stephanie Zollinger: What about some of the parties I've heard about? Did you enjoy them?

Paul Gedeohn: Oh, yes, we loved our parties. First of all, the studio was a family.

Stephanie Zollinger: That's what I've been hearing.

Paul Gedeohn: Yes. We were a family, like Stephanie and people before her. I forget names.

Stephanie Zollinger: Stephanie Rothschild née Sallinger?

Paul Gedeohn: She was the one that ran the whole mechanism of the studio. So there was Stephanie, there were the weavers, my assistant, and me.

Stephanie Zollinger: Was Ellie there?

Paul Gedeohn: Ellie was, yes. Ellie was in advertising, but she was such a wonderful girl that she was friends with everybody. There were others who were like that.

Stephanie Zollinger: What about Win Anderson? Can you talk a bit about Win because she was another Cranbrook graduate?

Paul Gedeohn: Yes, she was. She was in the Weaving Department with Jack. I think the whole time they were at Cranbrook they were there together. I think she moved to New York. She was involved in the development of Larsen Fabrics but she was a weaver.

Stephanie Zollinger: Did she oversee any projects?

Paul Gedeohn: For quite a long while, until she got so sick with arthritis, she ran the whole studio, as Stephanie later did. She sat in on all the meetings. She knew exactly what was going on.

Stephanie Zollinger: Did she lead any of her own projects?

Paul Gedeohn: I wouldn't say so, no. Whatever Jack wanted, she did, but I don't think any of them were her ideas. She was just incredibly good at interpreting and supervising. She didn't have much to do with me.

Stephanie Zollinger: She had a weaving background?

Paul Gedeohn: She was a weaver, yes. She had much, much more to do with the Weaving Department, as did Stephanie. There were other people between Win and Stephanie who ran the studio. Win had terrible arthritis and had to have metal pins put in her arms and legs. It got to the point where she really had to leave and she retired. I don't know the date but you can get that from Jack.

Stephanie Zollinger: Yes. I've actually talked to Win a couple of times.

Paul Gedeohn: She was a great person, really. How is she now, I wonder?

Stephanie Zollinger: I think she's doing well. I've tried to make arrangements to go and visit her but I haven't been able to get her to say yes. I know she was involved with the wax batik method.

Paul Gedeohn: Oh, yes, she loved that idea. I did not have much to do with that.

Stephanie Zollinger: I think she and Jack bought the machine from some Hollywood starlet?

Paul Gedeohn: Yes, they did. Jack can tell you. Thank God, they kept me out of all that. It was very experimental. I think the fabrics were beautiful but they were not exactly commercial. I think Jack got a lot of advertising out of them but they were just not practical.

Stephanie Zollinger: For residential use.

Paul Gedeohn: Yes. Oh, they were beautiful and all that. I don't know how long that lasted. I would say four or five years.

Stephanie Zollinger: I think *Water Lilies* and a few others like *Conquistador* were made on the machine?

Paul Gedeohn: Yes, they were. They were very lovely but it was very difficult to keep them consistent, as I know. Luckily, as I said, I was left out of that. <Laughs>

Stephanie Zollinger: In your opinion, what was Jack Lenor Larsen Incorporated, the company, what was its greatest contribution to the textile industry?

Paul Gedeohn: In the '50s and '60s Jack was an innovator. People look at the fabrics that have been developed after him, for instance, the printing on velvet. I think there were fashion people who did printing on velvet but one dress didn't have to be exactly the same as the next. It was not a system. He set up and, I think, lost a lot of money because he was not practical, but he was very innovative.

Stephanie Zollinger: Right. I heard, when some of these fabrics came out, that he really had to teach the designers how to use them because they had never seen such things for interiors.

Paul Gedeohn: He would have to, yes. That's where he innovated in every way. I think there's no doubt that he was a leader in the fabric industry because fabric companies slowly took off after him. I think it took a good ten years before the fabric industry was really able to do all of this. I think they got a lot of ideas from Jack.

Stephanie Zollinger: Yes. I think the timing was right, too, because it was some years after World War II, so the whole dynamics of what was happening in terms of residential design was changing and evolving. He happened upon this at a good time.

Paul Gedeohn: It was the perfect time and he really was an innovator. There's no doubt about it in the beginning. That's why I would say that he was never very practical. He ran that company and we did all those wonderful things until he hired some presidents to come in there.

Stephanie Zollinger: Was that Bob Carr or Manning Field?

Paul Gedeohn: Bob Carr and Manning Field were the first ones but they were also not the most practical people. What was the man's name?

Stephanie Zollinger: Huggins, Frank Huggins?

Paul Gedeohn: No. Huggins was not.

Stephanie Zollinger: Not on the financial side?

Paul Gedeohn: No, he was a salesperson. He was one of the big ones. I'm trying to think of the president of the company after Bob Carr left for California. We had a couple of people. I think Frank Huggins took over for a short while but then we really got a businessman. He had come from the automobile industry, or some such place. He really knew how to run a company to make money. I can't think of his name. Isn't that awful? Jack will know all these names.

Stephanie Zollinger: He's the one after Bob Carr?

Paul Gedeohn: Yes. I remember him distinctly as being the one who really knew how to have us start making money because we were not making money back in the early days.

Stephanie Zollinger: The money went to experiment and to develop?

Paul Gedeohn: I think so, yes. It took a different type of mind to run that company. In the beginning they were more like Jack but it changed. I would say we didn't really make a lot of money until the late '70s, early '80s.

Stephanie Zollinger: Well, thank you very much. This was wonderful.

End of Paul gedeohn3.mp3