INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW

The Reminiscences of

Joyce Matz

PREFACE

The following oral history is the result of a recorded interview with Joyce Matz conducted by Interviewer Keenan Hughes on October 10, 2007. This interview is part of the New York Preservation Archive's Project's collection of individual oral history interviews.

The reader is asked to bear in mind that s/he is reading a verbatim transcript of the spoken word, rather than written prose. The views expressed in this oral history interview do not necessarily reflect the views of the New York Preservation Archive Project.

Public relations consultant Joyce Matz is a veteran of numerous preservation battles. In this interview, conducted in 2007 by Pratt graduate student Keenan Hughes, Matz describes how she became involved in the preservation movement and the relationship of preservation to her own career, in which she has managed public relations for many groups fighting to preserve landmarks. Among the most notable fights in which Matz was deeply involved were the battle to achieve landmark designation for the City and Suburban Homes York Avenue Estate and the campaign against a proposal to build a tower on the site of St. Bartholomew's Church, both of which she details in this interview. She discusses how celebrities such as Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, Woody Allen and Tony Randall attracted media interest to preservation fights. Matz also provides her perspective on the evolution of the Landmarks Preservation Commission and the city's nonprofit organizations that support preservation in the 1990s and 2000s.

Joyce Matz, born in 1925 in Manhattan, was a publicist and preservationist. She was the chair of the of Manhattan Community Board 5's landmark committee during the 1980s. She was active in many preservation campaigns, notably to save the City and Suburban York Avenue Estate and the efforts to reduce the size of Trump City.

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Interviewee: Joyce Matz | Location: Manhattan, New York, NY

Interviewer: Keenan Hughes | Date: October 10, 2007

Q: Ok, this is Keenan Hughes. I'm here at the Kress Foundation on East Eightieth Street in Manhattan with Joyce Matz. It's about two P.M. on October tenth and why don't we just begin.

Matz: Go ahead.

Q: So Joyce I'd like to start by getting a little bit of background on you, maybe where you grew up briefly on that and then sort of your early career and how you got interested in preservation.

Matz: Okay, I was born in New York City. As a matter of fact, I was born right across and around in the middle of very historic places, Central Park, Central Park [Upper West Side/Central Park West] Historic District, the [American] Museum of Natural History, the [New York] Historical Society was on the corner, Universalist Church [Fourth Universalist Society in the City of New York] was around the corner.

Q: Yes.

Matz: I was surrounded by landmarks and was never affected by them, never even noticed them. Went to Fieldston—I went to Ethical Culture School Fieldston. Then I graduated from Dalton

[School], went to Mount Holyoke [College], graduate school at Smith [College], some graduate work at Barnard [College]. Didn't get my masters.

Q: What was your graduate work in?

Matz: English, everything was in English. Minors in religion—why, I'm not quite sure why I did that *[laughter]*, except I loved the religions teacher professor. Then I went to live in New York City, got a job working for the Zionist Archives and Library, because it was the only job I could get, frankly. Then I went into the PR [public relations] business with my ex-husband—mostly real estate. But, I was becoming very interested in preservation. I read an article in the *National Geographic*.

Q: This is fine.

Matz: I read an article in the *National Geographic* that Venice was sinking an inch a year, and for some reason I panicked *[laughs]*. I thought, I won't get there in time to see Venice, so I ran over to Italy with both my children, two different trips, and saw Rome and Venice and Florence and became enamored with buildings. I didn't want to go inside except the churches, but it was the outside of the buildings that drove me crazy. I fell in love with old architecture. I came back to the U.S. [United States]—and I had been involved in real estate public relations and when I separated from my husband, I got involved in preservation really because I wanted to start my own business. Doris [C.] Freedman, who you may have heard of, offered me a job as helping to found the Upper East Side Historic District and I said, "No, I want to start my own PR business."

And that's what I did. Because I was really down on my luck, a lot of people said, go to her, she'll be cheap *[laughter]*. So a lot of people came to me to hire me, not only preservation but police unions and a lot of different kinds of businesses. Somehow preservation became important to me. I heard about Pier A down at the bottom of Manhattan was going to be demolished, and I arranged to meet the man whose name escapes at the moment who was in charge of—what is that project down there? I can't think of it, it will come to me—the new buildings all along the water down there?

Q: Battery Park City?

Matz: Yes. So I went to see the man, made an appointment with somebody who referred me to him, told him about what I knew about Pier A and suggested that he build down to Pier A but not demolish it. Whether he listened to me or not, I will never know, but they didn't demolish Pier A. I was so happy. I was on [Manhattan] Community Board 5 [CB5], very active in their preservation committee, and someone decided that they were going to remove the interior of Town Hall.

Q: When is this roughly?

Matz: Oh probably I got on the board in 1976, so its probably the late 70's that I heard they were going to gut Town Hall. Town Hall at that time was not a landmark. But I got frantic, and I begin to research madly and discovered that the acoustics of Town Hall were the finest in the world. I

reach out to acousticians and I organized a little band of people and I went to work fighting the destruction of the interior of Town Hall.

I had been taken there many times by a great aunt. They use to have lectures there by very famous people, and she use to take me. I was a teenager, didn't know really anything, but I sort of had a close attachment to Town Hall because of that, and I thought, let's find out how serious this is. Well I realized it was very serious. In those days, it was a little easier to reach out to the [New York City] Landmarks [Preservation] Commission [LPC] and that's what I did. I reached out to them. I can't remember the name of the woman. I believe there was a woman at that time who was chairman of the Landmarks Commission. And I took her all the information I knew about Town Hall, requested that it be designated, and it was.

Q: Wow.

Matz: Town Hall is a landmark. The important thing about Town Hall is not the architecture. It's the interior, it's the acoustics, and it's the history, the culture. Not necessarily the architecture. It's a very small theater—he was going to demolish the whole thing and put a series of theaters inside. So we were able to save Town Hall.

Q: That's a wonderful story. I mean you make it sound so easy that you were able to—

Matz: It wasn't.

Q: I'm sure it wasn't.

Matz: It wasn't. I had very few people supporting me. I have, I keep all my clippings about me, and I believe there probably are some buried in the bottom of the file. But sometimes you get a feeling about a place, you're not sure if its important or not, but you begin to research and you discover that it's extremely important. I just researched a building on Fifty-Fourth Street—I'm digressing a little bit—but a very historic building on Fifty-Fourth Street that is not a landmark. I began to research it, and I found out that the man who was the architect of this building designed all the chateaux in Canada, all the railway stations in Canada, the Chateau Frontenac. I can't think of his name at the moment, but he's a very famous architect. He did some buildings in New York. He has some in the—*[unclear]* East Side Historic District? There are some of his buildings in some of the historic districts, but he's famous for all the magnificent chateaux he built in Canada. But the commission ignored it. Sent me a letter, we're not going to designate it. It's magnificent.

Q: This is pretty recently?

Matz: Recently, just this year. It's a magnificent building with a fantastic history and they told me they're not going to designate.

Q: And you knew—

Matz: There is nobody at the commission that really encourages designation, and it's so important to save some of these buildings. I'll tell you later about a firehouse that I got the Community Board interested in. Where was I? Town Hall, what happened after Town Hall?

Q: Yeah I think we started—

Matz: I was not active in the Grand Central Station Preservation. I went down there, I rallied with people but I was not one of the leaders of that. Lever House was going to be demolished. I started a campaign to save it. I got Jackie [Jacqueline Kennedy] Onassis there for a press conference, and nothing happened to it.

Sometimes you get lucky if you can delay demolition or if you can get enough information or if you can get enough people or press interested. Sometimes you can save something regardless of the Landmarks Commission. You cannot look to them for help anymore. They're just not there for you. Some of the members of the commission are very good, but if everybody supports something, if everybody in the whole Upper East Side supports something, then they might. But sometimes they don't. They didn't with a building on Ninety-First Street; they did with a building on Seventy-Sixth Street. You never know what's going to influence them. Sometimes it's money. Sometimes it's influence. Sometimes it's really because something is so important they can't ignore it. Where was I?

Q: Well I think that's a really important theme and that's something we'll probably return to throughout this conversation; the difference in the commission today versus when you first

started becoming involved in preservation. I think it's a really interesting theme and maybe throughout all these different battles that we discuss that's something that we can sort of make light of. I think it's interesting.

Matz: There are some commissioners that have been faulty, like Jennifer Raab. I don't know if you know her. Jennifer Raab was on my community board. She was head of the new construction committee. She never was on the landmarks committee, she never voted for landmarks, she wasn't interested in landmarks. She went to work for a law firm that happened to be representing a group that was fighting to save a landmark, so she did some work on it. Then, because she was friendly with [Rudolph] Giuliani because she helped him in his mayoral campaign, he appointed her Landmarks commissioner. It was devastating.

I discovered that there was a small enclave on Fifty-Fourth and Fifty-Fifth Street between Park [Avenue] and Lexington [Avenue]. An enclave of twelve small town houses still intact—some dating from the middle and late 1800's. All exquisite and all very seriously important. I got all the material together, I made books, I had pictures taken, I did a lot of work. I got a grant of five hundred dollars from the Walinsky Fund *[phonetic]*. I wasn't desperate for the grant, but I was really able to use it putting all these books together, dropping off a book at each commissioner's house—which is forbidden—so that I knew they would see them. She sees me at a benefit and she says, "I'm going to designate two of them." So I said, "I don't want two, I want all of them." She says, "You're not going to get all of them. You should be glad you're getting two." They were two very important ones, but it would have made a wonderful little historic district. Can you imagine? Between Park and Lexington still intact?

Q: What happened to those buildings?

Matz: They're still there. Some have been altered seriously, but they're still there.

Q: You know you—

Matz: Two of them were designated, but I believe it should have been a small historic district. I had a lot of support. I had support from the state, you know Kathy Howe, I don't know if you know her?

Q: Yeah, [New York] State Historic Preservation Office.

Matz: I had support from everybody. But that is more recent, that's in two thousand—I can't remember the exact date. Let's go back before then.

Q: Yeah and I also—

Matz: Let's go back to the Beacon Theatre.

Q: Sure. When was that?

Matz: I was hired for that. Let me see if I wrote down a date, wait a minute, I wrote down a few dates. What is this the wrong page, wrong book? Oh I hope I didn't bring the wrong book.

Q: Oh, I have nineteen—

Matz: Beacon.

Q: Nineteen-eighty-six, does that sound about right?

Matz: Yes.

Q: Okay.

Matz: Then I was very busy doing PR—only preservation.

Q: Only preservation, wow.

Matz: No, that's not true. Not real estate, I would not take a real estate developer, although some came to me. I told them, "I'm very sorry, you don't want me. You don't want me." I was working with police unions. I was doing the Armenian Diocese [Armenian Apostolic Church]. I was doing a lot of other PR, but my great love was preservation. The people on the west side had heard about me, I'd been doing some other work over there. I worked for the group that stopped the building on top of the Historical Society. At that time a very fine architect designed a very

beautiful building atop the Historical Society, using it as a base. Totally improper. The group over there hired me, and we won that fight. Other groups heard about me, and I worked for Landmark West!—I was very inexpensive.

Q: Well it seems—

Matz: My ex-husband said I was a philanthropist, because I really would have done some of those for nothing. I just loved a good fight. The Beacon people heard of me. There were a lot of young kids with relatively little money, and they were fighting to save the Beacon, another case of gutting the interior. There were big people—oh I remember who called me, Fred Papert. Do you know Fred Papert? He heads the Forty-Second Street Development Corporation. Fred knew me, and he called me and said he was recommending me to the people who were demolishing the interior of the Beacon. I said, "Fred, I can't take a client like that. I don't do that kind of work."

The people who were trying to save the Beacon heard about me and hired me. It was a long struggle. We were in and out of court. I remember, we were supposed to be in court and it was a New York City judge, a Supreme Court judge. I told them, "We have to get every public official to come to sit in the front row, right in front of the judge, because her appointment depends on these guys." So I got all these legislators to come and sit in the front row, and she had stacks, like this, of briefs. I remember that so clearly, thinking, how can she wade through those? And we had a wonderful attorney, Bob [Robert S.] Davis, who had also worked on fighting the Historical Society building on top, and he was terrific. I can't remember the ins and outs of that, but we got

a lot of publicity. We raised a lot of money in the street, selling pictures, selling—we had these street fairs where we sold old clothes.

Q: Did you coin a name for the effort, was it?

Matz: Save the Beacon Theatre.

Q: Save the Beacon Theatre.

Matz: I always believe in naming—

Q: That seems like a very important aspect of PR and—

Matz: —the fight what it is so the people immediately know what it is, know where you are, know which side you're on. In those days we did not have the kind of opposition that we have now. Real estate is stronger now, they have better lawyers now, and they also have very powerful PR people. Not like it was in the beginning.

Q: What about support?

Matz: I was one of the first to be working in that field, but now very powerful PR people are involved representing developers.

Q: Lobbyists.

Matz: They have a lot of influence; they have a lot of friends in the press. As a matter of fact one real estate man worked for *The [New York] Post* and was doing PR when he was working for *The Post*. Anyway he's another story. He was not allowed to do that, to make money working for developers while you were working for *The Post*, but we won that fight. We won it, if I recall, in a sort of negative way. I think they were not allowed to do it, and the theater was designated.

Q: So was—?

Matz: I understand it's in rather bad condition now. I think a cable company has taken it over. I've been watching the press to see what's happening there. I'm a little worried about it because the interior was wonderful. There again, one of the great things about the Beacon Theatre was the acoustics. We hired an acoustician from New Jersey that we'd heard about who was one of the most famous acousticians in the metropolitan area, and he came and—oh, I remember, he walked up all through, there's walks up in the roof where you can go, and he was up there walking everywhere, listening to the sounds, and he wrote a brief on the acoustics of the Beacon Theatre, how important they were.

Q: That helped in getting it—

Matz: It helped, and of course the architecture of the interior was wonderful. The most important thing about the Beacon of course is, like the Roxy [Theatre] and Radio City [Music Hall], they

were built by the same man. Roxy was, I think Radio City and the Beacon were too—I can't exactly remember, you might want to look it up.

Q: Well they the—

Matz: But what was important about all those theaters was that they were famous—famous people worked there, famous movies, famous like Radio City for example; the most famous thing about that are the shows. The movies that came out at Radio City always were the best. When a great movie came out, it appeared first at Radio City.

The Roxy, which was demolished, was a great loss, because it was better even than the Beacon. It was a great interior. We have lost most of the great theaters. They have been quadro-plexed interiors. It's a great pity that we have not been able to save more of those theaters. I remember going to a movie, *Death in Venice*, I remember like it was yesterday, I went to a theater way up on Broadway. They were showing *Death in Venice* and I was very anxious to see it. It was the only place it was playing. I went there, and the interior was unbelievable. That theater is no longer there. It's a great loss, like the churches that we lose every day remind me to tell you about my little church on 113th Street.

Q: I will.

Matz: Which we are about to lose. But the earliest architecture—the history of architecture in the city, is calendared really by the churches, the theaters, the housing, like City and Suburban. City

and Suburban was built at the turn of the century. It's a complex of about twelve different buildings, but it's one landmark. It was built by a number of different architect and it was built by philanthropists—Astors and the Auchincloss' and what not—built for low income, but it was built to make money. It was not built as a charity case. It was built to make money and still keep the rents very, very low. It was the largest housing project for low rent people in the country when it was built. It was the answer to railroad flats. It was built with windows everywhere and open what do you call them? You know.

Q: Open floor?

Matz: Courtyards.

Q: Oh, right.

Matz: Courtyards, and if you got to the roof of my building, you can see the whole layout. The center is open, and there are courtyards all the way going down. It goes from York [Avenue] to the East River and it's extremely historic. You would go and look at it and say, this is a landmark? It's not even pretty. It's not Beaux Arts gorgeous. It's very nice. It has very good decorative elements on the buildings. It has wrought iron and fences everywhere. People said to me, "Why are you trying to save that?" But it's so important. It's so historic.

Q: Yeah, that strikes me as many of these examples that you've given are examples of places that you just sort of found and you thought that they were important.

Matz: I was hired.

Q: Well in some cases you were hired.

Matz: I was hired for City and Suburban. People in City and Suburban heard about me, invited me to come to a meeting in one of their apartments one night. They hired me. They had almost no money. And I said, "Look, I'll help you for as long as I can. Let's see what happens." Then a friend of mine who lived across the street formed the Coalition to Save City and Suburban [Housing].

Q: What was her name?

Matz: Betty [Cooper] Wallerstein, very close friend. She hired me, and I worked for her for twelve years. For twelve years she raised the money to pay me and a lawyer.

Q: Just on City and Suburban?

Matz: Just on City and Suburban.

Q: That's amazing.

Matz: I was working for other clients. I was doing other things, but I was working for City and Suburban for twelve years. We were in and out of court god knows how many times. We lost at the [New York City] Board of Estimate, that rotten organization. The mayor was with us, but the deal was in. They had made a deal that the majority would vote against it. The mayor came out to save it, but he knew the deal was in. We had to go to court. We were in and out of court. We went to Albany finally, to the Court of Appeals. We were everywhere, we were in the court down on twenty—whatever street that is, you know the what's that court?

Q: Is it an Appeals Court down there or no?

Matz: The [New York State] Appellate Court.

Q: The Appellate Court

Matz: We were in the Appellate Court. We were at the [New York State] Court of Appeals up in Albany. We were everywhere.

Q: I want to ask you about—

Matz: And finally—

Q: Go ahead.

Matz: We won. We won. It was unbelievable. We won. Not a hair on that building was touched. The entire block was designated.

Q: That is incredible.

Matz: It's also on the National Register [of Historic Places], and I believe on the [New York] State Register [of Historic Places], but it was extraordinary, the fight. There're two hundred, more than two hundred organizations supporting us. We had every public official supporting us. We had famous professors who knew the history of architecture and housing in this country. And I did fantastic PR *[laughs]*.

Q: Lets talk about that, because in all of these, you know earlier you said you got hired because you were inexpensive. Well I know that that's not true, because almost every example you were the go-to person to bring in when one of these battles came up, and, you know, "Let's call Joyce. Joyce is good. She's worked on this and that she's done great things." What did you do? What were some of the—

Matz: I didn't always win, I didn't always win and in recent—

Q: Well, we've been talking about a lot of victories, and I'm sure you lost some as well. But what were some of the tools and tactics you used from a PR perspective? We talked about many—

Matz: Well I can't teach you PR in one hour and suffice it to say you have to go to the press and get support from the press.

Q: Just call them up and—?

Matz: Well, in those days—a lot of them have retired—but in those days I knew all the press, and you get their sympathy. You hold press conferences endlessly, you hold rallies in the street, you do what ever you have to do. You get every public official supporting you. And I wrote press releases—endless thousands of press releases—on every issue.

That's what we did at City and Suburban. Many of City and Suburban's tenants were elderly and not stabilized but rent controlled. Rent controlled tenants were paying three hundred, maybe four hundred dollars a month. They were very old, and you know rent control, when you died the apartment seeks the level of that of other apartments. My object in helping to save City and Suburban was not only its history, but because it was affordable housing. There were twelve hundred apartments. There were two thousand people living in that block.

Peter Kalikow, who is among the worst people in this city. Money does not clean that man. He is a miserable, miserable man and you can quote me. I don't care. He sent an eviction letter to the two thousand people living there. That they were being evicted. He had no right to do it. He did not have the law with him to do it. He had no sensibility as to what that letter would do. He is a callous man. And all these things inspired me to work for these people. I never, when they called me in and wanted to hire me, I never said yes right away. I always said, let me think about it. Let

me see what the story is and why you're fighting. I was not going to help people save their views, that was not my job in life. My job was to save a historic building and to save those tenants and their affordable housing.

Q: And so the Coalition to Save City and Suburban, that involved the tenants. It was—

Matz: No

Q: No it was—

Matz: The Coalition involved all the people who lived in the neighborhood. It involved all the organizations in this city. It involved all. The tenants' association only represented the tenants. It was a separate organization. Many of the people in City and Suburban fought us. They wanted Kalikow's money. He was buying them out. Many took the buyout. Many senior citizens were moved by their families to nursing homes. We lost a lot of tenants, and some of them really fought us, they wanted the money. Most of them—the ones that formed the organization, the tenants organization—didn't care about the money. They knew that no matter what money he gave them, they could never find a home that they could afford. Never. They were paying $300—that's all they could afford. They were on fixed incomes, elderly people who've lived there their whole lives. One woman, her family lived there. Her family's family lived there. They'd lived there ever since they came over. It was very sad. So my job was to let the press know about each of these tenants.

Q: How did the—was it pretty much universal support from the press or—?

Matz: Yes.

Q: Wow.

Matz: The PR man that Kalikow had was—

Q: Didn't Kalikow buy *The Post* around this time as well? *The New York Post*—didn't he own that paper?

Matz: Later.

Q: Later. Oh good, that wouldn't have helped.

Matz: A little bit later, a little bit later when we were, I believe when we were maybe at the Board of Estimate. Maybe later than that. He had a lot of influence, money. He could pay anybody anything—and he did. And the PR man he hired, I have a creed—it's not a goody-goody creed, it's just I find it useful—and that is to always tell the truth. I don't lie because you get caught. It doesn't pay to lie. It's bad to lie. Some PR people lie a lot, and Kalikow's man did. He didn't know about the truth, it's not in his vernacular. It's just, I always tell the truth. I tell reporters, don't just trust my press release, research it yourself. Come on over here and see it.

Meet the people that I'm writing to you about, you don't have to believe me. But the press always did believe me because they knew me and they trusted me.

Q: Were there times where they would come and see a site with you or—

Matz: Oh many times.

Q: —walk around the building with you?

Matz: Oh yes, yes, yes many, many, many times. We had many press coming. Many friends of mine from the *[New York] Daily News* came, walked around with us. TV crews came and walked around with us interviewed—I remember one elderly man. He used to set up the tennis net in the park every day, every morning, he would set that tennis net up. I think he must have died because I haven't seen him in a long time. Are you running out of tape?

Q: No, no we're good.

Matz: One woman I went to her apartment. She was such a lovely lady; she was a seamstress. Her family had lived there for generations. They had I think two apartments together and it was filled, it was filled I don't know if you've ever seen an apartment that's filled.

Q: It was just stuff everywhere?

Matz: Filled!

Q: I think I've read stories about this sort of thing.

Matz: Filled with everything, what a lovely lady she was, beautiful elderly lady who lived in an apartment that just was loaded and I took the press there. I took reporters there. I wanted them to see how little the apartments were, how small they were. They're very tiny, and I wanted them to meet her because she lived there for generations. I believe she moved out to Chicago or somewhere to live with her sister. It was a wonderful fight.

Q: A long fight.

Matz: And of course it never would have been saved without Betty Wallerstein. Never.

Q: She was sort of spearheading the coalition?

Matz: She put the coalition together. She hired me and she never missed a payment. She paid me every month I think it was for about twelve years.

Q: Wow.

Matz: But I did a spectacular job.

Q: Obviously.

Matz: I did a spectacular job.

Q: Well it's just such a wonderful story because you know affordable housing is still a crisis in this city, and the relationship between when you find a place a historic place it's clearly a landmark and it's also affordable housing, it just seems like a no-brainer. But it takes education, you know. You have to teach people. You have to show people what this means, why it's important. It's not the Empire State Building.

Matz: More important than that, more important than that is you need a better commission. You need a much better commission.

Q: What was the relationship with the commission at this time?

Matz: You know, you can have a thousand people supporting you, and they'll still turn it down. Or you can have a thousand people with you, and they'll approve something that shouldn't be approved. They've just approved changes to the Historical Society, and everybody who was fighting it said, "Well the changes aren't so bad." The changes are only the beginning. They're going to allow a building on top. But the changes are bad. You don't alter historic buildings. Don't do it unless the changes are so important or miniscule that they don't impact on the landmark. The City and Suburban thing was another thing all together. That was the demolition of an entire block, and the cruelty of a man so wealthy he didn't give a damn.

Funny, I was going with somebody who lived in Montauk and we sneaked in—*[laughs]*. It was nighttime, windy, muddy. And we sneaked onto the Kalikow building he was building for his home. Right on the water—docks, swimming pools, an enormous building for cars. You have enormous buildings for horses. This was an enormous, enormous long building for cars. He loves old beautiful cars. We wandered through this enormous house, and I thought to myself, really, here's a man with endless money, with no heart. What good is it? So he can have twenty cars? So he can have a swimming pool? I don't begrudge him any of those things, but give something back. You know? Give something back. If you're going to torture all these people, don't do it. There's other buildings in New York you can build on and demolish. There's a whole city. You didn't have to do it there. He came to a meeting at the school at P.S. 158, right next door to the complex, with bodyguards. He didn't need bodyguards. These were a lot of old people fighting for their lives, and he came with bodyguards.

Q: Well you know its just such an amazing story and—

Matz: Anyway we won that fight and a—

Q: Yeah well tell me about the decision to go to court after the Board of Estimates pulled that move.

Matz: Do you realize what it costs to go to court?

Q: That's what I am wondering. That must have been a really hard decision. But you'd been fighting it for so long—

Matz: Yes, yes. And Betty and I did it together, really. No matter what she did, she would call me to consult with me. No matter what I did, I consulted with her. We were very close. Every time it looked like we lost, we would meet. She would call me, she would say, "What about going to court?" And I'd always say to her, "Betty, if it's worth fighting for, it's worth going to court for, we're just going to have to raise the money." And she did. I never helped her raise the money. It costs hundreds of thousands of dollars. She got a lot of rich people who did want to save their views to give money. We didn't care where the money came from. We needed to go to court. Without court, we couldn't have done it.

Eventually the Landmarks Commission wanted only to designate the whole complex except for the end building, which was a hotel for single women. That hotel was built in the same period, but it was built specifically for single women. The top had been altered, a cupola on the top had been turned into apartments. We got word that they would designate the whole thing except for the end building. And Betty called me up, as she always did, and said, "What should we do?" And I said, "Betty, you know what we should do. That building is part of the complex. It's equally important, if not more so. It was only for women, when it was built for single women to come and have sewing rooms and eat there and not have to worry about men, because it was a scary city for single women."

So she decided that we would go to court on that, and we would appeal to the commission and not settle for a dismembered landmark. That's what it was, a dismembered landmark. I can't remember all the details, but we won. The entire complex was designated. We had been encouraged by everybody to settle for only the western part and not the whole complex.

Q: Who's everybody just—?

Matz: Everybody, public officials.

Q: Politicians?

Matz: Politicians, people on the commission, Laurie Beckelman, who was I believe the commissioner then.

Q: Maybe.

Matz: Everybody encouraged us take it, take it, take it

Q: What about other preservation groups? Them too?

Matz: A lot of people said, "Take it, take it. You may not get the whole thing. Take what you can." Well that's not a good way to fight, it's not an honorable way to fight, because that part of the complex was equally important as to the rest it, it was. You couldn't do it. You couldn't let a

tower be built there, and an important building be demolished. You couldn't do it, I said, "Betty, you can't do it." And she said, "You're right, we can't do it." So we continued the fight, and eventually the entire complex was designated after she had raised thousands of dollars. It couldn't have happened without her.

Q: Well no kidding.

Matz: But really I have to give her credit, because sometimes the person who spearheads this, it couldn't happen without them. And in this particular case, it could not have happened without her.

Q: But you were obviously very important in this. And in some of the research that I did to prepare for this, there's just a drumbeat of stories in the media that are mostly favorable. I was wondering to what extent you influenced those stories or befriended those journalists or educated them.

Matz: Well I'm very good at PR.

Q: I know you are.

Matz: Not because I'm very good, but because I know this area, I know the PR that involves community groups and individuals. I could do real estate PR, but it doesn't make me happy. I wouldn't want to do it.

Q: It seems like early in your career you did some real estate PR and developed an expertise—

Matz: When I was working—

Q: —and knowledge in that area, and then sort of used that in preservation.

Matz: When I was working with my ex-husband, he was doing a lot of real estate PR and I was doing the work in the office. I would sit and write the releases, and we were partners. But when we got a divorce, I left the business. Really I lost the business and went out on my own. It was at that time that I was offered the Upper East Side Historic District. And turned it down, and it was so lucky that I turned it down because the woman they finally got to do it—Halina Rosenthal—is one of the great people in preservation.

She helped to put that district together. It's really a number of historic districts combined. She was an extraordinary woman and did an extraordinary job. They were so lucky I turned them down, really. You know they had heard about my work in preservation and they thought, terrific, but she was wonderful. She was a great, great preservationist, and she would go anywhere. A lot of preservation groups won't go out of their little area, and I fault them for that. But she would go anywhere. She came over to the west side when were fighting to save the Beacon. She would come to all our fundraisers, and we held a lot of little ones. But, she would go anywhere to help save a landmark, and I would go anywhere.

Q: Yeah, that's so important.

Matz: Tell me, tell me something's endangered, and I'll go there. And that's what a lot of preservation groups don't do today. It's unfortunate. They don't understand how important it is to help others. I'm on the board of a group that doesn't really want to go outside of its area, and I always try to tell them, "It's so important for us to help other preservation groups, and it's so important to help our little area, support our area." But some preservation groups, like the New York Landmarks Conservancy, are governed by money.

And the Municipal Art Society [MAS]. I'm not criticizing them or faulting them for the good work they do, but they don't do the little work, they don't help the little guy who needs to be helped. They're very wealthy, all of them, they're—you know, it's very hard to do what they do without a lot of money. They have big staffs, they pay big rents, they need the money, and so they must cater to the very wealthy. It's the very wealthy that govern what they do and how much they do. They have a preservation committee, and they supported my effort to save my little historic district of twelve buildings, they were wonderful. I brought them pictures, and even though the head of that group was not so happy with me, they supported me. They don't support everybody who needs help.

Q: Yeah, that's always, there's always that tension there in all these different battles between these large citywide groups like the Municipal Art Society and the Landmarks Conservancy, and then some of your neighborhood-based efforts are—

Matz: For years I've been trying to get somebody interested in a for-profit preservation organization. A for-profit group, like the Real Estate Board [of New York]. We would have one little room with one little guy with a computer, and people all over the state donating ten dollars or twenty five dollars. And we would immediately go to the support of anybody who needed it in order to save a landmark. It wouldn't matter where that building was, in what city, what borough, what part of the state—we would be there, because we have the money and the know-how. I offered to do the PR for nothing for a year or two years. But I couldn't get anybody to support the effort. They laughed at me. They weren't interested; because nobody wants to give up their turf. And all I wanted from the MAS was—for one membership, twenty-five dollars. But I couldn't get anybody to support me or interested in it. Now there's a group that has been formed and is supported by Landmark West. It's not exactly what I had in mind, it may help but that's what we need. We need to able to fight like the Real Estate Board does. We need to have people in Albany—what's the word? Campaigning for us up there. You know, yes.

Q: State Historic Preservation Office or—?

Matz: No, no, no we need somebody lobbying.

Q: Oh, right.

Matz: We need lobbyists, paid lobbyists. We need to be a for-profit organization and we need to hire lobbyists and lawyers and architectural historians. We need to raise the money for that, and I've never been able to get anybody interested in it or supportive of it. I talked to the wind. I

spoke to a member of Landmarks West!, and he laughed at me. “Waste of time.” Not a waste of time. We have to fight like a business fights. We can’t be just a lot of little people fighting and running around raising dollars and sitting on the corner raising money. We need to do all that, but we need to have power. Votes. Money. The only way we can do that is through a for-profit organization that is raising money, collecting money.

Q: I think it’s an excellent idea and the way that you—

Matz: It’s very important, because you understand somebody like Kalikow has millions, and when he fights in a fight like that, every dollar he spends is tax deductible because it’s business related. Every developer we fight, it’s easy for them. He has lawyers and accountants and everybody that are on his payroll anyway, so it’s easy for him to fight, but it’s not easy for us to fight. When we fought to save the Cottages and Garden, I don’t know if you know about that. It’s the Cottages and Garden on Third Avenue between Seventy-Seventh [Street] and Seventy-Eighth Street. It was a complex of two story buildings that went around the block, and inside was a wonderful garden and huge trees and steps going up to these little cottages.

Q: Wow.

Matz: I think there were—how many cottages? Six, seven, I can’t remember the exact number. It was wonderful, it was unusual. It was like nothing in this city. And a developer had bought the property and wanted to demolish it all. We fought to get it designated, and the commissioner—*[pauses]*.

Q: Jennifer Raab?

Matz: Yes. She came there to visit it with the developers. She didn't come by herself with her staff, she came with the developers. I was there that day with Tony Randall. We had a lot of support—Tony Randall, Woody Allen. We had a lot of support. Woody because he loves landmarks and because he uses New York as his background for his movies. I got them to come there. I got their support. I got everybody's support except Jennifer Raab's. To come there with the developer I thought was really arrogant. She didn't even pretend to be impartial.

The cottages were wonderful. You walked into a cottage, there was all grass and trees and bushes, I think there was an apple tree even there, you walked into the cottage and there was a living room and then you walked up a few stairs and there was like a dinning room and then to the right there was a bedroom and a bathroom. They were wonderful, they were just wonderful. And people had lived there for years—twenty-five thirty years. Well, we couldn't do anything, we couldn't do anything.

We went to court as long as we could raise the money, and then we couldn't raise it anymore. We ended up owing; I don't know, maybe a hundred thousand dollars to lawyers. They did a bad job, and what's the point. I'm not even giving you their names, but they overcharged. For what they did, they overcharged. We had one lawyer who, I sat behind him at the one of the hearings, and he turned to me and he said, " What's the answer to that?" It was a joke; we had enormous support. But there again, unless everything comes together, unless you have the money. We had

a very nice group of people but they didn't stick and they weren't able to raise the money, so eventually we had to give up and the developer bought those people out. He paid six million dollars to buy them out, not enough. The lawyer got half or a third? Maybe he got a third. He got two million. Each of the tenants I think got a million and the organization that tried to save it were left owing a hundred thousand dollars.

Q: Wow.

Matz: How did that happen? How did that happen? Because we didn't get a letter, we didn't get agreements from the tenants. The tenants didn't give a damn. They knew they were going to be bought out eventually. We were trying to save a landmark, and we ended up owing more than a hundred thousand dollars. I remember that. And I told them I thought we should try and raise it, but I really didn't care. It wasn't worth the effort, we'd lost the fight. The lawyers had charged us too much, but that's what happens sometimes. You win the fight or you loose the fight, you're stuck with bills and they get bought out and get millions. Each tenant I believe got a million. What did a million matter? Where were they going to go? They would have to buy an apartment for a million dollars. It was not so much money. They should have held out for more. And the lawyer, Rozenholt *[phonetic]*, he got two million dollars. Terrific. And he did very little for that. He went to court a couple of times, but he did basically very little.

Q: That was a case where you were able to—?

Matz: But one of the things about lawyers are they get a lot of money and there have been times when people have called me in to help them and said they didn't have any money. And I've said, "Do you have a lawyer?" And they've said, "Yes." and I said, "Do you pay your lawyer?" And they say, "Yes." I don't work pro-bono. I do a lot of pro-bono work—a lot—but I don't work pro-bono for anybody that pays a lawyer. I don't care. You want to give me a hundred dollars a week? You want to give me five hundred dollars a month? I don't work pro-bono for any group that is paying a lawyer, because I know what that lawyer is getting. It's not right. They think because I do pro-bono work that I will do it for nothing, but I've turned down a lot. I turned down something over on East End Avenue where tenants were being evicted. I didn't turn it down. I gave them a very high price knowing they could never pay it. They were not going to raise money. They were not going do what they had to do. They had hired a lawyer who I knew they had to pay, I'm not interested in doing that kind of work.

Q: Right.

Matz: I'm really not.

Q: That's reasonable.

Matz: There are a lot of self-serving people in this world who are in the fight for reasons other than to save a landmark or prevent the demolition of a landmark or to save affordable housing. There's only certain things I want to work on. I loved working for the Metropolitan Club [of New York]. Have you ever been to the Metropolitan Club?

Q: I have not been there, no.

Matz: Oh, you must go there someday. I had been there before with a very famous actress, who was in New York, and her company had hired us and we had gone there with her for a cocktail party. Then the plan came to build on top of it, up the side of the Pierre Hotel. A very famous architect who was up at Columbia [University] was hired. Bob Davis hired me. It was a wonderful fight because it was so ludicrous to build on top of the Metropolitan Club. Up the side of the Hotel Pierre? The Hotel Pierre stands there you know the *[unclear]* and the Pierre stand there wonderful.

It was a wonderful fight and Bob Davis was great. The architect—a very famous architect, I can't remember his name. But that was a good fight, and we won that fight. We prevented anything from going up on top of the building. The argument always is, we need money. "We can't afford to keep the Metropolitan Club anymore. We need the money. We'll have to close down." Well my attitude is, "Close down. You want to save it? Raise the money." That was their argument. They didn't have the money to keep the building up or anything, they needed it. This is so often the argument, and the Landmarks Commission goes along with it. You have to say, no. It's like the churches.

Q: Right, well St Bart's [St. Bartholomew's Episcopal Church] is great example.

Matz: These poor little churches. They need money. I was on Community Board 5 then, when St Bart's came up.

[INTERRUPTION]

Matz: I was on Community Board 5 and I think I was head of the landmarks committee, and St Bart's came to us. The project was to demolish St. Bart's—the church, the community house, the terrace and the garden. Ada Louise Huxtable had written a wonderful editorial against demolishing the church. So the project that came to us was just demolishing the community house, terrace and garden.

We went to see the minister to see why he would do this. Well what was his name? [Thomas D.] Bowers, his name was Bowers. They paid for him to live in this very spacious apartment on Park Avenue. He was living like royalty. He wanted a TV ministry. That was what the money was for. A TV ministry and they didn't, they couldn't afford to keep up all these buildings anymore. Everything was going to wreck and ruin. There was water damage, there was building damage, and nothing—they couldn't afford to keep it up anymore.

We went back to the Community Board, and just about then a very good friend of mine on the Community Board who knew the head of the parishioners recommended me for PR. I met with them. I remember the meeting. It was high up in an office building—big spacious office—and they were telling me about the fight that the parishioners, half the parishioners, only half wanted to save the whole thing and didn't want to sell out to the developer. I remember asking the

question, “Do you want to save the whole thing, or do you want control of the church?” They were talking like they wanted to control the parishioners.

[INTERRUPTION]

Matz: Did I talk about St. Bart’s?

Q: You were just getting into it.

Matz: It was a very interesting fight because in those days—maybe you can do the same thing today—but I got about ten [New York] City Council people together, and we formed a committee of City Council people. And then we formed a committee of all the preservation groups. We had stationery made up, and it was a very comprehensive fight. The committee, the parishioners paid me, but I was also working at that time for the Municipal Art Society. I was doing some of their PR. So we were all sort of working together, but I believe that Armstrong, who was head of that group, [J.] Sinclair Armstrong—an extraordinary man, wonderful man—who led the fight to save St. Bart’s.

It’s always one person. See, I don’t organize the groups. Really my function is PR, my function is to get everybody there. But you need somebody who is special, and Sinclair Armstrong was a very good lawyer, very classy. Belonged to the finest yacht clubs, and he was not just your ordinary middle-income guy. He was very special, and he was a member of St. Bart’s, and he

was determined to save it, and he raised the money. He had a friend who was also at St. Bart's, and together they raised all the money, because it was a formidable expense.

We ended up in the federal court, where we won. We went to Supreme Court and a friend of mine turned out to be the judge. Never said a word to him, never went near him, never spoke to him, but he knew I was doing the PR for this group, and he decided that the best thing to do was for the parishioners to vote. Let the parishioners decide. They should vote. Well that was a catch twenty-two, because you weren't sure how the parishioners would vote. But we were thrilled. We figured we had it, and I said to Sinc, "Are you sure we have the numbers?" And he said, "Oh yes. We have the numbers." We didn't. We didn't have the numbers. We lost the vote. We lost the vote. Can you believe that?

Q: I can't. And what about there—

Matz: Here is my friend, the judge, trying to help us by saying vote, and the vote goes against us. That left it to the courts. More courts, we went to more courts and more courts and there was one wonderful judge I think in the federal court. We went downtown—to the federal court downtown. We didn't think we were going to win. We had wonderful lawyers. We had one wonderful lawyer. A little guy. Homely. I can't think of his name. He was terrific, Armstrong hired him, I had never heard of him. He wasn't a famous lawyer. He wasn't from a famous law firm. I think he had his own law firm. But he was terrific, he was terrific.

And of course we had a lot of other lawyer and other organizations supporting us. Everybody was supporting us. Everybody. We had a midnight vigil with candles where we walked around the church, but not just the church—the whole complex.

I'm trying to remember the real estate developer. [Howard] Ronsen I think his name was something like that. He spent a fortune on PR and a fortune on lawyers, and we won. That was a long fight. The interesting thing was that I was head of the landmarks committee at that point on the board. When it came to the board for a vote whether we should approve the demolition, I abstained and I didn't talk. I said, "I'm not voting and I'm not talking." Because I didn't want anybody ever to come back and say I influenced anybody. I feel very strongly about that, that if you have a conflict of any kind you should not vote and you should not speak.

Q: Right.

Matz: Speaking is as bad as voting. You can influence people by speaking. It's not right. So I sat there through all these meetings. Sat there, numb. Numb is not the work. Mum *[laughs]*, never saying a word, and the whole board voted against the project.

Q: Wow.

Matz: Never said a word. I never said one word, and a very good friend of mine who had gotten me the job stood up and she said, "I have a conflict of interest and I'm going to vote." *[Laughter]*.

Q: A different approach.

Matz: And nobody said a word. You know people don't give a damn about conflicts of interest most of the time. The moral standards are a little low. But anyway that was a wonderful fight really because of Sinc Armstrong. He has to be credited with that.

Q: But what about your PR efforts in that, I mean surely the press played a big role?

Matz: Well, I extended my job to include organizing. I got all the preservation groups involved, I got all the public officials involved and I did all the press and we had a lot of press. There was a lot of press on St. Bart's. I have files. I have a trans file of St. Bart's, which I hope is still in the basement. I don't know if the super threw it out or not, but a lot of stuff, lots of press for years.

Q: Did you have any particularly good friends in the press in those days?

Matz: Well because I did so much PR, the press knew me. At least the press that did these kinds of stories, the feature stories, yes.

Q: Architecture writers and—

Matz: And the Metro desks. But since I've been ill, I don't work as hard. I don't like the pressure. I will help a group if I can, if I feel it's important. But it was a wonderful fight then, wonderful .

Q: A wonderful victory.

Matz: Yes. The parishioners didn't have any money. The buildings were going to fall down, and we—and you know the Landmarks Commission did a very interesting thing. They put together a special task force of commissioners to deal only with St. Bart's, to find out if they really did have a hardship, because if they'd had a legitimate hardship, they might have allowed this. We knew they could raise the money to do the repairs they needed to do. We knew that. It was not like they had a big tower to repair. The thing that galled me was that the first proposal was to demolish the church. Have you ever been in that church?

Q: Yeah, it's marvelous.

Matz: By a wonderful architect, who's name is escaping me. Yes, it is magnificent.

Q: Yeah.

Matz: [Bertram] Goodhue did the church.

Q: Okay.

Matz: But it was a wonderful fight. Armstrong's dead now—he died a couple of years ago—but he was a wonderful man and a wonderful fighter. I remember getting a call one day about, something about St. Bart's. Should we allow something. I can't remember what the agreement was that they were trying to put together. I think maybe it was about the law. Somebody in Brooklyn had introduced a law that churches could not be designated.

I remember sitting at the Municipal Art Society, I was working there that day on press releases and what not, and Armstrong was out on his boat in the Atlantic somewhere. And the Municipal Art Society, I can't remember the exact thing, Municipal Art Society said, "It's okay." And Dorothy Miner who worked for the Landmarks Commission said, "It's okay." I called Armstrong out in the middle of the ocean and I said, "Armstrong, what do you think? I think this is dangerous to do." And he said, " Absolutely. Can't agree." That's the kind of guy he was, he was terrific.

We didn't go along with the MAS, and finally we won. I can't remember the exact thing we were being offered. Then of course we took a trainload of people up to Albany when that bill was introduced. I did the press for that, and Jackie [Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis] came with us.

Q: Really?

Matz: And she said to me, "I do not care to talk to the press, I don't want to talk to the press." And I said, "Okay, I'll keep the press away from you." An impossibility, right? We had a press

conference in Grand Central Terminal before we got on the train with her. We had a press conference as we're getting on the train with her. We had a press conference when we got off the train in Albany with her. When we got to the capital, whatever the hell it is, we held a press conference. She said she did not want to talk. She said, "Don't want to talk to the press." I said okay. We held a press conference, we're all sitting up there she's sitting up there and they start to ask her questions, what's she going to do? She had to answer. She was wonderful, she was wonderful. And then she stood and had her picture taken with every single legislator.

Q: So politically that killed that amendment I'm sure?

Matz: It died.

Q: Right away?

Matz: Well they held a big hearing in a big room that went up like this—and I'm crouching down. In those days I could crouch. I could walk. I could do everything. I'm crouching down where the photographers and press are, and she gets up and makes a speech. We had a lot of people making speeches that day, but she was wonderful, she was wonderful.

Then when Lever House was threatened, I called her and said would she come to the press conference and she came. She was funny. A reporter had called me and said, could I get him an interview with her? And I said, I'll ask her. So at the press conference for Lever House, we had a lot of press. But this guy couldn't come, but he wanted to interview her. He was a famous

reporter, and so as we're leaving the press conference, I said to her, "Jackie, this reporter,"—and I gave her the name—"would like to interview you, would you do it?" And she said to me, "I hate that guy." So I called him up and I said she would've loved to do it, she likes you so much, she would love to do it, but she's made it a policy not to give out interviews like that. They kill the messenger you know, and I was not going to be the messenger killed.

Q: That's funny. Well it seems like there's been other cases too where you've involved celebrity types, whether its Woody Allen or Jackie O in these efforts. Would you say that that was pretty key to the PR efforts historically, it's been that way in preservation—

Matz: I always felt it was helpful to have public officials and celebrities. I've always felt that that would, because the press is not interested in Joe Blow down the block, no matter how important the building is. He wants to get there and interview Jackie or Woody Allen or Tony Randall. Tony Randall was wonderful, he came to the site. He met with reporters. He was wonderful. I liked him so much. He would sit back on the couch in the foyer of The Cottages, and he would tell funny stories about how he was walking down Central Park West with his kid. He had a very young wife she was about fifty years younger than he was. He would be walking down Central Park West with a kid and people would ask is this your grandchild? He had two little children when he died and a very young wife, very young. They were very happy and in love, she was very nice. But the two of them agreed to, when I was honored by the Historic Districts Council [HDC] as their Lion of the Year, to be sponsors of the event.

Q: Yeah, yeah, yeah. When was that?

Matz: I think it was 2000 or 2001, I'm not sure. And it was really because of some friends of mine at the Historic District who put up my name and persuaded everybody.

Q: I'm sure it was more than that.

Matz: Persuaded everybody to go along, and they both agreed. Tony Randall and Woody Allen and Sinc Armstrong, he was alive then, agreed to be the sponsors of it. Have their names on the invitation. And I knew they wouldn't be there, but I wrote the letters for HDC inviting them to do it then I wrote the letters for HDC thanking them. I didn't expect them to come and they didn't. They're invited to those things everyday, but it was very nice that they agreed to be honorary chairmen of that event.

Q: Yes.

Matz: It was very nice. I really was very appreciative and it was a lovely event I mean there were a lot of public officials there, and even my nemesis.

Q: The former commissioner?

Matz: Yes.

Q: Jennifer Raab?

Matz: Jennifer was there that night and gave a speech about how wonderful I was. Unbelievable. She's very nice to me when she sees me. She's very sweet. She invites me to things, very nice. She just was not an appropriate commissioner. There are some that are not appropriate. The man now, it's a shame. He's a nice man, but he came in knowing nothing. He had to learn. He's learning, but his heart is not there. To be on a landmarks commission, your heart has to be there. When I was chairman of the landmarks committee at Board 5, I always said to the committee members, "I want members of the committee to love landmarks." That's very important—to love landmarks, to care. And I don't think [Robert B.] Tierney cares. He'll sometimes do the appropriate thing, but his heart is not there. Roberta Gratz, was the only one in recent years—I think she left.

Q: I think she's still on the commission.

Matz: She did a wonderful job with the Eldridge Street Synagogue.

Q: Oh yeah.

Matz: You know she started that; she hired me. She probably doesn't remember anymore, because she hired me for just a short time for the Eldridge Street Synagogue. She started it, Roberta did it. I never have seen her name in an article attributing anything to her, but she really started it. She was the one that hired me. I went down there with her, and they showed me all these nooks and crannies and a safe they opened that hadn't been opened in a hundred years. I

mean it was a fabulous place. When you walk in there, you feel as if you're walking back in time. You can hear the voices. It's amazing to walk into a landmark. We have so few interior designations, and that one is spectacular.

Q: Wow.

Matz: Spectacular and I'm not sure the interior is designated. Where were we?

Q: Well I think we were talking about a little bit about difference in the commission and Roberta seems to be someone who has her heart in it.

Matz: It's wonderful to know architecture. That's important for a commissioner. It's wonderful to know real estate. But it's very important to have the heart there. The job of the Landmarks commissioner is not to help real estate, that's not their job. The [New York] City Planning Commissioners, the [New York City] Board of Standards and Appeals—there are lots of places for real estate.

The job of the Landmarks Commission is to help landmarks, help preservation. Save important landmarks. Prevent them from being dismembered or injured or whatever. And our Landmarks Commission doesn't do that. It doesn't know what it's supposed to be doing. I don't think anybody ever said to them, "This is what you're supposed to do." I don't think Tierney was ever told that was what he was supposed to do, but that's what their job is. Just like my job, when I was chairman of the landmarks committee of Board 5, my job was to save landmarks in our

board area. It was to prevent any damage to them. And that's what the commission's job, is and I don't think they know what their job is. I don't think they're bad people. I just don't think they know why they're there. But that's what they're there for, and they don't do it. And I had always hoped that maybe Tony [Anthony C.] Wood would get to be a Landmarks commissioner, but he has no backing, no power, no political power. Nobody knows him. He would be wonderful because I think his heart would be in it.

Q: It sure would be.

Matz: But it's people like that who should be commissioners, to fight on the commission, to save a landmark. There's nobody there to fight for a landmark. We have to go there and fight. We shouldn't have to fight. They should be fighting. That's their responsibility, and they don't do it. But enough about them.

Q: I have a note here about 113th Street, a church?

Matz: Oh my little, my little—you know you can lead a horse to water but you can't make them drink. I give good advice, I get paid sometimes a lot of money for my advice. And if the people don't do it, don't follow my advice, there's nothing I can do about it.

I was reading about the Our Lady Queen of Angels [Catholic Church] on 113th Street and between Second and Third. It's an enclave. A housing project was built around it, and it's very historic, it really is. But I read about it in *The Times*, and I thought, god, I'd like to help them. So

I put in a call. I found the woman who was heading the group, took a long time to get her name, finally found her and offered my support. They were suspicious. "What did she want? Who is she?" You know people are very suspicious sometime. And the people up there are mostly very low income, Hispanic. They were very suspicious of me.

I wrote a long email to the local councilman to tell her who I was and what I did. I told them what I did, and I allowed them to come to my house for a meeting. I told them all about myself. And I think they were impressed. I said I would be happy to help them, but the point of the meeting was to tell them what they had to do. They were holding a lot of rallies in front of the church getting a lot of press but I said that's not enough. It wasn't enough.

I sat down and decided I needed to know what that church was. What was it? When was it built? Nobody knew. So I spent hours researching it. I went up there several times to look at it. It was not the kind of church you would say was important to save. Very plain, very small. But I began to really research it. I was researching Catholic records. And in the Catholic records, they were talking about this little church. It turned out that the man who came to the United States from Switzerland and became a father of the Catholic Church out in Chicago. He founded the Capuchin [Franciscans] Order, in the U.S. In Europe, the Capuchins were very important, very strong. He came here to America there was no Capuchin Order. He founded it, and then he came to New York. He was invited to come to New York by the Archbishop of New York.

Q: Wow.

Matz: An Italian name, I can't remember. He came to New York and the Archbishop asked him to build a little church for the German community, so this Father Barthalomeo *[phonetic]* went up to 113th Street he bought a piece of property on 112th Street and he had people worshiping there while he built the church on 113th. He hired the most foremost church architect in the country, and that was [William] Schickel. He hired Schickel to build this little church. So between Schickel and the little church,1868, it was built by Schickel, and Barthalomeo I think his name was, I can't remember—who built it at the request of the Archbishop for this little German community, very important.

Q: It's an amazing story. You researched and got that whole story together, that's incredible.

Matz: I researched it found out all this and the Catholic records. It's in the Catholic records. I couldn't believe that the Catholic Church wanted to close it down. They came and locked it up. You couldn't get inside. So the parishioners were having services out in the street, getting a lot of press in *The Times*. But I told them, "You have to go—" I went to the Landmarks Commission with my report, and they were very nice. Over the phone as a matter of fact, they allowed me to put in a request for evaluation with the research department. That's the way it works. And I sent them everything I had, and as I collected more material I sent it to them knowing they would never designate it. They were not going to fight with the church. They haven't once stood up to the Catholic Church.

They did designate some churches in Harlem, but I don't think the church cared. The Diocese was determined to close this little church. So I explained to this little group that met in my house.

Meanwhile I had gotten the HDC, Landmark West, Friends of the Upper Eastside Historic District, Landmarks Conservancy all to write letters to the commission. Those letters went to the group and to the councilmen up there. And I was letting the councilmen know that she had to reach out to the—

[INTERRUPTION]

Matz: I explained to her that you have to get the congressman, you have to get the state senator, you have to get the state assemblymen, you have to get everybody to support you. She did nothing, nothing. I told the group the same thing. I emailed letters to all those people asking for their help, but I was from outside. I wasn't a parishioner. The parishioners had to go; I explained it all to them. Then word comes down to me that the Landmarks Commission will not designate it.

Q: When was this?

Matz: Just this year. Meanwhile everybody had supported it. It was a shame. It is a shame, but there's nothing more I can do. They are not even staying in touch with me and I said to them, "You know I get thousands for my advice. Take it." I went up to their community board and got the community board. They didn't go, I did to get the community board to vote to designate it.

Q: And they did or they?

Matz: The community board did it. But they never sent the letter to the commission. I called them twenty times. “Did you send the resolution to the commission?” “No we don’t have a chair. We can’t do it yet”. I wrote a resolution for them. You know you can only do so much, and then if you’re dealing with people who won’t listen to you there’s nothing more you can do. It’s wonderful for them to rally outside the church and pray outside the church every Sunday, but that doesn’t do the job, and publicity alone doesn’t do the job. I tell people this.

I’m helping some people pro-bono down on Fifty-Fourth [Street]. Between Fifty-Third [Street] and Fifty-Sixth Street, there are some buildings. Some blocks there between Fifth and Sixth [Avenue] that have some wonderful historic buildings, wonderful. It’s an historic enclave. It should be a designated historic district. But the commission said no. So I have been bringing one at a time buildings to the community board to get the board to vote for them so we could then send them to—

Q: The commission?

Matz: Yes. We don’t hear from the commission. Nothing. The commission recently designated two, but there’s a lot of development going to go on there and a lot of buildings going to be lost. And I’m working for them for nothing because I know how much money they have, and I also know that they have not hired a lawyer even though I pleaded with them to hire a lawyer. I begged them to hire a lawyer. They hired Andrew [S.] Dolkart, you know Andrew? They couldn’t pay Andrew for months, and all his kids were doing the work I think they only wanted

four or six thousand, something like that. They didn't have the money, so I worked pro-bono for them. I didn't want anything. I just wanted them to do what I told them to do.

They had these magnificent pictures of some of the buildings. I said, "Get them down to the commission." Never went. What can you do? I think if they paid me, they would listen to me more. I think all these groups that I work pro-bono for would listen to me more if they were paying me. If they were paying me a lot of money, they would feel obligated to listen. I give them very good advice, but they don't do what I tell them to do. They have these glorious pictures, they have this glorious picture of this red building. It's so gorgeous, that's the one that the architect who built all the chateaux in Canada built. It's gorgeous, it's historic and the commission said no. Had they seen the picture, had they taken that big enormous thing down to the commission and left it there for everybody to see, I think the commission would have acted differently.

I'm not chairman of that committee any more.

Q: The CB5 Committee?

Matz: Yes. We have a new chairman, and he appointed a man who never was on the landmarks committee, ever, didn't know anything about landmarks, to be the chair. I don't know why. Maybe he didn't like my high profile. I don't know why he did it. It was a great shame, not for me but for landmarks. I can't do anything now to bring landmarks before the board to help them.

I'm going to research the Pennsylvania Hotel now, but I don't think there's a prayer. He probably has a permit to demolish it. That whole area there is being demolished—the stores, the hotel, everything. It's a shame. That's the guy who's involved with Madison Square Garden and the Post Office. It's a shame. You could do a lot of things and still save the hotel, but I haven't started to research it yet, I may find that it's not worth saving. I'll look it up I'll study it. I'll go to everyplace I can do to find out what it is, but. That's what I did with these buildings on Fifty-Fourth and Fifty-Sixth.

They gave me some buildings, and I said, you're not giving me—Andrew's kids had done a little brief like this, I said, "That's not enough. Do you have any more of it?" And they said, "No." So I researched each one because you need to get a lot of material. We did hire Mary Deerick *[phonetic]*. A man down in Greenwich Village, notified me that there were three fire houses that were very significant. They were very early before the fire department, when they used to have private fire engines. These three buildings—one downtown, one on Thirty-something Street, and one in Brooklyn—are the remnants in the country of this kind of fire control. They're called Fire Control Stations? They're not city, they were private. They were run by the people who give out the insurance for fires. One of the people who I assigned, I assigned two people to research it, called Mary Deerick and asked her to help. She agreed to do it for free, which was really extraordinary.

Q: Wow. Yeah.

Matz: She did a wonderful report. We have not heard back from the commission, and the board voted for it because they're very historic. Not only historic, but they're architecturally very good. Behind one is still the stable that housed the horses that used to pull the fire engines.

Q: Wow. So it seems like that you've bumped up against some difficulties at the commission in recent years. Were there just—

Matz: Everybody has.

Q: —a lack of communication and in your early years you know the first things that you got involved with would you, was there more communication?

Matz: When we were doing City and Suburban, we met with the commission many times, with the commissioner I can't think of his name, big tall black guy. We met with him. I remember him saying, "The Landmarks Commission's like a train, and you're here the last car and you have to wait until all the cars go by for your car to come in." That's like yesterday I remember. We met more frequently with the commission then.

Q: Yes.

Matz: They were more open and receptive and the staff was different. I used to call the staff when something came to the committee of the community board. I would call the staff and I would call the person responsible for the particular item and talk to them about it. I'd want their

input on, “What do you think about this building? What do you think about this proposal? It’s coming to the board I’d like to know a little bit more about it.” And they would help me. Not give me advice, but they would give me more information, which is what you need to make a decision. You can’t do that anymore. That doesn’t exist.

It’s a shame; it started really with Jennifer I think. Everybody was afraid of her, afraid to talk to anybody. The staff was afraid to talk to anybody. Its just like when we delivered those books to everybody on The Cottages, she went wild. “How dare we go to the homes of the commissioners and drop them off.” Well, we had done something wrong, so what? Make a big deal about it. She could have just said, “You know, we don’t like that. Deliver it to the office.” Now we just deliver whatever we have to the commission and hope that the commissioners get it. We don’t know. So when I testify, I always take ten copies of everything, as everybody else does, and leave them there.

One funny story. I spoke against the Historical Society changes. I didn’t address the tower because its not there yet, but I did address the changes. I said, “This is an evil organization.” And when I used the word evil I’m watching Tierney. Tierney has a very expressive face. You can always tell what he’s thinking. Sometimes he laughs. Sometimes he grins. Sometimes he scowls. He was aghast at my use of the word evil. I didn’t say anything, but I knew what his reaction was; it was a very strong word to use about this organization. I felt very strongly about the changes they wanted to make.

Q: And you had seen that before.

Matz: And I used the word evil about the administration of the Historical Society. But I wrote him a letter not apologizing, I did not apologize. I simply said that I realized from his face that he was disturbed by my use of the word evil, and I would try to refrain from using that word again. But I did not apologize *[laughter]*.

Q: That's a good one.

Matz: But anyway I'm usually very calm when I testify. I don't testify very much anymore. When Halina Rosenthal was head of the Upper East Side Historic District, we all use to go down and testify. She went and she would bring all of us with her. And those were heady days, because at least they were listening. I don't know if they listen now. I have a feeling that before it's heard, the decision has been made. But I don't know that. I'm only guessing. And it's really not fair to say because I have no proof of that. It's very secret. The commission is very secret. You do not know why they turn something down. You merely get a letter saying that, "We're not designating this." That's it. You have any questions for me?

Q: Yeah, what about the way that the press has changed over the years if at all. I mean you've had a lot of experience.

Matz: Well there were always one or two reporters on every paper that liked to write about landmarks and were open to phone calls, and now you don't have as much of that. And now you have these important guys on *The Times*. I see one of them died the other day

Q: Yeah, [Herbert] Muschamp, yeah.

Matz: But they are much more receptive to the—they write about the design of the building rather than what the building will replace. They don't really, [Paul] Goldberger use to write a little bit more about preservation and be a little bit more reachable, but I don't know.

Q: It does seem like there's more of an emphasis on the star architects and what are they building.

Matz: Exactly.

Q: And not so much about what does this mean for the people who live around these buildings and the community.

Matz: It's just like the building on Madison opposite the hotel on Seventy-Sixth [Street]. The articles that were written about that were mostly about the design, about the developer, about the wonderful things he wanted to do. The community had joined together, and hired a PR man, and were spending a fortune. And although they won, they did not get the same kind of story.

Q: Yes, the preservation issues were not discussed.

Matz: The preservation issue was not in there. Mostly it was about the design. I testified at the commission on that, too. There were a lot of people testifying on that. And as a matter of fact I was on TV. I didn't know I was being filmed. I love being on TV. I love it. I didn't know I was even being filmed or quoted. I was quoted in *The Post* I think. I guess I gave a good speech *[laughter]*.

Q: I'm sure you did.

Matz: But most of the stories were by these reporters that are into architecture. Even *The [New York] Sun*, which frequently does a different kind of story, wrote a glowing story about the architecture. The architecture's terrible. Not just it's on top of a landmark in a historic district, because everything in a historic district is a landmark, but its inappropriate. It's a terrible design. It's a bully. It's a Peter Kalikow all over again. Different, not the same kind of bully, but a bully. He came with his entourage, they spend a fortune and we have to fight to raise the money. This group that fought it was all from Madison and Park and Fifth—very rich people who joined to fight it, spent a lot of money on PR, did win. But it's going to come back, no question about that. It's going to come back. Just like the Historical Society's come back. Why should they give up? They know if they keep doing it over and over they'll win, with this commission. They know it with this commission. That's what's so terrible about this commission; the real estate people know that they'll win.

Q: That's what I was going to ask, there's a pretty strong real estate market in the 1980's, and then again now it's just, it's out of control.

Matz: Not like today.

Q: Yeah, not like today.

Matz: It was very strong, and the Real Estate Board has always been strong. And the developers have always been strong. But today, because of the market, because of the value of real estate and the value of the apartments, that gives them more power. I mean you used to be able to get an apartment for a thousand dollars. Forget it. Even City and Suburban, which was really rentable, affordable, he puts in new stoves, new toilets, new everything. The apartments there are renting for thirteen hundred dollars, and they're miniscule. The whole apartment is maybe as big as this room, maybe a little smaller. It's too bad, the fight is more, and Landmark West does a great job fighting. The Landmarks Commission doesn't like them. I have always said that we have to deal with the commission, so let's not attack them. We have to work with them. They're there.

Q: Right.

Matz: They exist. We have to work with them. Why antagonize them? Fight with them? So that they hate you when you go to testify? Do the opposite. When they do something good, congratulate them. But don't attack them. See, I'm attacking them viciously now, but I would not do that with the press.

Q: Right.

Matz: In the first place, it wouldn't be fair because they're not here to argue with me. And in the second place, what do I have to gain from that? Nothing. And I've told Landmark West that. Preservationists don't listen to each other, you know.

Q: What do you mean by that?

Matz: Everybody in preservation thinks that they're the expert. Everybody. Whatever group it is, whatever person it is, they think they're the expert. And it's easier to give advice to people who don't know anything than to people who know everything, or think they know everything.

Q: Well sort of towards wrapping up, was there anything I didn't ask you that you'd like address I mean other—

Matz: Let me see what I *[crosstalk]*.

Q: Yeah if you have a list of—

Matz: You see I did do other battles, like fighting [Donald J.] Trump.

Q: Oh, what was that?

Matz: You know Trump built all along the Hudson River. I worked for a group called—I can't think of the exact name, but it's the coalition on the west side. It's headed by a woman by the name of Pollace *[phonetic]*. And it's a wonderful group, a wonderful group of people who fight to save landmarks. Who fought to help with the Beacon. Who fight to prevent over-development. They're a wonderful group, wonderful. One of the best in the city, if not the best. And they have been fighting Trump for years on that project to prevent development along the railroad tracks there and to make it a park area and a—

Q: Near Riverside Park or—?

Matz: Yes, below it.

Q: Yes south okay, I can picture that.

Matz: Below it, south of it, below. If you go below Seventy-Second [Street], there's a very historic building on the corner of Seventy-Second and Riverside Drive. Very historic. Where a big Trump building was going up in front of it.

Q: Okay.

Q: There were a lot of reasons to fight this project. And I was working also for Landmark West at that time. This isn't a nice story, so turn that off.

[INTERRUPTION]

Matz: After that I never worked for Landmark West again. They hired a big PR firm and I've never worked for them again. I have helped them when they called me. When they called me for help on anything regarding preservation I've always been willing to help them. That was—

Q: No, it's a—

Matz: You know there are things people do for whatever reason. They do them to be friendly with Trump, to be able to go to his office, to be able to meet with him, to be able to dine with him. People will sell their souls for that. It doesn't take much to buy somebody.

You're very young, and you haven't really learned about the world yet, but you will learn, and you may even be approached. I was working for the Bryant Park Restoration Corporation—that's a historic park, you know. When they first hired me, the park was a mess. A man by the Dan [Daniel A.] Biederman was hired by the park—by the library I think—to put it together, to clean it up. Then later the same people formed the Grand Central Partnership. And the man who headed the Grand Central Partnership owned the building. This is very convoluted.

Q: I'm following.

Matz: But it's an interesting story. I was doing PR for both organizations, big client—Bryant Park and Grand Central Partnership. The man who headed the Grand Central Partnership owned

a building on Fifth Avenue and Thirty-Fourth Street—Altman's [B. Altman and Co.] Department Store?

Q: Oh yes.

Matz: And a proposal came to us to build on top of Altman's, and I proceeded to fight it on the community board wherever I could. I get a call one day from Biederman, who heads Bryant Park and who was my client, and he says to me, "Joyce, you're upsetting—" I can't think of the realtors name, "—you're upsetting him very much with your fight against his proposal to build on top of Altman's. You'll have to stop doing that". And I said, "Dan I can't do that, and you can't tell me to do it." He said, "Well, we can't have you our PR people if you won't do it." I said, "Then you'll have to fire me." And that's what they did, they fired me. I lost both enormous accounts, my biggest.

Q: Wow.

Matz: Because I could not let anybody tell me what to do when it came to preservation. I couldn't allow it. A realtor telling me what to do? And Dan worked for the realtor, because Dan was putting together the Grand Central Partnership and the head of the board was this realtor. But in life you can't allow that, you can't allow anybody to tell you something you know is wrong, to do something that is wrong.

Biederman's an interesting case. I like him so much, but he was corrupted. He was chairman of the community board, I put him there. We organized to make him chairman of the community board. He was wonderful—saving landmarks, supporting landmarks, doing everything. But when he became head of the Bryant Park Restoration Corporation, where Bryant Park's a scenic landmark and Grand Central Partnership, he became a different person. He was subservient to the realtors and he became one of them. It was such a shame, because he's a lovely guy. He's smart, he's nice. Attractive man. Did a wonderful job at Bryant Park despite all the fights and everything, but he was corrupted. Remember that, as you get older.

Q: I will.

Matz: I don't know what you plan to do with your life, but there's two roads. You know there's a poem by Robert Frost about two roads. You don't have to take the one that's no good. I'm a little weepy because it reminds me of something. But I went there to Robert Frost's, have you ever been there?

Q: No, no.

Matz: There are signs on the trees, you know, for the poems. You walk down lanes and there are signs—each one with a poem on it. But it's true—you don't have to take that road. You're not going to make the same kind of money. Maybe, I don't know. I think you can be rich and honest. I really think you can be.

Q: Well I think you've had a wonderful career making those decisions. I mean in your capacity as a PR person. I mean there's obviously conflicts of interests that come up all the time but—

Matz: Well somebody once asked me if I would work for Trump. And you know I thought about that. How much would Trump have to offer me for me to work with him a million? Two million? Five million? I'm lucky I don't need the money. I don't have a wife and children to support. That makes a big difference, you know. It changes your whole perspective on things, when you have a family to support and the money's tight and you need to pay the mortgage. I don't have that. It's very easy for me to be honest. Very easy. Don't give me credit for that, really.

Q: Okay.

Matz: Because it's an easy thing to be, but it's not so easy when—that's why when somebody asked me that question about working for Trump, there's nothing he could offer me that I need. I have more than enough to live on, for anything I need. So what could he offer me, marriage? *[Laughter]*. Nothing. I can't think of anything that man could give me that would buy me, you know?

Q: Yes. No that's a great lesson.

Matz: But if I were a young lawyer—there's a lawyer that I know who always helped us with preservation. Still advises us, very good. Worked for Trump to help him fight to build that big building on First Avenue. He had bought air rights from every building in the neighborhood, and

just piled them one on top of the other. There was an organization that took him to court. He was a lawyer who should not have represented Trump, because he had never been on that side. But Trump must have offered him a lot of money. Trump does pay big fees. And this was a lawyer who was not doing well and not feeling well, and he took the job. I can understand it. People criticized him, but I never said a word because I could understand it. If you need money and he offers so much, you know? You will find that in life.

[INTERRUPTION]

Q: Well is there anything else that I haven't mentioned that you want to get in here.

Matz: Well let me look, I just made a few notes so let's see.

Q: We've covered a lot, and we're well over two hours so—

Matz: Margot Gayle, Margot Gayle.

Q: Oh yes.

Matz: Margot Gayle is one of these extraordinary people who saved and got designated a lot of buildings downtown in the—what do you call that district?

Q: Soho.

Matz: No, it's the district where they use to put windows in like that *[laughs]*. Oh whatever. Anyway Margot is wonderful. And the library, she saved the library [Jefferson Market Library]. It was a jail down in Greenwich Village.

Q: Oh yes.

Matz: And she saved that, and it was restored by Giorgio Cavalieri, who just died, who I use to go out with.

Q: Oh really?

Matz: Lovely man, lovely man. He would only take me out during the week, and I said to him one day, "Giorgio you never invite me out on weekends.Why is that?" So he said, "I've got a girlfriend that I see on weekends, and she doesn't want to see me during the week." He was such a nice guy. Yes, he restored that library. But Margot is terrific. And I did some PR for her pro-bono for the Yorkville Clock. She raised some money to have the Yorkville Clock restored. It's a very historic little—not little, big clock. One of those standing clocks?

Q: I can picture it yeah.

Matz: And I did the PR for her for free, I wouldn't charge for things like that. Margot is going to be—how old? A hundred? This year? I go to her birthday parties every year. She's a remarkable

woman. She cannot hear a word. She's much worse than I am but so you write to her and she writes or talks back. She's wonderful, an extraordinary preservationist. Taught me a lot. And would always send me notes, "You must write a letter to the commission on this issue." And, "You must write a letter on this issue." She was forever sending me letters to write. I should write to the commission on this or that, and if I asked her for a letter on anything, she would write it. And she was always fighting to save buildings, and we didn't always agree.

There was group trying to save the [Tisch] Children's Zoo in Central Park. A friend of mine was trying to do that. She got in a lot of trouble because of it, and Margot didn't agree with her. We don't always agree. And that's okay. And sometimes we don't testify the way others want us to. You just do the best you can, you do what you think is right. That's the most important thing—to do what you think is right.

I have another philosophy, when in doubt, don't. If I'm not sure about something, then I do nothing about it. If I'm not sure something is really important, then I don't do anything, or I research it more. But just because somebody asked me to do something, doesn't mean that I'm going to do it. We do a lot of favors for one another, because everybody's got a favorite landmark they're trying to save right now. But you don't always have to help. Somebody asked me to support some naming for Eighty-Sixth Street. They wanted to name it after a German soldier who helped the American Revolution. I didn't write that letter because I didn't know if he was the appropriate man to name that street after, you know what I'm saying?

Q: Right, right.

Matz: So that's my point—when in doubt, don't.

Q: Yeah, because its very easy to just start supporting everything and writing letters for everything.

Matz: Yeah, because a friend calls you up and says do this, or somebody who helped you do something you asked, they ask you for a favor, you don't always have to do it if you're not sure it's the right thing to do. And I wasn't sure about naming Eighty-Sixth Street after this German general. It was Yorkville once. It's still called Yorkville, but it's not Yorkville. There's no German restaurants or German people there anymore. I don't think you could find a German restaurant. Once, before you were born, it was all German. It's not that way anymore.

Q: Right.

Matz: So I'm not sure it's appropriate to name it after a German general. I'm not sure. What else did I want to mention, I'm not sure here. Why did I put this historic district Fifty-Fourth to FIfy-FIfth?

Q: I got that.

Matz: I talked about that.

Q: Yeah.

Matz: City and Suburban, Yorkville Clock, Beacon Theater, St. Bart's, Save the Cottages, and Pier 8 and Town Hall. That's all I could think of on the way over here.

Q: Excellent, I think we covered a lot of ground. Thank you so much for your time.

[END OF INTERVIEW]