

San Francisco Film Society  
Oral History Project

**Interview with Jerry Mander**  
**Conducted by Lee Amazonas**  
**San Francisco, CA**  
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LEE AMAZONAS: This is an interview for the San Francisco International Film Festival History Project. This is Lee Amazonas. I'm interviewing Jerry Mander and we're doing the interview in his office in San Francisco.

I'd like to start by asking you a little something about your background. Where you were born, your educational and professional life.

JERRY MANDER: Okay. I was born in the Bronx. I grew up in Yonkers, New York. I went to school at the University of Pennsylvania, Wharton School of Business. Where I got an undergraduate degree in economics. Then I went to graduate school at Columbia University and got a master's in international economics. And I was not studying film, I knew nothing about film. But I'm jumping ahead. What else do you want to know?

LEE AMAZONAS: Well, that was how you got started professionally. What was your first—

JERRY MANDER: My first exposure to this whole territory was while living in New York, taking my master's at Columbia. There were those film societies in New York, like Cinema 16, that were playing Stan Brakhage and Maya Deren and all the experimental films of the period. I used to go to those and I got fascinated with film through that, and used to hang out at those places sometimes. Then, when I graduated college, I went into the advertising business and I really became enthusiastic about advertising. I was fascinated. I thought it was just really terrific and creative and beautiful and jazzy. So I went into advertising when I got out of college. But my first job was with a big corporation in New Jersey, and I hated that job. I came to California, to San Francisco, in 1960. I came here because it was beautiful and wonderful, and I was very affected by the beauty of the place. But I didn't have work, and so I applied for a job. I was working at the City of Paris, which was a big store, and then I decided that what I wanted to do was to set up a film society like Cinema 16, and I also wanted to start repertory films. In those days, Pauline Kael was doing all that work at Berkeley. She was on KPFA and doing these fantastic interviews, and I just was really in love with Pauline Kael. I became friends with Ernest (Chick) Callenbach, who was then the editor of **Film Quarterly**. I decided that what I wanted to do was open up my own theater of the kind that she had in Berkeley, showing film repertory. And I did. I opened it down on Hyde Street in San Francisco, opposite the Buena Vista Café, at a

theater called the Playhouse which was, up until then, just for plays. But I started a little film repertory theater there. The first night, I presented a panel of Pauline Kael and my friend Chick and Henry Breitrose from Stanford. Albert Johnson may have been on that panel, too. I don't remember. It was a pretty good panel. They talked about old movies and a lot about repertory film at that time. But the thing didn't go well. I couldn't build up an audience well enough. This was quite a few years before the Surf Theatre started, which later did make a success out of that kind of format. But I didn't know how to do it well enough, I guess.

I had heard from somebody that there was a job open at the San Francisco Film Festival, which had just started a couple of years before. And I went there, and I got hired by Irving Levin. It was sort of a nondescript job. The only other full-time employee was Bob Greensfelder, who you really ought to interview, by the way. Bob Greensfelder was there much longer than I was and was much more deeply involved with Irving. We shared an office together. It was basically a closet. Irving at that time, managed a lot of theaters. United California Theatres and one other chain of theaters. So Bob and I shared a little kind of office in the back of Irving's office. It was literally a closet, a storage room, and the two of us worked in there. We were very, very badly paid and worked at least six or seven days a week almost every week.

Irving was a tough employer because he was always there seven days a week and very, very old-style "work is life" kind of thing. So we were always expected to be there too, and we were there a lot of the time. We also had to work one night a week at his theaters as managers. I worked at the Vogue Theatre and at the Coronet Theatre as the manager for one night a week. It was a hard job. But it was also fun because we were working on the Film Festival, too. That was the one with **Ballad of a Soldier** in it. So this would have been—

LEE AMAZONAS: Was that 1960?

JERRY MANDER: Let's see what year this was. Yeah, 1960. **Ballad of a Soldier** was a big deal because a big Russian delegation came, and it was the first time for a film from Russia. There was something completely new about it. I think it was the first Soviet film that came to the United States, and there was all this stuff about whether it was a propaganda film or not. John Cassavetes' film **Shadows** was part of the Festival too. That was also kind of a big deal. And

there were one or two others that were a sort of big deal in those days. **La Dolce Vita**. But that had been around already, I'm pretty sure.

LEE AMAZONAS: And that, in the end, was canceled.

JERRY MANDER: It was? I don't remember that. You know more about it than I do, I'm sure.

LEE AMAZONAS: It was very last-minute.

JERRY MANDER: I remember everything was centered around **Ballad of a Soldier**. That was a very, very big deal, and it got a lot of attention. News stories were appearing about it. A couple of the stars were there. There were a lot of parties. A lot of Hollywood people came up. I became the publicist for the Festival, so you'd think I'd remember some of these films! But **Ballad of a Soldier**, all our energy went into that. I was also the publicist for his theaters at that time. So that's what got me into doing publicity work, which actually led me back into the advertising business after a while.

LEE AMAZONAS: When you started working, it sounded like you didn't start with publicity. What kind of things did you start doing for him?

JERRY MANDER: I just started doing errands. I was very young. Let's see, that was 1960, so I was 24 years old. I was just basically a helper around the place. I would file things and look things up, and call people if he needed to tell them something. It was only a matter of a couple of months before I became the publicist for him. It was very, very quick, because he had a lot of work to do, both for his theaters and for the Festival. He would deal with Bob and I like we were his major consultants. He was very mistrustful of other people, pretty much. He wasn't very inclusive about anything he was doing in terms of the decisions that were being made around films. I'm not so sure how he actually made his decisions about which films to show. I think they would come to him. I don't think he really went out exploring too much.

LEE AMAZONAS: Would he ask you about your opinion on any films that he was considering?

JERRY MANDER: Yeah. If I would see them. I wouldn't always see them, but if we had a chance to look at them, he would ask Bob and I what we thought. I didn't have a very developed viewpoint about films in those days, so I wasn't much help, I don't think. I think Bob was much more grounded and much more interesting in terms of his analysis of these films. Was that '61? Because I think I worked on two Festivals. I think I worked on this one too, but I'm trying to remember because there were a few films I got very involved in.

LEE AMAZONAS: You left after the '61 Festival?

JERRY MANDER: What happened is that I became a pretty good publicist, mainly working for his commercial theaters, and I also got to know a lot of local artists and performers and people doing creative work. I became very close friends with Anna Halprin, who was a dancer and had a dancing company called The Dancers Workshop. I quit working for Levin because the pay was just terrible and it was just not very satisfying work. I was getting other opportunities, and people were asking me to do publicity for them. I then became a publicist, a press agent, for movies and for other theatrical and artistic things that were going on in town. I worked for Anna Halprin. I became her manager, and we traveled around Europe together and did big performances at European opera houses and things like that. That would have been 1962 or '63, right after I quit the Festival.

Then I later became the publicist for The Committee, which was a satirical theater group. I actually launched them. I was very close friends with Alan Myerson, who was the director, and we launched The Committee, and I stayed with it for many years. From that, I went into the commercial advertising business for a while before I quit that. I don't even remember the circumstance under which I left the Festival, but the working situation was very unpleasant there. I wanted to get out and I wanted to do my own thing.

LEE AMAZONAS: You mentioned the pay was low.

JERRY MANDER: It was extraordinarily low.

LEE AMAZONAS: What were some of the other things that you may have liked? Or not liked?

JERRY MANDER: I liked working among films. I felt I was learning a lot. I liked helping create the events. I liked doing the publicity because I got to go around to the newspapers and meet all the writers and talk about films. I met a lot of interesting film people who are still my friends now. I liked that part of it. I wasn't crazy about working with Irving Levin. He was a difficult guy. I admired his audaciousness at doing this thing. He seemed to pull it together with very little money. It was a great effort for him to pull it together. He had another full-time business going the whole time he did it. He did it without any real support from the city. All the stuff that came from the city kicked in later, and he never got much benefit of any of that. He basically did it on his own in his spare time. I think we were his whole staff, the two of us, for those years. He continued with the Festival for a few years after that. But I don't know who he hired later on. I wasn't at all surprised when the city sort of took it away from him. I think he was limited by his personality to kind of keep it all on his table, you might say. He wanted to keep everything on his own table and make all decisions on his own.

He was typical of a certain kind of businessman in those days. My father was a lot like him. He could also be very charming. And he was entertaining. He tried to be nice. He would include us in everything because we were sort of his best friends in that whole deal in those days. Pauline Kael wanted to participate, and Chick Callenbach wanted to participate, and Henry Breitrose, and some of these same people who I had met earlier. And Albert Johnson used to come around and talk to him. "Why don't you do this? Why don't you do that?" He would consider it all. I don't know what his thought process was about it all, but he would never let go of any control of anything. He was the one who was going to finally decide how everything was going to go. He never developed any real support groups, you might say.

There was some kind of women's auxiliary, some kind of friends of the Film Festival, I believe. I'm vaguely remembering that now, but it was basically his own thing. It was people he pulled together to do this. He would talk to the mayor every once in a while and the mayor would say, "This is great that you're doing it," but he never got any real meaningful civic support. So he had a tough go. I don't think the city understood what a film festival could be. It was still very early in the whole history of film festivals. You had Cannes and you had Venice. And you had a few other big ones, but every other town didn't have a film festival like they do now.

It was audacious and it was fun. Irving took films seriously and he wanted to be a figure who would do something important about films. He just played it as it came. He didn't have any long-range plan. It was just what he could do in his spare time at his desk while he wasn't working on his movie theaters, on Saturday. It was pretty much run that way, just out of his hip pocket. I'm not even sure he had a real separate budget for it. I think he just operated it out of the budget for his theaters and he called it promotional expense. I'm pretty sure he did do it that way. I don't think he managed to raise much money for the Festival at that time. I think he just took his Metro Theatre and he said, "We're going to have a film festival here. Bring a bunch of films from around the world, and it will be interesting. And we'll have panels. Maybe some movie stars will come, and that'll be a film festival." I think that's more or less the way he conceived of it. I don't know if that's very helpful to you.

LEE AMAZONAS: It's very helpful. There aren't very many people who'd have that kind of insight into Bud Levin.

JERRY MANDER: You must talk to Bob Greensfelder. He's way ahead of me in terms of his experience. Because, I was there a year-and-a-half, maybe. Bob was probably there five years. And Bob was all by himself until I got there, so he was very happy when I got there, and we hung out a lot, and I'm still a friend of his. He knows much more. And he was also much more attuned. I was new to the whole thing. And possibly he has more understanding of who Irving Levin really was.

LEE AMAZONAS: You did refer to the Council of Friends, the women's auxiliary. I was about to ask about the socialites, because it seems that from the very beginning—

JERRY MANDER: There were some socialites involved.

LEE AMAZONAS: From what I've been able to read, it seemed they did a lot of the day-to-day work.

JERRY MANDER: No. They put on a lot of parties. They didn't do the day-to-day work. I don't know what the reports said, but that's not the way it happened. The day-to-day work was done in the back room with Bob and I.

LEE AMAZONAS: The two of you.

JERRY MANDER: Well, Bud had a secretary also, named Dolores. She did a lot of work. She would take care of all the calling of people and arranging a party, trying to get the nuts and bolts all working, and travel arrangements and all that stuff. She would do all that kind of thing. These committees that got set up, these socialite committees, he would try to get them to do parties. And they did do parties. That was a big part of the Film Festival. He would try to arrange parties for each film and for each delegation that was coming in. I remember Barnaby Conrad was pretty involved in it, and a few other socialites. I can't remember who they all were. Well, you must know if you've been reading the old papers.

LEE AMAZONAS: One is Marion Davies Lewis.

JERRY MANDER: Marion Davies Lewis. Right. She would come around every now and then and talk about parties. That group understood how this was a glamorous thing, potentially, and they were trying to make it work. But if the stories are saying they did real work, that's not true. They did do promotional work in the sense that they would do these parties, and there was a lot of press around the parties. There was social press. In those days, in San Francisco, there was a separate section on society, there was a separate society page devoted strictly to that. It was a good way to publicize things. And he did cater to that. He tried to make that happen a lot, and succeeded to some degree. I forgot about that. That's true. That was an important part of it. Like, when these Russians came to town, they were just all over these parties, and it was a big, big thing. Marion Davies Lewis, that's right, and Barnaby Conrad was another one. If you found the names, I'd probably recognize them.

LEE AMAZONAS: Through the years, there were scores and scores of them. Marion Davies Lewis is somebody who seemed to come back year after year and was the head of many of these committees. Did you work with them when you were doing publicity?

JERRY MANDER: No, I didn't work with them much because Bud wanted to work with them. See, I think that was another one of his things. I don't know if he really was a social climber himself. In those days there was a big hierarchy between the socialites and the non-socialites.



Much less now, but in those days it was a much bigger deal. He was definitely a Jewish businessman kind of guy—which my father was too, so I understood the species very, very well—and he wanted to be accepted in these fancier, ritzier circles, you might say. So that was his territory. Bob and I were rarely involved with them. I had a very, very fancy girlfriend, though, I must say, in those days. A model. A well-known model. And that got me invited to a lot of things. And he began to see that as a good thing, that my girlfriend was being invited to everything. So then I started to get included at a certain point.

LEE AMAZONAS: So you went to a number of these parties?

JERRY MANDER: Oh, I went to the parties. Bob and I would go to the parties, but we weren't the organizers of the parties.

LEE AMAZONAS: What was it like to go to these parties?

JERRY MANDER: They were just, I guess, the standard socialite parties. In those days, I think they had less content than they do now. Most socialites who get involved in these things know something about them. Back then, it seemed to me they were just glad to have celebrities coming through. The year I mainly worked on it we had mainly Russian celebrities. The young woman who was a movie star from Russia was there. She was very charming and nice and fun. There were a couple of other people from the film who were around, I believe. The producers or distributors were there. And there were some people from other films who were there. A lot of effort was put into taking them around and showing them things. I remember there was an outing to Napa we all went on one day. They had parties at the wineries and whatever. To me it was a different world than I had grown up in, but I wasn't that attracted to it. It didn't appeal to me that much. It did really appeal to Bud Levin. He really, really liked that. Bob would try to avoid it. I would go along, and I was included in most of those kind of things.

LEE AMAZONAS: Do you have any stories about the Russian filmmakers and performers who came?

JERRY MANDER: No, but they were very, very sensible. They were just regular, they weren't Hollywood-style stars. They came out of an industry that was very different. It was a state-run

industry. Even though this film was a little bit critical, it was a state-run operation, and they didn't have a lot of pretensions. They were very nice, regular people. Now, we did have—I don't know if it was that year or another year—we did get involved with some young movie star wannabes who started doing things like jumping in the pools in front of the Palace of Fine Arts. There was a woman—I remember her name, Jeri Elam, because we got to be friends later. Her father was a famous actor, Jack Elam, who was a kind of a Hollywood heavy kind of guy. She came. She was very beautiful and very funny. She was hilarious. And she just said, “Well, you know, if I'm going to be a movie star, I've gotta do something here. So I'm gonna jump in there and take my clothes off.” She didn't do that all the way, but it was the first time the Film Festival ever had that Cannes kind of thing happen, where she took it on and then everybody wanted to talk with her and hang out with her. I don't know what became of her. It didn't make her career, that's for sure, because I never heard of her after that.

LEE AMAZONAS: It didn't, but she did get into all the papers.

JERRY MANDER: Oh yes, there were big stories of her prancing around the pool partly naked. She didn't take off her clothes, really, but she was showing her legs and swimming around in the pool and going to the photographers. She was very, very, very funny. She was really a good, funny person, and I really wished her well. But I don't think she ever became anything after that. I think that was her big moment, right there. I'm pretty sure. That's one of few such things that happened at the Film Festival. Irving really encouraged it. He was, “Yeah, get her to do that. If she wants to do that, let's get her to do that.” So he was in on it and thought it would make the front page of the paper, which it did. I don't know what it did for the Festival in particular except gain a lot of publicity.

LEE AMAZONAS: One of the things that seemed to be repeated year after year, starting around 1960 or so, the question of is there too much glamour in the Film Festival or is there not enough glamour in the Film Festival.

JERRY MANDER: You know what it was? There wasn't that much glamour in the Film Festival, not really. There was a lot of society in the Film Festival, if you want to call that glamour. But there wasn't “glamour” glamour. There was a famous Czech director who came. Not Milos Forman but somebody before him, a previous round.

LEE AMAZONAS: Jiri Weiss came, but I think that was after you were there.

JERRY MANDER: That might have been after me. But I remember some Czech director because he was after my girlfriend, actually. It was during this period. Maybe the Russian—what was the name of the Russian director from **Ballad of a Soldier**? Gregory Chukhrai.

LEE AMAZONAS: That year he was on the jury.

JERRY MANDER: He was? How could I forget that? Maybe it's just I was too dumb to care.

LEE AMAZONAS: In fact, I think the Czech was on the jury with that Russian director. And the third person was Edward Dmytryk.

JERRY MANDER: Edward Dmytryk is who I am talking about. So he was an American director, that's right. That's right, but I was remembering the name. Yeah, I think it was him. [LOOKING THROUGH PROGRAM] I don't have a good memory of this, I must say. I don't remember these films at all. Jiri Weiss. There were some well-known directors who came on that trip to the wine country, and they were kind of interesting and fun to talk to. And there was one film that I just fell in love with. It was called **The White Dove**. I don't remember what year that must have been. It must have been this Festival or the one after that. Bob Greensfelder and I tried to buy the distribution rights and distribute it ourselves. Here it is. **The White Dove**. I thought that was a really good film. Kent MacKenzie, **The Exiles**. I remember these films better than the other ones.

LEE AMAZONAS: Do you have any specific memories of any of the films that you're taking a look at now?

JERRY MANDER: This Indian film with Kent MacKenzie, I remember that very well. That was quite a powerful film, I thought. **The White Dove** was a very, very beautiful film. It's kind of a lyrical story.

LEE AMAZONAS: So you weren't successful in getting it?

JERRY MANDER: No, we couldn't pull it off. I don't remember what happened but we couldn't get the rights to it. Oh, Satyajit Ray, didn't he come? I think he came for a visit.

LEE AMAZONAS: He came a couple of times.

JERRY MANDER: Yeah, I remember he came, too.

LEE AMAZONAS: He came that year?

JERRY MANDER: He came that year for that film, **The Goddess**. I guess I was involved in this Festival too. Those are my two Festivals, there. So I'm not being very helpful to you, I don't think.

LEE AMAZONAS: No, you're being extremely helpful. We want to get an idea of what it was like for the people who were there for the time they were there. And any memories you have of individuals you worked with. Certainly, talking about Bud was very helpful. And anybody else who you may think of, whether it be film director, or a particular film. The kinds of things that happened.

JERRY MANDER: I remember Albert Johnson came around a fair amount. He always had good ideas. Irving Levin would listen to him probably more than anybody else, though he wouldn't always do what Albert was suggesting. Albert had ideas for groups of films and to do things on musicals, do another kind of thing. He tried to introduce Irving Levin to the possibilities. To the broader possibilities. I wasn't surprised when he got to be program director, because I thought he'd been really on it. He was on it for a long time before he was in it. Irving actually appointed him to some role. I don't remember what it was. Maybe it was curator. Couldn't have been curator. Advisor? Film selection committee, that's what it was. He named him, I think, the head of the film selection committee at some point. Albert went off to Europe; he would go look at films for Irving. He helped select them. I don't think he was doing that when I first got there, but in the second year that I was there, Albert got more involved and offered to go around and see films at other festivals, or see what's being done in other film industries. He would come back

with advice on whether to use this film or that film. He was doing what a festival director would normally do that Irving didn't do as well. Irving rarely went and looked at movies.

LEE AMAZONAS: Really?

JERRY MANDER: Yeah. He would see movies that came to him. You'd better check with Bob. I don't remember him going to look at movies. Bob would remember better than me if he did. But I know Albert Johnson had a big role in finding films for the Festival. There was another guy who used to come around all the time, named Feinstein. Herbert Feinstein. He got himself a role in there too, in some way. I don't think Irving ever paid these people to do it. Or even paid their costs. Maybe he did pay them a little fee, for finding films for him. Herbert Feinstein had some of the same kind of role as Albert Johnson. Those are the only two that I can remember that had a real role in terms of looking for films.

LEE AMAZONAS: And going elsewhere.

JERRY MANDER: Going elsewhere. They'd go to Russia. They'd go to Eastern Europe. They'd go to Europe, to Cannes. And they'd try to find films and come back and tell Irving, "This is a really good film. You ought to try to get it in the Festival." And try to get it in his theaters, too. That was another thing. That was sort of a dual thing, because the two things were merged.

LEE AMAZONAS: That's what sounds interesting, that he was operating both the Festival and his theaters—

JERRY MANDER: Simultaneously, and maybe on one budget. I'm not sure they were ever separated. I never saw the books, I have no idea for real. But to me, it just looked like it was all on his desk in piles. Some of it went into his theaters and some went into his film festival, and sometimes both. I just have a feeling that he used whatever monies he had for whatever he needed to do. There had to be a nonprofit organization for the Film Festival, but pretty much he just operated it like two weeks' worth of programming at the theater, and we're gonna call it a Film Festival. That's pretty much the way he set it up.

LEE AMAZONAS: Do you remember any of the Festival volunteers who didn't seem to be from the socialite circle? From the 1961 Festival? [LEE SHOWS MANDER A LIST OF 1961 FESTIVAL VOLUNTEERS]

JERRY MANDER: I don't remember any of them. Festival volunteers? I don't know what they did.

LEE AMAZONAS: They all seemed to have day jobs, so they probably worked after work in the evenings.

JERRY MANDER: Not as far as I know. Maybe they had something to do with some of these parties and things like that. I never heard of any of these people. Frank Gorney, that's the only name I vaguely recognize. Sorry. They may have done something, but not that I know of.

LEE AMAZONAS: In 1960, Mary Pickford was the mistress of ceremonies. Do you remember that?

JERRY MANDER: Yeah, I vaguely remember that. I don't remember what she did but I remember that she did show up in some role.

LEE AMAZONAS: And then Josef von Sternberg was there on the jury in 1961.

JERRY MANDER: Yeah. I remember that too. I remember having to get him interviews and things like that. I don't remember much about that. I remember von Sternberg was there. Sorry, I'm drawing a blank. I probably shouldn't have bothered to do this.

LEE AMAZONAS: No, I mean, we're probably getting down to the areas where—

JERRY MANDER: That I don't know. I didn't know much.

LEE AMAZONAS: Believe me, you know a lot. It is very useful. Alvah Bessie?

JERRY MANDER: Alvah Bessie. I can picture him. Yeah, he would come around a lot. What was his role? He had a role of some kind. He was there some of the time when I was there. He didn't work in the office but he was some kind of outside helper.

LEE AMAZONAS: I thought he dealt with the press, but that would have been your job.

JERRY MANDER: That was my job, but it wasn't my job at the very beginning. So it could be that Alvah Bessie was doing that at the very beginning. It became my job a little bit later. I'm not sure exactly when, but it seems like it was a matter of four or five months later that I was winding up doing it. I guess he was involved. I don't remember for sure. I guess these things didn't make that much of an impression on me. I remember so many other things from that period and I don't remember this! It's amazing.

LEE AMAZONAS: Were there any other people that you recall?

JERRY MANDER: Coming around?

LEE AMAZONAS: Yeah.

JERRY MANDER: I think Shirley Temple came around a few times and wanted to be helpful. I think Irving got her involved in some way on one of his social things or becoming a hostess of some kind. And there were a couple of people from Hollywood, from big Hollywood, who would come around occasionally and express their interest and enthusiasm for it, but I can't really think of anybody offhand.

LEE AMAZONAS: It did take a while for Hollywood films to actually show up at the Festival.

JERRY MANDER: Yeah. Well, big films. Smaller films like Cassavetes' were showing. But for big films to come around... It wasn't recognized as a venue that they were that interested in. There was a frustration about that. Irving Levin always wanted an angle to try to get some "big film" to launch the Festival and to make a big splash in the press, and rarely succeeded in doing that.

LEE AMAZONAS: Did that make your job as publicist more difficult, because you didn't have the Hollywood films?

JERRY MANDER: My main role as a publicist was to work for his theaters. But doing that enabled me to meet all the film critics in the Bay Area, so I got to know people like Paine Knickerbocker very well, and Stanley Eichelbaum. They were around a lot. They loved the Film Festival because, for them, it was a kind of step up. So they always wanted to know what was going on, and I would keep feeding them whenever I could about Festival doings. They always wished the Festival had more celebrity connected to it so that it would make it easier for them. Stanley Eichelbaum might still be alive.

LEE AMAZONAS: He died a couple of years ago.

JERRY MANDER: He did? I remember he was opening restaurants in the last few years. Well, Paine Knickerbocker's daughter is around, but she was very young right then. They would try to help. They would try very hard to help get the Festival be more recognized and be considered more important. But I think Irving was trying to get the mayor to do something too. I think the mayor finally did make some proclamation or other about the Festival. It didn't really mean much. He wanted the Festival to be considered on the level of other major San Francisco cultural events. He wanted to be like the Black and White Ball, or something like that. Something big. He wanted to be important in the hierarchy of San Francisco cultural goings-on. He never did achieve that. I think only recently it achieved that to some degree. But not for many years after that. When the city kind of took it away from him—I don't know how that all happened, it was way past when I was there—but at a certain point the city kind of took the Festival away from him.

LEE AMAZONAS: The Chamber of Commerce took over running it in '65.

JERRY MANDER: He probably fought that, as I recall. I vaguely remember he was fighting that. I guess it was at that point that they saw it could be done on a larger scale, and it could mean more for the city, and decided to take it out away from this guy who kind of kept it in his hip pocket. I think from the point of view of San Francisco's future, that's probably the right



idea. Bud had a vision but he didn't know how to get it there. He didn't know how to make it into what he hoped or wanted it to be.

LEE AMAZONAS: You mentioned before that Albert Johnson had come around and given him some ideas. It sounded like you were talking about the retrospectives.

JERRY MANDER: Retrospectives, that's right.

LEE AMAZONAS: Albert was able to start doing them as of '65, when the Chamber took over. Do you recall why Irving listened to Albert but didn't really take him up on those suggestions? Did he have any problem with the idea of retrospectives?

JERRY MANDER: Well, there's one thing about Irving that might have been a factor there. I always wondered why he hired me, because I had no experience of any kind. I finally figured out that the reason he hired me is that I went to see him. I wanted to form a West Coast Cinema 16. I wanted to form a film society in San Francisco, like I had been in before. I was running this repertory movie thing at that point. And I wanted to form a film society. He got very uptight about that. He saw it as competition. He thought maybe I would eventually try to have a film festival. I don't think he liked that I was going to do that. He tried to discourage me from it, and then eventually said, "Well, why don't you just come work here?" So I have a feeling the reason he hired me was so that I wouldn't do the other thing. I wouldn't be at all surprised if he viewed Albert as competition too. I never thought about it for five minutes since then, but now that you ask, he was very protective of his role. He was a bit jealous of competition. He really wanted to be in the limelight about this thing. Somebody else would come up with some idea and I'd say, "This is great! Let's do this." And he would always find a reason why it wasn't so great, and not do it. Because it would be out of his territory. So Albert may have been proposing a retrospective series to be part of the Festival, that he would present, I don't think Irving would like that. He wanted to be the presenter. That, in the end, may have been his downfall. He couldn't let it be big because it could only be whatever size he could personally manage. So it was not really possible for it to go to where it needed to go, to be something important civically. Or to be important internationally. To be a major festival. Albert had the vision and the knowledge to take it to the next stage, and I think Irving saw that and he didn't want to make it easier for him to go

there. This is my guess. But try that question out on Bob Greensfelder and see what he says. Or Chick Callenbach. Are you talking to Chick Callenbach, too?

LEE AMAZONAS: We already have.

JERRY MANDER: And see if they say similar things like this. I mean, he wouldn't mind a Shirley Temple coming along and being something, or a Mary Pickford or von Sternberg. But that's different because they're performers and then he gets to present them. But somebody who knows a lot about movies, like Albert did, and has a kind of winning personality, charm. Irving would not be friendly to that idea. Irving himself wasn't as charming. He was a small theater owner and he aspired to be a greater cultural figure and to do a great thing. This was his access to that. He kept it going with no money. You have to give him a lot of credit for pulling it off. He did that. He gave a gift to the city which is still there now. He deserves a lot of credit for that, so we don't want to be too negative about it, but I think he limited the potential of the thing by his own limitations. That would be my guess about why he wouldn't do those things Albert proposed. It makes sense. And it also matches my own experience. He didn't want me to do a film society of any kind that might do public events and begin to build toward a competitive role.

LEE AMAZONAS: When I was doing research in the Pacific Film Archive, I noticed a flyer for something called the San Francisco Film Festival. I can't really tell what the date is but it looks like it's around that time. Was that possibly the group that you were starting?

JERRY MANDER: No, I didn't have it yet. I never prepared a flyer. I had a repertory theater called The Playhouse Repertory Theatre, but I don't think I have any of that material left. I think it's all gone. It didn't last very long. Six months. I ran out of money. I didn't really have enough money to do it. But I never actually formed this film society. I just wanted to. Because I told you, I really loved Cinema 16. I really learned a lot from that and I loved going to their events and I thought that was a great thing and I wanted to do it more. By then I knew Stan Brakhage and I knew a lot of those characters. I knew Jordan Belson and some of the weird underground filmmakers who were around here. What's his name? Pauline's husband, who made films. Gay guy. He made very funny light films. Good ones. I can't think of his name.

LEE AMAZONAS: James Broughton?

JERRY MANDER: Yeah, James Broughton. They were married for a while, Pauline and James Broughton. I knew them. I was in that scene for a little while.

LEE AMAZONAS: I'd asked you about whether your group was—

JERRY MANDER: Oh, no, no. It wasn't happening yet. It was just an idea. The thing that I'm remembering now that I didn't remember before is that that's how I met Irving Levin. He didn't have any job openings. He just made one for me, I'm pretty sure because he didn't want me out there in the world. There was plenty of work to do, but he didn't want me moving around the world as a potential competitor. He was a bit insecure. What else can I tell you?

LEE AMAZONAS: I had a few pages of questions and I believe you've answered just about all of them. Unless you can think of something else that we haven't gone over that you really wanted to talk about, or something that you may have remembered while looking through some of the programs.

JERRY MANDER: Most of these others I wasn't part of.

LEE AMAZONAS: Actually, there is another question I did want to ask you. Did you attend the Festival after your association?

JERRY MANDER: Yes, I attended it somewhat. But I was off on something else at that point. I would go to see him again occasionally after that, just to drop by. [LOOKING AT PROGRAMS] **Crazy Quilt**. Huh! I'm in that film. What year is this? Ninth film festival.

LEE AMAZONAS: Nineteen sixty-five. That was the first post-Bud Festival.

JERRY MANDER: Is that the year they gave him an award of some kind? The city thanked him or something.

LEE AMAZONAS: I don't recall if it was that year.

JERRY MANDER: Film selection committee. Oh, there's Claude Jarman, Marshall Naify. Marshall Naify worked with Irving. Herb Gold, Barnaby Conrad, Ernest Callenbach. You know, there weren't many people showing films from Korea and Poland and places like that in those days. Turkey.

LEE AMAZONAS: In '62, which is when I thought you had worked there, I was going to ask you about this film from Thailand, which was a silent film with a live vocal and instrumental accompaniment. I believe the crown prince of Thailand had come for the screening.

JERRY MANDER: I wasn't there. This is '62 right here. [LOOKING AT PROGRAM] Oh, here's the patrons. Walter Haas, Bill Roth. Roth was the greatest guy.

LEE AMAZONAS: What did he do?

JERRY MANDER: He was a developer. He's the one who built Ghirardelli Square and the Cannery. He was a very, very sophisticated person and he thought the Film Festival was a great idea. Is this the Thai film, **Embrace of Fate**? Never heard of it. I don't think I had anything to do with it this year. I think I stayed away.

LEE AMAZONAS: There were a number of competitions for shorts.

JERRY MANDER: Not when I was there. It's fun to look at these things. You don't have '60?

LEE AMAZONAS: Here it is.

JERRY MANDER: Oh, '60, yeah. This is the one that's just before me, '59. I remember a few of these films. I think I went to this and that's how I got interested in it. You know, films from China. Nobody was doing that yet in this country. This may have been the first. You have to give Bud a lot of credit. Were there other U.S. festivals going on in those days?

LEE AMAZONAS: No, this was the first. Well, it's the oldest one, and the first major one in the United States. I think that there were some small independent ones around the country before that, but really this was the first one on this kind of scale.

JERRY MANDER: Well, I think that's all I have to say. I can't think of anything else.

LEE AMAZONAS: Thank you.