

San Francisco Film Society  
Oral History Project

**Interview with Patricia de Larios Peyton**  
**Conducted by Sheila Cadigan**  
**San Francisco Film Society, San Francisco, CA**  
**September 25, 2006**

SHEILA CADIGAN: September 25, 2006. I am in the Levin Archive in the Film Society offices at 39 Mesa Street in the Presidio in San Francisco. My name is Sheila Cadigan, and I am interviewing Patricia Delarios, formerly Operations Manager for the San Francisco Film Society from 1980 to 1981. First, I just want to ask you a few questions about yourself.

PATRICIA DE LARIOS PEYTON: Sure.

SHEILA CADIGAN: What is your place of birth?

PATRICIA DE LARIOS PEYTON: I was born in San Mateo, California.

SHEILA CADIGAN: What did your family do?

PATRICIA DE LARIOS PEYTON: My father had a number of different small jobs, but he ended up being a printer.

SHEILA CADIGAN: What about your mom?

PATRICIA DE LARIOS PEYTON: My mom stayed at home mainly, but she eventually ended up teaching, assisting at a high school, after we grew up. This was in the '50s.

SHEILA CADIGAN: What was it like growing up in the Bay Area?

PATRICIA DE LARIOS PEYTON: It was really, really difficult growing up in the suburbs, especially because it was a white, almost exclusively white area and neighborhood that I lived in, and my mother was from Mexico. And so it was very alienating, and I felt a lot of racism. And I had to hide and conceal the fact that we were Mexicans. I couldn't get into the Girl Scouts because of being a Mexican, that kind of stuff. I was alienated by suburban life, I think. And by the time I was in high school, I was doing a lot of cutting school. I got very politicized, and started working with the farm workers. As soon as I turned eighteen, I pretty much left San Mateo.

SHEILA CADIGAN: Where did you go to school?

PATRICIA DE LARIOS PEYTON: I took a semester or something at the College of San Mateo. And there I did a lot of other things in between, including moving to Puerto Rico. And then I came back and I finished at UC Berkeley.

SHEILA CADIGAN: What was your degree in?

PATRICIA DE LARIOS PEYTON: Latin American Literature.

SHEILA CADIGAN: Really?

PATRICIA DE LARIOS PEYTON: Yeah.

SHEILA CADIGAN: So what was your first job?

PATRICIA DE LARIOS PEYTON: I always put myself through school, so I had jobs like working in an optical shop in Berkeley when I was going to school. It was one of the first years of affirmative action programs, so I got some financial aid from there. And I also had gone to school in Italy for a little bit. I traveled to Europe before I came back to Berkeley.

SHEILA CADIGAN: So your first professional job, out of school—

PATRICIA DE LARIOS PEYTON: My first professional job was with Tricontinental Film Center, which was a distributor of third world films, political films. That was in 1973. And that's how I got involved in film. It wasn't because I was interested in film, but because I was very involved in politics. And when the September 11th, 1973 coup happened in Chile, I got involved with a group called Non-Intervention in Chile in Berkeley. In that suite of offices there was a group called Tricontinental Film Center, and it was run by Carlos Broullón and Rodi Broullón and Gino Lofredo, these Latin Americans. I ended up working for them and becoming like an officer in that group, distributing films from the third world into the United States and films by third world filmmakers made in the United States. So we specialized in that, mostly political documentaries and features. And I ended up marrying Carlos Broullón, and then I had a child in 1976. So I stayed with Tricon film distribution for many years—well, many years to me at that point in my young life. It was like six years or something like that. We were distributing all Cuban films. We had a contract with the Cuban Film Institute. In 1978, we took a group of entertainment critics, mostly film critics, from major newspapers around the country to Cuba on a tour of the Cuban Film Institute and a tour of Cuba. [Chronicle critic] Judy Stone was one of them. I became very close with Tom Luddy at that time, and we were very good friends with a lot of the local film people, and Albert Johnson. And that sort of segued—oh, the African Film Society, we were close with the people that were active in that. And I was hired—I don't know if you're asking me to do a chronology of how I got into the Festival?

SHEILA CADIGAN: This is all very interesting.

PATRICIA DE LARIOS PEYTON: Okay. Well, this is it. I was hired by the Film Fund to write a book on social issue films and US distribution. So that was an effort that went on for several months, and I published a book. And then I was hired by the Film Festival. And I'm sure I was ushered in through Tom and Albert to do outreach and to try to develop a little bit more aggressively the Film Society, the membership program. And I remember they wanted me to be in charge of pageantry, which I guess is like the aesthetics. I always hated that word, because I didn't know what it meant. [LAUGHS]

SHEILA CADIGAN: Do you know now?

PATRICIA DE LARIOS PEYTON: I do, but I'm still kind of vague about it. But what it meant to me was probably different from what it meant to a lot of other people. So with my background and my orientation, [the Festival] became very popular; it was a very popular image as opposed to this really traditionally glamorous image. And so [we had] lots of music, like popular music. I don't know if you would want to call it world music, but it was like reggae and salsa and African music and Brazilian music.

SHEILA CADIGAN: So these were infused into events surrounding film screenings, then?

PATRICIA DE LARIOS PEYTON: Exactly.

SHEILA CADIGAN: If there was a Cuban movie, they would—

PATRICIA DE LARIOS PEYTON: Well, eventually that's what we ended up doing. That was more in 1981. In 1980 it was sort of growing, just feeling out the personality of the Festival, because as I remember it, the people who came in, it was like a regime change, from Claude Jarman to—do you know all about them?

SHEILA CADIGAN: Why don't you tell me about it?

PATRICIA DE LARIOS PEYTON: You may correct me.

SHEILA CADIGAN: I understand it was a dramatic period for the Festival, and that there was a lot of upheaval.

PATRICIA DE LARIOS PEYTON: Well, yeah, I think there was a bunch of tension between Jarman, who I never even really knew, and Albert Johnson. You know, Albert Johnson had long been with the Festival, doing the tributes. But then they had some kind of a falling out, I think.

SHEILA CADIGAN: What year was that?

PATRICIA DE LARIOS PEYTON: I think that was in the late seventies, maybe going into 1980, because I know that they had an office on California street, where Lorena Cantrell worked, and then there was the group that—we called them the Gang of Four; it was Peter Buchanan, Tom Luddy, Mel Novikoff and Albert Johnson. And the offices were set up inside of Peter Buchanan's law offices. So it was kind of weird. There was this big law firm in the Bank of America building, and it was just one office, looking out over all of the Bay Area from the 55th floor of the Bank of America building. It was way the hell up there. And it was just all these lawyers and clerks and paralegals, and there was the Film Festival, supposedly, in there. But meanwhile, they had like a parallel government. Peter Buchanan was the Executive Director, and then Albert sort of took over as Artistic Director. So anyway, that was 1981, and it was sort of just kind of feeling

out marketing, establishing a new image, a new identity of the Film Festival. Anyway, that's getting up to 1980, so I don't know if you want to ask me some questions.

SHEILA CADIGAN: Well I think you're really ahead of your time, just your previous background with your husband, having that kind of a film distribution promotion. I mean, now it seems like the Latin American film is really in its heyday. You always seem to be a little ahead of your time, really.

PATRICIA DE LARIOS PEYTON: Yeah, well, we were really cutting edge at Tricontinental Films.

SHEILA CADIGAN: Nineteen seventy-three, that's thirty-four years ago.

PATRICIA DE LARIOS PEYTON: Yeah, it started in like, probably '72, when they started Tricontinental with **Hora de los hornos** which is a classic Argentinean film. And it was such a tumultuous period, as it is now. But then, in the seventies, it really was too, and all kinds of liberation movements.

SHEILA CADIGAN: But the image of the Latin American in film was still not entirely positive in the seventies. It was something you really had to—there was a film on the other night about the resurgence of Latin American actors and films, and becoming more mainstream.

PATRICIA DE LARIOS PEYTON: Really? That's interesting. I don't know about that, how it's evolved up to today, but the Cuban films were really prolific and the Cuban filmmakers were extraordinarily talented in filmmaking with very limited resources. So they kind of led the way. Then there were what were called agitprop films—agitation propaganda—which would be like organizing films. You could get people fired up. Propaganda, is just a cheap way to refer to it. I mean, they were literally made to tell the truth, convey a reality that people weren't reading about any place in the newspapers, and used for organizing and workers' movements and all kinds of social change movements. And films were really used as a politicizing, political tool in the seventies, much more than they are now. And I don't know why that is, because you see something like Michael Moore's films or the Wal-Mart film [**Wal-Mart: The High Cost of Low Price**] or something like that, and you think that they're useful, but it's like, with the kind of distribution that **Fahrenheit 9/11** got, and this country still elected Bush, it's just beyond belief to me. So I think in the seventies, we were still in a ghetto in terms of our distribution. However, there were theaters in San Francisco that would show them. Pauline Kael and the **New York Times** would review them. And we were sort of darlings of the Left, I would say.

SHEILA CADIGAN: You're talking about Tricontinental

PATRICIA DE LARIOS PEYTON: Tricontinental.

SHEILA CADIGAN: Your role was to distribute those films within the US?

PATRICIA DE LARIOS PEYTON: We distributed them, yeah. So we did public showings, sponsored showings ourselves. Community organizations rented them from us. We showed them in theaters, and we did a lot of selling to high schools and universities, and they would have public events around them. So film was really used as a forum for a lot of organizing, a lot of political grouping. You'd have meetings. People would show films and there'd be political groups that would meet. And you'd show the film in the living room, and then you'd have discussion groups afterwards. It was a highly charged era. Tom Luddy was at the Pacific Film Archive and Albert Johnson was at UC Berkeley. And they were all very active. And Chez Panisse was just starting up, and Alice Waters would have film showings there, at the restaurant.

SHEILA CADIGAN: It's interesting that you were doing that in an era when it sounds like the Festival is wanting to become less elitist and more homegrown, more grassroots in the Bay Area, rather than a one-time-a-year event, where celebrities would fly in. So is that what they saw in you, you think?

PATRICIA DE LARIOS PEYTON: Maybe.

SHEILA CADIGAN: The group of four, you're saying they hired you.

PATRICIA DE LARIOS PEYTON: Yeah, probably.

SHEILA CADIGAN: Because you had the ability or the vision to be doing that already, having screenings in people's living rooms, and political activism surrounding a film. I actually thought that was sort of a recent development here in the Bay Area.

PATRICIA DE LARIOS PEYTON: Isn't that funny? No, I guess it comes from then. I mean, that's what we were doing then. And we would have screenings every weekend of films. Tricontinental would sponsor, or political groups would rent our films and put them on. And California Newsreel was another distribution group. They're still around today. Tricontinental changed its name to Unifilm in about 1980, when they took on the Brazilian films.

SHEILA CADIGAN: So was it just Latin American films or was it all national cinemas?

PATRICIA DE LARIOS PEYTON: It's like they had a contract with the Brazilian Film Institute, so it was like an exclusive contract. And then, also, we had to register, as agents of foreign principles, because we were distributing Cuban films. So when you see the film, when they come up on the screen and there's a leader and the credits and everything, it's distributed by Tricontinental, which is registered with the Justice Department as an agent of a foreign principle or a foreign government. So that really curtailed our ability to sell the films in the academic and the university market and the high school markets, because people thought, "My God, these people are spies; I'm going to get in trouble," and all that kind of stuff. So that was really a disaster, the political repressive nature that was really coming down hard.

SHEILA CADIGAN: Were those films considered pro-Castro?

PATRICIA DE LARIOS PEYTON: They're made by the Cubans, so they're made from within Cuba.

SHEILA CADIGAN: Did you know Laura Thielen? I think she was after your time.

PATRICIA DE LARIOS PEYTON: Yeah, I know that name. I don't remember how I know her, though.

SHEILA CADIGAN: She became a programmer, I think, in the next generation of the Film Society, after it skipped that year. And I remember she said she went to Cuba often for these film festivals, and she would collect some things and bring them back. And Havana was always an interesting festival to go to. So tell me about your first year on the Festival. That was 1980. So you got hired formally, or did you just start working?

PATRICIA DE LARIOS PEYTON: I was hired formally. And it's pretty vague.

SHEILA CADIGAN: Who hired you, exactly?

PATRICIA DE LARIOS PEYTON: Well, I mean, the formality of it was handled by Peter Buchanan. We had a little office, like I said, set up in the Bank of America building, in his law offices. And I started just coming up with ideas for pageantry and membership, like we'd go to parties, and yeah, I got people involved. I got Eleanor Bertino involved, who ended up being a hospitality director. I don't know if that was '80 or '81.

SHEILA CADIGAN: But there had been pageantry around events before.

PATRICIA DE LARIOS PEYTON: Yeah, I'm sure there was.

SHEILA CADIGAN: Well it was the eighties, right?

PATRICIA DE LARIOS PEYTON: Yeah, right.

SHEILA CADIGAN: Bad fashions, great music, great films.

PATRICIA DE LARIOS PEYTON: Yeah. It was a tremendous amount of fun, and it was—

SHEILA CADIGAN: You were very, very young.

PATRICIA DE LARIOS PEYTON: Well I was young enough, like 30, 31 or something like that. But when I think about, like, that's my daughter's age now, and I think of her as a child. And so for me to have that kind of responsibility, I mean, it was a lot of

responsibility, which I wasn't at all intimidated by. It was just kind of jumping in with both feet, and trying to make it an event that was for all the people. Now it sounds very rhetorical, but that's really what it was. I was trying to make it a little more political, more socially relevant.

SHEILA CADIGAN: And less elitist, less something for the moneyed.

PATRICIA DE LARIOS PEYTON: Oh yeah, which is something that I—

SHEILA CADIGAN: Shattering cultural classes.

PATRICIA DE LARIOS PEYTON: Yeah, right, exactly, trying to make it a public popular event rather than the opera or the symphony, which is kind of in that domain where I envisioned it to be before, sort of irrelevant to most of the people. At least that was my opinion then and it continues to be, so I didn't lose that point of view.

SHEILA CADIGAN: Well a lot of institutions suffer from that reputation, not just the opera or the ballet. Public broadcasting, I think, always sort of fights that, that it's an elitist institution, and so they have to do things to sort of reach out to—

PATRICIA DE LARIOS PEYTON: Oh sure, right. Well I think that's a complicated situation, but I think it's got explanations. Whenever you have corporate funding like that, I think there's a big contradiction in whatever your goals are to be as popular and progressive as you might want to be. You're sort of strapped by your sponsors, so you have to be careful what you do. So I see that in public broadcasting. NPR, PBS, all that kind of stuff. It doesn't look too much different to me than any of the mainstream corporate media.

SHEILA CADIGAN: So Peter Buchanan hires you and gives you this mandate to take to the masses, the San Francisco Bay Area masses—

PATRICIA DE LARIOS PEYTON: I wouldn't say that's what Peter Buchanan's position was. That was my position. Peter Buchanan hired me to bring some vitality to Festival events, and pomp and circumstance on a popular level, but it wasn't like he said—Peter Buchanan did not have the same politics that I did at all, but he was willing to give me a lot of latitude in what I wanted to do in terms of events, like kind of stylizing events.

SHEILA CADIGAN: Give me some examples of things that you had a lot of fun with that way.

PATRICIA DE LARIOS PEYTON: Oh, God!

SHEILA CADIGAN: Why don't you look through the program and see if there's something that you were able to imbue with that.



PATRICIA DE LARIOS PEYTON: [POINTING AT THE 1981 FESTIVAL PROGRAM GUIDE] This was mine, actually.

SHEILA CADIGAN: We're looking at the 1981 Festival program guide.

PATRICIA DE LARIOS PEYTON: Right. This was, see, you'll see what it says. This is a way the Film Society was trying to bring the people, the masses of people, into enjoying the Festival. The cover of it says, "All day, all night, year round, all over town." And the text of it is, "Marathon international festivals each October for the past 25 years, an orgy of movies and music from all over the world. Bay Area filmmakers, a showcase of work by our own local talent. Springtime ethnic festivals, a salute to the city's diverse communities. Gala premieres, lavish dinners, black-tie affairs. Scholarly symposiums, intensive seminars, international conferences. Caribbean dancing in neighborhood nightclubs, sneak previews every month, Sunday mornings with coffee and doughnuts, newsletters, T-shirts, posters, buttons, and lots more film club paraphernalia. A touch of class, a touch of funk, a bit of Carnival and a lot of film. Join the San Francisco Film Society, and join the Festival." So I was trying to reach across, arch over everybody, like not ignore those sponsors, with that lavish and gala stuff, but the Caribbean dancing in neighborhood nightclubs and the funkiness, that really does express where I was coming from with the festival. And I didn't meet with resistance from the directors. And we were spending a lot of money. I had input in the directors that should be coming, who should be invited to the Festival, so my orientation went to the lesser known, emerging and third world directors. The third world, you would now call it global south, but at that time we were calling it third world. So we were spending a lot of money bringing people in from around the world to represent their films.

SHEILA CADIGAN: I think that's fascinating.

PATRICIA DE LARIOS PEYTON: Yeah. So there were African directors, of course as many Cubans as we could bring. (LAUGHS)

SHEILA CADIGAN: And as far as you're aware, they weren't doing that kind of outreach before.

PATRICIA DE LARIOS PEYTON: I don't think they were focusing on lesser known third world filmmakers before. As far as I know, the Film Festival was, I hate to say, elitist.

SHEILA CADIGAN: You watched films, you went to parties, and if you paid a lot of money to do that—

PATRICIA DE LARIOS PEYTON: You could go to the Opening Night and you could rub elbows with the movie stars. And it was a little bit more sophisticated than just mainstream going to the movies because there would be some tributes and there would be dialogue, good interviews and stuff like that. But it was basically like just another function of high society in San Francisco, I think. That was my impression of the Film

Festival from before. Nineteen eighty-one was really when we moved into the California offices. I brought on some people that I liked. And we had a Festival on Castro Street. And we'd have music, we'd have bands before film showings. Where the films were being shown, we'd have groups out there playing, that kind of stuff. On Mission past Cesar Chavez, south of Cesar Chavez, and the little clubs around there, we'd have music, and we'd take the filmmakers out to local restaurants and party like that.

SHEILA CADIGAN: Well that sounds like a lot of fun.

PATRICIA DE LARIOS PEYTON: It was incredible fun. And the thing is that there was so much outreach through local community organizations that I had been working with. Like we showed a film that was dealing with the Middle East and Palestinian issues, and I would get local Palestinian Arab Anti-Discrimination League people involved in promoting the film to their constituency, and give away tickets at cheaper costs, and so it was like theme-oriented outreach and promotion that I would be doing. I ended up doing kind of a lot of that specialized type of promotion. Of course, with the Latin American films, like in El Salvador, the war was going on at that time, and there was a film in here, that we had parties for, **The Revolution in Central America**, I think it's called, and we had a big party for John Chapman, and we engaged the people that were working on solidarity movements in El Salvador—oh, no, he was actually doing Nicaragua; his film was about Nicaragua, but the other was about El Salvador. And so we would integrate the people that were activists around those issues to get their people out, to pull their people into the Festival. And always, we would try to adjust downward the costs of the tickets so that these people could get into them for free. There were also the children's programs that were free, that a lot of students could come in to see.

SHEILA CADIGAN: Was there any pet project that stands out for you during that time, that's one of your favorite memories?

PATRICIA DE LARIOS PEYTON: My pet project was really decentralizing the Festival from being sort of a one-venue, one time a year—

SHEILA CADIGAN: Which was the Kabuki at that time—

PATRICIA DE LARIOS PEYTON: No, it was the Palace of Fine Arts.

SHEILA CADIGAN: Oh, that's right.

PATRICIA DE LARIOS PEYTON: Yeah, and to bring it out into the different neighborhoods and also bringing in political films. I keep saying this over and over; I sound like a broken record. But it's bringing in more politically relevant films by people of color and about issues affecting people from all over the world. So that was really what my pet project was, and to make it more accessible to just common, normal people in the city.

SHEILA CADIGAN: Were there certain films that you felt very triumphant about having brought to the festival then?

PATRICIA DE LARIOS PEYTON: Well **Bye Bye Brazil** was a really successful introduction. It was a really wonderful, festive, huge film. And we had brought the filmmaker up, Carlos Diegues, and lots of music, and some of these people I was introducing myself onstage, so I had horrible stage fright, so I wouldn't be able to say, "Ladies and Gentlemen," because I would be so excited. "Here's Carlos Diegues," and that was it. I would run off. Instead of doing any questions or anything, I just abandoned them onstage.

SHEILA CADIGAN: I thought Albert Johnson had that role.

PATRICIA DE LARIOS PEYTON: Well, Albert Johnson had the role a lot. I mean, different people would introduce the filmmakers, but Albert did a lot of the interviews in the tributes. And he really represented the Film Festival in that time, being African American, and so he had tremendous connections in the black communities. Also, being very artsy and scholarly and academic from Berkeley, so he had all these people. People used to just gravitate around Albert like he was the second coming. And he was a wonderful, wonderful person. He was just an absolute joy to work with. We also had a lot of parties in the neighborhood clubs, music in the streets, and everybody wanted to entertain the Cubans. We went up to Francis Coppola's house in Napa, and Bernardo Bertolucci was there and just fawning over the Cubans, because they were like exotic. In the first place, they were really gorgeous. Pastor Vega and Daisy Granados and Tomás Gutiérrez Alea had come. I don't know if these names mean anything to you, but they're major filmmakers. And Alea made a film called **Memories of Underdevelopment**, which was like a breakthrough Cuban film in the United States, and got tremendous acclaim from all over the world. Anyway, so we bring the filmmakers up there, and Alec Guinness is there.

SHEILA CADIGAN: You speak Spanish.

PATRICIA DE LARIOS PEYTON: I'm bilingual, yes, so that was good. So anytime there was Spanish speaking, I was always the one that was doing it, because nobody else spoke Spanish there.

SHEILA CADIGAN: And I'm sure if there were logistical arrangements to be done with Spanish-speaking filmmakers, you would take care of those?

PATRICIA DE LARIOS PEYTON: Yeah, I did some of that, although because Tricontinental was doing the distribution, they did a lot of the arrangements with bringing in the filmmakers. I was going to show you a picture that I found. I can't believe I found it. [HOLDS THE PICTURE IN HER HANDS] This is when we first moved to the offices. Now I'll just show you, this, is so ridiculous, but here's this El Salvador liberation group, and Bob Marley and Stevie Wonder, and then me with the El Salvador

T-shirt on, and then here is the T-shirt that we had. I don't know if it was the first year we had T-shirts. That's my daughter at the time.

SHEILA CADIGAN: And the Festival was foundering financially too?

PATRICIA DE LARIOS PEYTON: It was?

SHEILA CADIGAN: I mean, it sounds like they spent a lot of money, and they did these things—

PATRICIA DE LARIOS PEYTON: There were a lot of these things, we would go out to dinner with twenty people, and that was really expensive. The thinking, which I shared also—I mean, I don't know if I can speak for other people—was that there were so many endowed people, the Festival was so endowed, or should have been so endowed, that we should spread the wealth and bring in the creative elements and sponsor all these people. So there was a lot of generosity, of spending other people's money. OPM, like they say.

SHEILA CADIGAN: George Gund was still the main sponsor at the time, right?

PATRICIA DE LARIOS PEYTON: George Gund was a great sponsor. Yeah, we actually flew on his Lear Jet—it was quite a thrill—with the Cuban filmmakers. I think we were coming back from Telluride, and they said, “Well now you understand why the ruling class will never give it up without a fight.” I thought it was so classic.

SHEILA CADIGAN: And these were communist filmmakers then?

PATRICIA DE LARIOS PEYTON: Well, it's not so easy, it's like saying you're a capitalist filmmaker because you live here, you know? It's not like that. It's a very dynamic country. It's art, but it happens to be produced in Cuba.

SHEILA CADIGAN: So the year was '80, '81, and a lot of money was being spent to try and—

PATRICIA DE LARIOS PEYTON: A lot of money was being spent. I think there was a certain amount of recklessness about it, because it was pretty chaotic. It got to be pretty chaotic when we sort of took it over in that transitional period in 1981. And there were lots of people being hired. I don't remember, I don't know if you have the records on how much we were being paid. It wasn't very much, but it was enough to pay my rent. I mean, it was fairly reasonable for me at that time.

SHEILA CADIGAN: Well. Festival jobs are notoriously fun but always low paying, and will forever be thus, right?

PATRICIA DE LARIOS PEYTON: Right.

SHEILA CADIGAN: And seasonal. I mean, there's the six months, and then work somewhere else.

PATRICIA DE LARIOS PEYTON: Well I think I worked all year round, though, so I think that's another reason why there was so much money being spent. And I can't say that it was tremendously well managed; I don't think it was. But there was a lot of spirit, there was so much spirit going on at that time. I was remembering, in the beginning of the eighties, it was just the beginning, I think, of the cocaine years, so there was lots of drug-taking going on at the parties, even Opening Nights. People were passing around cocaine and stuff. There was a recklessness, but a lot of fun and a lot of good intentions.

SHEILA CADIGAN: That was a boom time for the economy too, or it was getting somewhat better, wasn't it?

PATRICIA DE LARIOS PEYTON: A boom for the economy?

SHEILA CADIGAN: Maybe that's wrong.

PATRICIA DE LARIOS PEYTON: Well, the eighties. I think they called that the Me Decade.

SHEILA CADIGAN: Continuing into the nineties.

PATRICIA DE LARIOS PEYTON: Yeah.

SHEILA CADIGAN: Anyway, these were the cocaine years, in terms of the celebrities using drugs, or everybody using drugs?

PATRICIA DE LARIOS PEYTON: Oh, gosh! Yeah. I'm not saying everybody, but you would see it; it was visible. The people would be snorting coke at the dinner table, around their salmon, [LAUGHS] passing it around. And I'm not saying that that was going on during the day, during the workday either, but it was very heavily, socially intense. It was all day and all night. And it was chaotic in the office too. It was a very small office and there were tons of people that would be coming through there. The doors were open to just about everybody. I was doing operations, and so it was right before the Festival. You haven't ever worked in a Festival, right? But you can imagine what it's like. You're not only in charge of seeing that films got here, like hundreds of films, if the filmmakers got their tickets, if the translators were here, if the—it's just an endless series of things. So there were different people doing different things, but I was managing to make sure that this was all getting taken care of, and in the meanwhile, there's dozens of volunteers walking through the Festival, wanting to help. They're all filled with goodwill and everything, but there's a whole learning curve with each and every volunteer. So you try to get a volunteer coordinator, but since they're a volunteer, they don't always show up and telephones are ringing off the hook. Albert Johnson's office was there. His was the only office that was actually in the Film Festival offices. Mel Novikoff had his offices at the Castro Theatre, and Tom had his own thing going. And Peter Buchanan was still at

his law office. So it was Albert and me and a couple other staff people. Eric Whittington was one of them. And the phone rang, like this nonstop ringing, and people would say, “This is so-and-so calling for Albert Johnson, this is so-and-so calling for so-and-so.” So I’m answering, “Film Festival!” And this man says, “Hello. Is Albert Johnson there?” And I was just at my wit’s end. And I said, “Yes, Albert Johnson is here. And who may I say is calling?” “This is Fred Astaire.” I was so shocked, because I wasn’t really a stargazer. I mean, there were two people in my life that I had any contact with that were super celebrities that I would say that I was kind of stunned by, and that was one, the phone contact with Fred Astaire, especially after I had been such a bitch, and it had to be Fred Astaire. The second one was Alec Guinness. That was really thrilling, to meet him.

SHEILA CADIGAN: I’m sure you have other celebrity anecdotes from those years.

PATRICIA DE LARIOS PEYTON: Oh, I have lots of celebrity anecdotes, I mean, Dolores del Rio. We did a tribute to her, and she was a magnificent movie star. And she was always somebody that figured into my family because she was Mexican. And there were so many Mexican actors and actresses that were not recognized, or else they were going by other names, or they were playing with whiteface on and hiding that they were Mexicans, just the whole racism of the industry. And she was actually one that was able to, well, I mean, she was exploited, but she was successful. And she was just gorgeous. And so when she came to Coppola’s—Francis Coppola was hosting a lot of the parties, or we were hosting them at his house, when he lived on Broadway and Fillmore. And it’s a wonderful, old, big Victorian. And Nicolas Cage would be running around. He was only like seventeen or something.

SHEILA CADIGAN: Sofia Coppola must have been just a wink in her mother’s eye.

PATRICIA DE LARIOS PEYTON: Yeah, I don’t even remember her. She was probably a child. How old is she now?

SHEILA CADIGAN: She’s about thirty.

PATRICIA DE LARIOS PEYTON: Yeah, I could probably, if I thought hard enough, remember her. But Nic Cage I remember, because I just remember sitting down and having dinner with him and Francis and Carlos one time. Francis would have a lot of the parties at his house. And Eleanor Bertino did a lot of the hosting, and Chez Panisse—Alice Waters—she would bring in the food. And we had a party with Jacqueline Bisset and Candice Bergen. There had been a tribute to them too. And it was just kind of like a ho-hum, it was a nice party and everything, but when Dolores del Rio came, it was like people were just dazzled by her. And she was like, in her eighties at that point, just one of those people who kind of walks on air. She just had such a presence about her.

SHEILA CADIGAN: Yeah, Cathy Meyer had a really strong memory of that party too.

PATRICIA DE LARIOS PEYTON: Oh she did? Oh that’s interesting.

SHEILA CADIGAN: Dolores del Rio, yeah.

PATRICIA DE LARIOS PEYTON: Wow! What did she say?

SHEILA CADIGAN: Just sort of, “Wow!”

PATRICIA DE LARIOS PEYTON: Isn’t that interesting?

SHEILA CADIGAN: Yeah. I can’t remember specifics, but she was like, “Whoa.” It was hard for her to describe her impact. It’s sort of like Marilyn Monroe.

PATRICIA DE LARIOS PEYTON: Yeah. Well, this incredible charisma that some people have, yeah.

SHEILA CADIGAN: Do you have some other party anecdotes? We’re having a lot of fun collecting those, about celebrities and whatnot.

PATRICIA DE LARIOS PEYTON: I guess you are. But I’m not a big celebrity hound, that’s not the kind of stuff that I’m real—

SHEILA CADIGAN: Well just memories of other, reminisces of the others—

PATRICIA DE LARIOS PEYTON: Yeah. I wasn’t really one of the people, even though we had popularized the festival and stuff like that, there was still this very significant social strata within the Festival. Tom Luddy, Albert Johnson, Mel Novikoff and Peter Buchanan were always on that upper-class level, and I never was. So the people that I would be hanging out with and partying with would be the unknowns, the emerging filmmakers, the people from Africa and Latin America and Mexico. So unless I was with the Cubans or the Brazilians that had that kind of glamour, that international glamour, I don’t really have any of those celebrity stories for you. I mean, to me, what I considered glamorous were people that were working for social change and they were really artistically talented. And I don’t even remember the names. There was an Indian filmmaker that I was very close to, an African guy that came back a few times and, of course, like I keep saying, the Cubans and the Brazilians.

SHEILA CADIGAN: Well, sort of looking toward the—there were two years, and things were sort of closing down around ’81. The Festival skipped a year in ’82 because they moved it from the fall to the spring. So that’s when you stopped working there too, because that’s when Cathy stopped, and the Festival sort of closed down for a period?

PATRICIA DE LARIOS PEYTON: Yeah. It did, because of all these fiscal problems they were having, is that correct?

SHEILA CADIGAN: You tell me.

PATRICIA DE LARIOS PEYTON: Well I don't know. First, in 1980, I had to go through an attempted murder trial. So this took a big chunk of my life—weeks—away from the Festival. And then, I had split up with my husband, and then I was going out with the next person who was a long-term relationship, who was Jamaican, and I was really involved in music. We used to bring a lot of reggae to the festival too. And Bob Marley died, so we went to Jamaica, and I brought my daughter. She was just four or five at the time. And everybody got really mad at me. [LAUGHS] I don't blame them. I mean, I was gone for like three or four weeks or something like that. But I mean, I was 31. So that's what happened. Then I guess the Festival, when did it happen? It happened in October, and then it went down after that, right?

SHEILA CADIGAN: Something like that. I heard something about the locks being changed.

PATRICIA DE LARIOS PEYTON: Oh, right. Okay, I was gone by then. I was off by then, yeah.

SHEILA CADIGAN: Because you'd gone off to Jamaica?

PATRICIA DE LARIOS PEYTON: Well, I wasn't fired or anything. I was just remembering that today, actually, that I went to Jamaica, and it was kind of inopportune timing, but I think I kind of sensed that things were pretty much falling apart. So then I left after that.

SHEILA CADIGAN: We should probably talk about the founding of the actual Film Society in name, because you said you did do a mailing. Was the board involved in that? Obviously it's a membership organization; it was meant to bring in money in addition to popularizing the institution locally.

PATRICIA DE LARIOS PEYTON: Right, of course.

SHEILA CADIGAN: So can you tell me about those discussions?

PATRICIA D ELARIOS PEYTON: I did not participate in any of the board meetings at all. So if they discussed any of my ideas about the Film Society, it would have been conveyed by one of the directors.

SHEILA CADIGAN: You were told to fabricate a thing called the Film Society?

PATRICIA DE LARIOS PEYTON: Right.

SHEILA CADIGAN: And they had already named it, or did you come up with the name?

PATRICIA DE LARIOS PEYTON: No. The name I think came from a previous year, but they asked me to reconceptualize it and just make it happen. So that's why we called



it the San Francisco Film Society, because it was already an established name or element for the Film Festival.

SHEILA CADIGAN: And I assume you had a mailing list to work with already.

PATRICIA DE LARIOS PEYTON: We had a certain mailing list to work with already, but then we used a lot of lists that I had already culled, put together through community organizations and schools, so we really reached out more. And that's when we did that one brochure that I read to you. And that was pretty successful. It was the idea of making it like a party, an ongoing party, that you could meet people, and have a lot of fun.

SHEILA CADIGAN: A parade, rather than a museum.

PATRICIA DE LARIOS PEYTON: Right. [LAUGHS] Exactly.

SHEILA CADIGAN: Yeah, it sort of is a good model.

PATRICIA DE LARIOS PEYTON: A carnival, yeah, exactly.

SHEILA CADIGAN: A carnival, not an opera.

PATRICIA DE LARIOS PEYTON: Exactly. That's a good analogy, precisely.

SHEILA CADIGAN: Why don't you tell me some of your impressions of some of these key players. We talked about George and Tom Luddy.

PATRICIA DE LARIOS PEYTON: Yeah. Tom was a friend of mine, and his wife Monique, from the seventies and early eighties. Then I went into a different direction from film altogether, for many years. So we kind of parted ways. And Tom Luddy's wonderful. I think he's just tremendously talented, with a little ADD thrown in there. Do you know him?

SHEILA CADIGAN: No, but I've heard wonderful things.

PATRICIA DE LARIOS PEYTON: Yes, He's extremely focused and very, very smart. . . . There was just one screening I wanted to talk about, that stands out. It's just so ridiculous. But I don't remember if it was a Film Society screening. I want to say it was either at Fantasy Studios screening room, or it was at Francis Coppola's screening room downstairs at his house. But it was smaller, it wasn't in a major theater. And all the directors were there, the Film Festival directors and the board of directors. And I also remember that Nancy Pelosi had things at her house once in a while. She'd have celebrity parties and stuff like that. I don't know if she was there, but kind of the glitterati were there at the screening, and very serious people. And it was a porno film! God! I wish I could remember the name of this film.

SHEILA CADIGAN: **Caligula?**

PATRICIA DE LARIOS PEYTON: No, it was straight-up, hardcore porn. It had no artistic consideration at all. I guess it had a little storyline to it, so everybody was trying to justify it, that it had some narrative to it, unlike most hardcore porn. And it was about some woman, how she couldn't have an orgasm, and there were all these machines. But it was so hilarious, because everybody was just looking, I remember looking around the audience, and all these people in their seats, looking straight ahead. It was really embarrassing, and it was really amusing.

SHEILA CADIGAN: Whose house was this at?

PATRICIA DE LARIOS PEYTON: It was either at Coppola's screening room, which I believe was downstairs from his house, or else it was at Fantasy Studios. It was a private screening room, but there were easily eighty people there. And then there was a party. I don't remember if it was exactly afterward. At the Castro Theatre, we used to have parties a lot upstairs. And the woman, the porn star, was there. And nobody would talk to her. And it was so bizarre, because I guess, I don't know what the psychology of that was, if people were embarrassed. They wouldn't even look at her. So I sat there and talked to her. And I felt really sorry for her, because what a humiliating experience. I mean, that was how I projected it. You're in a porn film, and everybody's watching you, and then you're at this party afterward, and nobody's talking to you. She was literally, you know when you see somebody in a party just standing against the wall with a little glass of white wine?

SHEILA CADIGAN: I guess it would be hard to be embarrassed if you're a porn star, though.

PATRICIA DE LARIOS PEYTON: Maybe, yeah. [LAUGHS]

SHEILA CADIGAN: It would be a real disability if you were. [LAUGHS] You'd have to have workers' comp or something for being so shy.

PATRICIA DE LARIOS PEYTON: Yeah, but that was just funny. But I wanted to say about Mel Novikoff, now he ran—I don't know if you know who he is or was, but he owned the Surf Theatre and Clay Theatre, which turned into the Landmark Theatres. There was another one down at the Cannery that he ran for a while. This was before the Embarcadero. And the Castro. So there were four theaters, I think, that he had. And this is Mel right here. [POINTS TO PHOTO] And he was a doll. I just loved him. I remember he said to me one time at a party—I was all dressed up, it might have been an Opening Night party or something like that—but he said, "Oh, Patricia,"—he was drunk—he looks at me and goes, "If only I was twenty years younger, two feet taller and third world." [LAUGHS] It was so cute. And I think he was gay. But it was just such a darling—

SHEILA CADIGAN: All the more flattering.

PATRICIA DE LARIOS PEYTON: All the more flattering, exactly. He didn't put that in, "and not gay." Where is he? I just saw a picture of him here. But he, when he passed on, there was a huge tribute for him—this was in the eighties, I think, still, maybe the late eighties—at the Castro. Jeannette Etheredge, the owner of Tosca Café, had a lot of parties there. But again, that was more sort of the glamour, high society.

SHEILA CADIGAN: The glitterati.

PATRICIA DE LARIOS PEYTON: The glitterati, yeah. And she did a lot of that high society stuff. So I'm sure she'll be able to talk at great lengths about that. I like her a lot too, and Gary and Cathy. Cathy and I became close.

SHEILA CADIGAN: [Festival publicist] Cathy Meyer?

PATRICIA DE LARIOS PEYTON: Cathy Meyer, yeah.

SHEILA CADIGAN: She spoke really fondly of you.

PATRICIA DE LARIOS PEYTON: I liked her a lot.

SHEILA CADIGAN: She was thrilled to hear you were doing well.

PATRICIA DE LARIOS PEYTON: Yeah. It's just, we just went different directions, you know? At least, I went in a different direction, I think.

SHEILA CADIGAN: Yeah, why don't we talk about that different direction. It sounds so interesting.

PATRICIA DE LARIOS PEYTON: Well, right after the Film Festival ended, I started a music production and promotion company. So I was putting on music shows around the city independently. And in fact, one of the people, Eric Whittington, who worked at the Festival, worked on it with me. And we called it Carnival Productions. So it was the same kind of festival atmosphere, but it was just strictly music. And we would have events in clubs around the city. We would put on Caribbean and reggae music, salsa, African music, sometimes blues and funk and stuff. And we put them on in different venues around the city. And we did all our own promotion. And we brought in people from Jamaica, like big groups. And this was the beginning of rap, and some people argued that rap was started in Jamaica, through the deejay movement. And we did a big show at the Fillmore. And of course we weren't making any money. And then Bill Graham hired us to do some stuff on Sundays at one of his clubs. And then my parents got really sick. I was a single mother also. I had to make some more money. I wasn't making enough money. I used to take my daughter to all the Festival events. She'd come work with me in the office. She was only four, but she was around all the time. And after my parents passed on, I got into the art business, and I became an art dealer. And this was like 1983. I didn't know anything about fine art, nothing. I just happened to be looking for a job, and I met this older man who had a gallery, and he said, "You'd be a good art

salesman. You wanna come work at my gallery?” And I said, “Oh, sure,” because I needed to do something. And it was right in the beginning of when that industry was just taking off and ballooning. And it was just incredible timing. So I worked in the gallery for a little bit, and I was all of a sudden making 500 dollars a day, and it was just enormous amounts of money for me. And then I went off on my own. I put a 25 dollar ad in the newspaper, saying, “I sell fine art.” And somebody called me, and they said, “I have some money, I want you to go find me some art,” and it was \$75,000 that they dropped on my living room table, out of a money machine. And then somebody else came and did the same thing. So I just all of a sudden started making all this money. Well, as it turns out, the first guy who did it ended up ultimately getting busted by the federal government for international drug smuggling. I said, “Where do you get your money?” And he’d say, “I have a joba plantation in Bolivia.” Well, he was running cocaine. But he’s serving a life sentence. That was when those really draconian drug laws were coming down for drug dealers. Life in prison, no possibility of parole.

SHEILA CADIGAN: So sort of money laundering by art, for cash?

PATRICIA DE LARIOS PEYTON: Yes, because that’s what people were doing. They were hiding it behind art. So he’d say, “Get me Diego Rivera, get me Chagal.” So all of a sudden I got introduced to the art world, and I had enormous prestige because I had this money.

SHEILA CADIGAN: The laundress.

PATRICIA DE LARIOS PEYTON: And people started giving me art without buying it up front. But it was a very, very, very bland industry and I just hated it. And then I got involved in a little bit of private investigation through a friend, which I just loved, but they were only paying 15 dollars an hour, and I couldn’t support myself and my daughter on that. And then I tried to make a film documentary exposé of the art industry, because it’s just really sick, really, really sick. And I got some funding to do a pilot. And I went the foundation route, but I never got enough money. And then my daughter went to college on kind of a scholarship. And so then I went full ahead into the private investigation field. I worked for an agency for a while. Now I’m completely on my own. And that’s the story of my life. [LAUGHS]

SHEILA CADIGAN: Well, it’s a wonderful life, really. It’s been a great story, and a great interview.

PATRICIA DE LARIOS PEYTON: Well I don’t know how useful it is, but it’s—

SHEILA CADIGAN: Oh, no, no, no. There will be people who will be very interested to hear a lot of this.

PATRICIA DE LARIOS PEYTON: I did actually have another little brief stint in the nineties through [former Festival Executive Director] Peter Scarlet, after I found out that my film wasn’t going to go any place and I wasn’t going to be able to produce it, I called

the Film Festival just to see if there was anything available. And Peter said, “Oh, this is total serendipity. I’m looking for somebody to do some marketing.” This was when their offices were on—was it Ellis and Fillmore? And I said, “Oh, that’s just so wonderful.” And so I went in there for about three months. I think that was 1996. And damn, was that a different operation! It was totally corporate. We were, I would say, the antithesis of corporate in the early eighties. We were like a community organization basically, with a lot of fanfare, a lot of glamour connections and stuff like that.

SHEILA CADIGAN: 1996 was not a great year for the arts in the Bay Area anyway. I think the dot-commers were sort of driving it out.

PATRICIA DE LARIOS PEYTON: Yeah, that’s true. But it was a very depressed atmosphere inside the Festival. People were very disconnected, I thought, from each other. There was a lot of antagonism among the employees. It was really, really bizarre and alienating. Anyway, that’s what I have to say about that. That was just that one year. It could have been just me, just totally outgrowing or undergrowing what it was about. Just not being in sync with it. And it was just not what I was supposed to do. So that’s when I went full force into PI work.

SHEILA CADIGAN: Have you followed the Festival at all?

PATRICIA DE LARIOS PEYTON: No. I mean, I go from time to time, but I don’t have any connection to it in terms of—I’m not even on the mailing list.

SHEILA CADIGAN: You seemed very surprised when I told you they actually are doing a lot of the things that you had started doing in ’80.

PATRICIA DE LARIOS PEYTON: Yeah, I didn’t even know that.

SHEILA CADIGAN: They’re really bringing back, this past year, the sort of private viewings in homes.

PATRICIA DE LARIOS PEYTON: I didn’t even know that.

SHEILA CADIGAN: There’s a new program, SF360.

PATRICIA DE LARIOS PEYTON: I saw the brochure for that.

SHEILA CADIGAN: Yeah. They have a film **American Blackout**, which you can show in your home, and it actually has outreach materials and other things.

PATRICIA DE LARIOS PEYTON: Oh really? Oh, that’s good.

SHEILA CADIGAN: So it’s become very, almost the vision that you envisioned almost thirty years ago.

PATRICIA DE LARIOS PEYTON: Yeah. I mean, I think the time for change is even more compelling now than ever before. I think that we're facing a collapse of the globe. I really do. And I think that the Film Festival should connect up with the social change filmmakers and sponsor showings like Robert Greenwald, who did the Wal-Mart film, for example. He's got another one out, **Iraq for Sale**. Or like Michael Moore, co-sponsor community based showings so everybody's seeing these films, because they're not going to get on television, so bring them out to the city. I don't know if there's that impulse.

SHEILA CADIGAN: I think that's the model. And I think, again, it's the model that you were looking at in 1980, '81.

PATRICIA DE LARIOS PEYTON: That's great.

SHEILA CADIGAN: So maybe you should take another look and get on the mailing list and say, "Hey, that was my idea." [LAUGHS]

PATRICIA DE LARIOS PEYTON: [LAUGHS] Right.

SHEILA CADIGAN: "You must have ripped it off from me."

PATRICIA DE LARIOS PEYTON: Yeah.

SHEILA CADIGAN: But anyway, I think you have a lot to be proud of.

PATRICIA DE LARIOS PEYTON: Thank you. I really appreciate your asking me to do this, even though it's freaked me out, because like I said, it's two years in my life, and I don't really remember too many details. But they were important years.

SHEILA CADIGAN: Well, I want to thank Patricia de Larios Peyton for her oral history interview.

PATRICIA DE LARIOS PEYTON: Thank you so much. I really appreciate it.