

A TEI Project

Interview of Sherman Lee

Contents

1. Transcript

- 1.1. TAPE NUMBER: I, SIDE ONE (APRIL 7, 1992)
- 1.2. TAPE NUMBER: I, SIDE TWO (APRIL 7, 1992)
- 1.3. TAPE NUMBER: II, SIDE ONE (APRIL 7, 1992)
- 1.4. TAPE NUMBER: II, SIDE TWO (APRIL 7, 1992)
- 1.5. TAPE NUMBER: III, SIDE ONE (APRIL 8, 1992)
- 1.6. TAPE NUMBER: III, SIDE TWO (APRIL 8, 1992)
- 1.7. TAPE NUMBER: IV, SIDE ONE (APRIL 8, 1992)
- 1.8. TAPE NUMBER: IV, SIDE TWO (APRIL 8, 1992)
- 1.9. TAPE NUMBER: V, SIDE ONE (APRIL 8, 1992)
- 1.10. TAPE NUMBER: V, SIDE TWO (APRIL 8, 1992)
- 1.11. TAPE NUMBER: VI, SIDE ONE (APRIL 9, 1992)
- 1.12. TAPE NUMBER: VI, SIDE TWO (APRIL 9, 1992)
- 1.13. TAPE NUMBER: VII, SIDE ONE (JULY 13, 1992)
- 1.14. TAPE NUMBER: VII, SIDE TWO (JULY 13, 1992)
- 1.15. TAPE NUMBER: VIII, SIDE ONE (JULY 13, 1992)
- 1.16. TAPE NUMBER: VIII, SIDE TWO (JULY 13, 1992)
- 1.17. SECOND PART (JULY 14, 1992)
- 1.18. TAPE NUMBER: IX, SIDE ONE (JULY 14, 1992)
- 1.19. TAPE NUMBER: IX, SIDE TWO (JULY 14, 1992)
- 1.20. TAPE NUMBER: X, SIDE ONE (JULY 14, 1992)
- 1.21. SECOND PART (JULY 15, 1992)
- 1.22. TAPE NUMBER: X, SIDE TWO (JULY 15, 1992)
- 1.23. TAPE NUMBER: XI, SIDE ONE (JULY 15, 1992)
- 1.24. TAPE NUMBER: XI, SIDE TWO (JULY 15, 1992)
- 1.25. TAPE NUMBER: XII, SIDE ONE (JULY 16, 1992)
- 1.26. TAPE NUMBER: XII, SIDE TWO (JULY 16, 1992)
- 1.27. TAPE NUMBER: XIII, SIDE ONE (JULY 16, 1992)
- 1.28. TAPE NUMBER: XIII, SIDE TWO (JULY 16, 1992)
- 1.29. TAPE NUMBER: XIV, SIDE ONE (JULY 16, 1992)
- 1.30. TAPE NUMBER: XIV, SIDE TWO (JULY 16, 1992)

1. Transcript

1.1. TAPE NUMBER: I, SIDE ONE

APRIL 7, 1992

GARDNER

To begin with, I'd like to have you start off by talking about you and your family background. So, for the record, if you could tell me where you were born, when, and then tell me something about the Lee family.

LEE

Well, I was born in Seattle, Washington, on April 19, 1918. April 19, as all good New Englanders know, is Patriots Day and the anniversary of the battle of Breed's Hill or Bunker Hill, whichever you want to call it. And that introduces you to my family, because they were basically from New England. My father [Emery H. Lee] was born in Malden, Massachusetts, and his family goes back to the New England Lees. The one perhaps most remembered member of the family was the general who was cursed out by Washington at the Battle of Monmouth. I know some of the Lees and also other members of the family at that time were Tories and went to Canada, but basically Father's father and his grandfather were from Massachusetts. And my mother [Adelia Baker Lee]'s family goes back really first to Indiana and then to Ohio. One of my ancestors on that side of the family-- Two of them, two brothers, were kidnapped by Indians about 1814 or so and managed to kill three Indians and escape back home. They were the Johnston boys. And that feat was recorded in The Story of Ohio by William Dean Howells. So my mother's side had all that. My mother's mother--my grandmother--was Carrie [Johnston] Baker. Her grandfather was an adjutant general during the Civil War. She was a big Civil War buff, Northern naturally. So that was part of the family tradition. Both were avid members of the Daughters of the American Revolution [DAR]. I began as a member of the Children of the American Revolution, until I hit college, and then I was supposed to become a member of the Sons of the American Revolution. But when I hit college I began to look at things a little differently, and I just didn't follow up on that kind of thing.

GARDNER

I didn't even know there was a Children of the American Revolution.

LEE

Oh, yes.

GARDNER

What was your mother's family name?

LEE

Her name was Carrie Johnston Baker, and Johnston was the main line going back. We also had ancestors in the seventeenth century in New Amsterdam [New York], the Van Buskirk family. So the Lees, the Van Buskirks, the Johnstons, and then there was also some family called Kimball. And my grandmother was with this DAR. She was very keenly interested in genealogy and did quite a bit of research in that matter in the New York Public Library when we were living in New York City. That's where I picked up all this material, because she was very keen that we understand that we had this background. My father went to the University of Washington in Seattle. He moved out there from the East to make a living. He went to the university there for three years--he didn't finish his B.S.--and he was in what is called radio engineering. He met my mother at the university. She didn't finish. And they were married in Seattle and I was born in Seattle. There is an old picture of me as a child of about six or seven months, playing with a leaf of grass, on the site of the Seattle Art Museum in Volunteer Park. Since the museum wasn't there and nobody knew there was going to be one there, there is no way I could have been influenced by that location. But it's kind of an interesting coincidence. Father was a radio engineer, and his first job was out with a firm, a radio engineering firm, when radio was just new in that time, in 1918, 1919. A firm called Kilbourn and Clark. And he worked there a few months, I guess. The federal government was setting up a new department under the Department of Commerce for the federal regulation of the airwaves. Among the special responsibilities of the Department of Commerce was the use of radio on shipboard as a means of safety, so all the radios on all the ships that came into New York Harbor and docked there and had business there had to be inspected by federal government representatives. They set up a department--it was called the radio division, I guess--and father applied for a

civil service job and got that job. We moved to New York City when I was less than one year old, in 1919. So we started living in Brooklyn, in Brooklyn Heights, which was then not such a great place. It had come down some, and then later on it went up. But while we were there it was inexpensive brownstone housing. Father was inspecting radios on ships all the time, and they were beginning to set up broadcasting. So it was a busy time. His office was in the subtreaury building, which is the building right down on Wall Street where Washington gave his first inaugural speech. It's a beautiful neoclassic building with very thick walls. I used to go there quite often, not on school days, but in the afternoon. I remember it being a wonderful place to visit. Of course New York was quite different in 1919 to 1932, which was when we were there. The subway system was marvelous and very safe. My grandmother had come east. She came east a couple of times before she came east permanently, because my mother wasn't a terribly healthy woman. Grandmother finally decided rather than take the train east and go back to Seattle and so forth, she would come and stay. She really had probably at least as much or even more to do with my upbringing than anyone else. She was very fussy and very straitlaced. But she thought nothing of letting me get on the subway at age seven or eight or nine to go up to the Bronx Zoo or the Seventh Regiment Armory, where I used to fly model airplanes. It was just a wonderful life. We moved from Brooklyn Heights out to Flatbush and different places, mostly near Kings Highway and the old Dutch Reformed church, which was built in sixteen [hundred] something. Of course, Flatbush then was just salt marshes all the way out from where we were to the Rockaway Beach. Floyd Bennett Field wasn't built in 1926, so before that there was nothing out there. You could take your bike and ride out and cross a wooden bridge to the strand. There was nothing on the strand except a Coast Guard station. So you could go fishing or go camping. It was really a very pleasant place to live, with a combination of rural qualities plus big city. I don't know how much detail you want me to go into.

GARDNER

Oh, you're doing so well. I'm riveted. Let me ask you this, what was your schooling like? What kind of school were you in?

LEE

I was going to get into that. Before we moved out to Flatbush, we moved from Brooklyn Heights to a big apartment house which was up-- I know it wasn't far from PS [public school] 177. Grandmother, as I said, was very straitlaced and also very careful, also very sort of aware that she and the Lees were somehow supposed to be different from other people around. We had many friends who were not, certainly, Sons or Daughters of the American Revolution. But she was very, very fussy. For instance, one of the first things I remember with any clarity is that we lived in this big apartment house and I used to play out-- this was now sort of the mid-twenties, I guess--in the places where construction had begun. They had excavated, but they hadn't built anything. So there were big piles of dirt and excavations and a wonderful place to play military games, which, of course, kids always like. But I had very few friends, because Grandmother watched over me very carefully. There's a movie, a movie with Harold Lloyd, called Grandma's Boy--well, that's what the situation was. She used to walk me from the apartment house to the school, PS 177, to make sure I got there safely. And then she used to meet me there at lunchtime, and we would go just around the corner, I remember, to a very sort of old-fashioned delicatessen with wonderful sausages and Swiss cheese and so on. That's where we had lunch. There are all kinds of little odds and ends and fragments I remember. My grammar school was PS 119, which was out in Flatbush. By then we were out there. I won the history medal, awarded by the American Legion, as having the best grades and record in history. I won the science medal. I did not get the medal that was awarded to the best person in shop. Shop was very important. And my grandmother was incensed and went to the principal and asked what had happened. He made a big mistake. Instead of saying, "Well, someone else deserved it," he said, "Well, your son really should have had it, but we thought that another boy, who was going on and so forth, should get it." She was even more incensed. It was very, very embarrassing. Anyhow, my friends were mostly-- We played some sandlot baseball. It was the principal sport, I remember. I also began hitting balls by myself--tennis balls. These were duplex houses in Flatbush, and our next-door neighbor was Italian. These were single houses, but next to it part of the land was an old barn, a relic of the farm area there, and he used to press grapes in season to make wine. This was during Prohibition. Grandmother was an ardent prohibitionist and she used to try to get him in trouble again and again, but she finally laid off. I used the barn door as a practice thing for hitting

tennis balls. So I played baseball, I played tennis. I hadn't been on a tennis court. All my friends decided they were going to--not all but most of them--go to Brooklyn Technical High School. I insisted that I had to go to Brooklyn Technical High School, too. It's a long way away, and finally they gave in. I had to get up at about five every morning, because the only way to get there was an old-fashioned streetcar with the little wood-burning stove in it and a big box with brass handles and so on. It took about an hour and a quarter to get from our house to Brooklyn Technical High School. So that's where I started high school. I was interested. I learned mechanical drawing. I learned about wood treatment. I heard there was going to be a tennis tournament, so I signed up. I had never been on a tennis court; I'd only hit balls against the wall. Of course in the first round-- There was a very fancy tennis place over on Brooklyn Parkway. The first person I drew in the tennis tournament was the captain of the tennis team. It was the most embarrassing moment--my first great embarrassment--because I was hitting the balls over the fence and everything, and he'd just stand on the court and make me go and get them and come back. Oh, it was just dreadful. By the end of the first semester the man who taught shop, Mr. Foster--they had an in-house thing at the end of the first semester--took my parents aside, and my grandmother was there too. He said, "You know, it is perfectly absurd for this kid to be in Brooklyn Technical High School. He's good in the academic subjects and he can do the others too, but it's foolish. All these people are basically going to go on in engineering or this will be the end of their education." So they changed me. From there they enrolled me in Erasmus Hall High School, which was in Flatbush not too far from where we lived. And I think I went there a couple of weeks and then I was transferred, because they had just opened a brand-new high school which was quite close to us called James Madison High School, also Flatbush. So I was sent over there, and that's where I took my first two years of high school education. I remember relatively little about the teaching there. I know I remember trying out for the baseball team. I didn't do too badly, but I didn't make the team. I was a freshman, anyhow. So that--

GARDNER

Had you had any exposure to the arts at this point?

LEE

Well, I was getting there. Grandmother was interested in literature and Mark Twain. I read a great deal. One reason was because in my eighth year I had a very bad experience. First I fell down the stone stairs in the apartment house-- this is before we went to Flatbush, when I was going to PS 177--and broke my collarbone. That put me in bed for a couple of weeks. Then I contracted pneumonia. I was up from the collarbone and then I contracted pneumonia, which then developed into pleurisy. In those days that was bad news. There were no antibiotics or anything of that nature. The family doctor, whose name was Loughlin, who was later--I think two years later--murdered in the dead of night while he was crossing some empty lot near his house-- Involved with some kind of marital problem, I believe. Anyhow, he was the doctor, and I was operated on, on the dining room table, in the apartment. I remember before the operation I was scared to death. I locked myself in the bathroom to try to get out of everything. So they had to break the door, break the lock, get me out. I remember the smell of that chloroform with great, great displeasure. And they operated. I was literally in bed for almost six months. I had a tube in my back--I have a big scar on my back still--for draining your lungs and so forth. So I was sort of out of school for almost a year. By the time I graduated my eight years of grammar school-- I graduated two years ahead. So I graduated at age twelve instead of fourteen. And that wasn't so good, because that meant that all through high school here was a twelve-year-old or thirteen-year-old trying to make the baseball team against eighteen-year-olds and so on. So that kind of put me down a bit in thinking about my marvelous athletic abilities. And I still was trying tennis despite the terrible experience at Brooklyn Tech. But I basically was sort of a sissy. I read a lot. My grandmother urged me to read Civil War history, which I did. I knew a lot. I knew everything about the Civil War that you could possibly imagine. I read and all that. I got in the habit of reading a lot. Grandmother is the one who got me into that. Greek history. I read Mark Twain. I read all the usual trash that young kids also read: the [Joseph] Altsheler books, the Hardy Boys, Robin Hood. Of course I loved Treasure Island She also took me on occasional cultural journeys. We went, for instance, once to the Brooklyn Academy of Music, and my first memory of anyone on stage or singing was Maria Jeritza, a red-headed opera diva. Grandmother took me to the Brooklyn Museum, which I remember basically in terms of a staircase, great staircases that go around a central court that go from the lower floor to the upper floor, each with a landing between

the flights. On that landing there was a big case, a glass case, with a suit of Japanese armor, because I remember a mask with mustaches and the big antler ornaments on the helmet. I don't think it predisposed me to oriental art, but I remember it. At the Metropolitan Museum [of Art] the memory is more ordinary. Almost everyone remembers the Egyptian mummy. And of course at the Metropolitan--up until the refurbishing of the Egyptian galleries by the architects who did the new wings at the Metropolitan Museum--they still had that case, which was a square case that was about forty, forty-two inches square that you looked down at. Of course it was an earth pit grave with a curled-up skeleton and a bowl and some grain. That I remember well. I really don't remember anything other than that at the Metropolitan Museum, except it was a museum. Going back a minute to show you why I said I was somewhat of a sissy, partly because of my youth in relation to the others in the class-- In PS 177, for example, they always had a big spelling bee involving all the students--the school spelling bee. That year I won it, and Grandmother was very proud. She thought it was terrific. But it always had been won by a girl. Always. So they proudly presented me with the book they'd bought before--of course thinking it was going to be a girl--a copy of Heidi. And you can imagine how that went over.

GARDNER

Were there any teachers that you had? You mention in the earlier part there weren't, but--

LEE

My only memory of a grammar school teacher is Miss Sorenson at PS 119, who taught music. And the reason I remember her is because she was a very tall, well-developed Swedish type. She had gorgeous legs, and that I remember. I don't remember the names of any other teachers in grammar school. I remember my first two years in high school, not my third year in high school. I remember several teachers. I remember vividly Miss Nissle, who taught French. She had the most amazing pair of breasts that ever appeared, and that I remember vividly. I went to Erasmus for just a few weeks. Then I went to James Madison. I didn't finish there, but I went there a year and a half. Then Father was transferred to what was now the Federal Radio Commission. It was, I think, separate from the Department of Commerce then.

He was transferred to Detroit. So we moved to Detroit at the end of my sophomore year at James Madison. Now, let me think if there is anything else about New York that needs to be hashed out.

GARDNER

Or we can always come back to it.

LEE

You can always come back to it. It probably will occur to me as we-- So we moved to Detroit. The high school I went to was Cooley High School. We lived in sort of a better kind of house, a brick house. The houses we lived in in Flatbush were duplexes, framed duplexes. I do remember in New York Father was always having problems with second mortgages and making ends meet. Before we moved to Detroit, he had come up through the civil service, when he was in charge of the New York office. He was transferred to Detroit so that he would be supervisor of the whole region, not just Detroit. So he was moving up very well. And he tried to get me interested in radio engineering and so forth. I built a receiver, I built a transmitter, but it just didn't take with me. I had a very tough time with mathematics. Especially when I hit calculus in college, it was perfectly clear any dreams I had for being a physicist or astronomer were just pure baloney. But he was very much interested in radio engineering. He had an elaborate transmitter--a ham radio. He was in touch with people from all over the world with that thing. And he was very good at it and he rose very rapidly in the civil service. But it just didn't interest me. During the end of Prohibition, just before the election of [Franklin D.] Roosevelt in 1932, father had to work with the Treasury Department--the people who were enforcing the Volsted Act. Because they were using the radio, you see, as a means of getting their boats that they sent to the beaches all out in the ocean to Long Island for unloading the scotch and gin from England and so forth. That was happening all the time, and the radio people were cooperating with the Treasury Department in trying to catch these dastardly people who were bringing in liquor. I remember some of the treasury agents who came to the house. They had a big problem, because one of the major transmitters for the bootleggers they couldn't locate, and it was a thorn in their flesh. They finally developed--again, this was all a long time ago--a system of beaming in on the transmittal thing. So they could zero in on the

location, or begin to get fixes, what they call fixes, and gradually get it more refined. It finally wound up that they discovered that the transmitter was just around the corner from our house, which was very clever of the bootleggers. They put it right smack in the house about three houses away, around the corner. I remember the great excitement when they finally raided that place and got that under control. The other thing was that there was one big excitement, which was due again to my father's position. He called up and asked me to come down to the subtreasury building office as soon as I could and take the subway--it only took about twenty minutes, fifteen minutes--because he wanted me to see something. So I went down there, and there in his office was Charles Lindbergh. Lindbergh was getting his radio permit for his flight. And I was shown Mr. Lindbergh and Mr. Lindbergh shook my hand and I remember seeing him--I looked like just a little kid of course. Later he sent me an autographed photograph, which I think is still in my files somewhere.

GARDNER

I hope so.

LEE

Yes. Well, we moved to Detroit, and obviously a better house and a better section of town as far as Detroit went. I went to Cooley High School, and I only went there one year. There I met a student adviser, Dr. Blanchard, a very nice man with a mustache and blue eyes, an outdoorsman, very much an outdoor type--fishing and so on. He had a small camp, where he took some of the boys and some of the athletes at the school, up on the Au Sable River--not the northern peninsula, but the northern part of the lower peninsula. He taught me a lot about fishing. He introduced me to a native up in the town of Mio [Michigan], which is the nearest town to where we stayed, who was an avid fisherman and fished at night for large brown trout. That was what we especially liked to do. I learned a lot about fishing and the woods. I was always interested in fishing. Somehow or another when I got to grammar school, I saw a book on trout fishing and I read that, and I said, "I've got to try this." My father wasn't interested in that stuff at all. I bedeviled the family. Really, I must have been a terrible pest. The first time I went fishing, we went out--Long Island--drove out to Lake Ronkonkomo, which is now solid wall-to-wall houses. Then it was lovely and open. They had what they called Indian

moccasin flowers growing wild in the woods, and we had a picnic lunch. The stream that made Lake Ronkonkomo had some trout in it. I started out, I remember, trying with a Montreal, a maroon-colored fly. I couldn't catch anything with it. I had a steel rod--just awful stuff. Then I tried salmon eggs and I didn't catch anything. So then I bedeviled them to take me up to Katonah. The city reservoirs have very good bass fishing. I got a casting rod and some plugs, and there I caught my first fish, or bass, and was very excited. And I caught a few more. I remember one thing happened that was sort of symbolic. I had a new plug called a bass-orino--a diving one, weighted a bit--that had an aluminum head or steel head and a wooden plug. And it was brand-new. I had been casting, and Father said, "Well, you're not casting hard enough. You've got to really put more into it." He said, "Here, let me show you." And he took the rod and he wound up, and of course he snapped the plug. This new plug went sailing all by itself almost three-quarters away across the lake into the deepest part. It was gone. He just handed me the rod and he turned around and walked away. Then I got him to take me up to the northwest corner of New Jersey. There's a wonderful trout stream, still quite good, called Flat Brook. It's right near Port Jervis. I fished, and I saw people catching trout, and I learned how you should cast a fly. I began to do that, and the next year they left me on a farm up on the Neversink River.

GARDNER

They just left you there this time?

LEE

For a week. They boarded me at this farm and I could fish to my heart's content. I really became sort of a fishing nut. Also I forgot to mention, in New York I played a lot of sandlot baseball. I had a lot of friends who were sort of athletic types, and I tried that. And I played reasonably well. I made the high school baseball team in my senior year in Washington--we'll get to that.

GARDNER

Did you go to see the Dodgers play at all?

LEE

Oh, yes. Ebbets Field was a great place. I do remember there. I remember Dazzy Vance pitching with his fantastic windup, and I remember seeing Harry Heilmann, who then played with the Cincinnati Reds. He played in right field and Babe Herman played right field for Brooklyn. And Long George Kelly. I remember I was very keen about baseball. Ebbets Field was a great place to go. It was just marvelous. Also, in New York I was very interested and Father was-- It was something we could share, because he liked putting these radio things together. I became interested in flying model airplanes. Not the kinds that sort of realistically represent a plane, but for-duration kinds of planes that you flew at the Seventh Regiment Armory, made of paper and various thin pieces of balsa wood and long rubber bands that could unwind forever. I could fly a plane and have it stay up ten or twelve minutes. Of course, later on they began to have planes that would stay up for thirty minutes. I never got that good. Anyhow, I got to be pretty good at it. As a matter of fact, I won for my age in the city competition. I think it was my first year in high school. Now we can go back to Detroit. Doc Blanchard in Detroit really taught me an awful lot about the woods, camping and hiking. I bought from New York, through the mail-order catalog--my parents paid for it--a small one-man tent from Abercrombie, not Abercrombie and Fitch, but David Abercrombie, who was an outfitter for really good camping material. I had waxed linen bags for food and a Duluth packsack. My parents would drive me up to Mio and drop me off and come back and get me in a month. And I'd just manage up there.

GARDNER

Really?

LEE

Oh, yes. This was when I was about sixteen. I used to do that every summer for two or three years or so.

GARDNER

How did they feel about that?

LEE

Well, Doc Blanchard had his little camp not far away. Occasionally he'd ask me to help out, because he had boys that were twelve to fourteen, and I was

about fifteen. I'd help out with some of the things they had to do: take them to go fishing or do this, that, or the other. So I was used to a degree of solitude. And I didn't mind being alone, I rather enjoyed it. I loved the outdoors. I was playing more and more tennis. In Detroit, I began to get better. Now, I have to make sure I don't transpose what happened later in Detroit, when I went to the Detroit museum [Detroit Institute of Arts], to what I did when I was in that one year of high school. I had my first girlfriend in Detroit, who lived just up the street from us.

GARDNER

It sounds as though you adjusted very well. It's not easy to take someone in the early to mid-teens and transplant from an environment that they have known all along.

LEE

Well, I always read a lot. I did very well in school. I didn't do all that well in Detroit, at Cooley, I think partly because I had been moved from New York to Detroit. But also I think partly because I don't think I sort of really zeroed in on what I was interested in. I was still trying do some stuff with science or engineering. But anyhow, all of a sudden-- We were just in Detroit for that year or year and a half. Father was promoted again, and they asked him to come to Washington [D.C.]. So we moved to Washington, and we got a very nice house out in Chevy Chase.

**1.2. TAPE NUMBER: I, SIDE TWO
APRIL 7, 1992**

GARDNER

We had just gotten you to Washington, to Chevy Chase.

LEE

So there we were, and, again, in I think a more expensive--still nothing extraordinary--environment. Father was working down in the Commerce Department. He was about second or third in command in the whole operation, which had become quite, quite big. It meant dealing with all these radio networks and so on. I was in the district of Western High School. So I went to Western High School for one year. I graduated from Western High

School. And there I began to really sort of get into things where I felt I was doing something I was terribly interested in. I continued to be interested in outdoor sports and fishing. I played more tennis. And I made the Western High School baseball team as a pitcher, and I made the Western High School basketball team, though I wasn't terribly good at either. I was never a starting player, always a substitute. But I had some wonderful teachers and courses on a much higher level and much more interesting subjects than I had ever had before. Western High School was quite extraordinary. This was 1933, '34. Washington was then a city of four hundred thousand, and it was very attractive and just wonderful. And also Father was very keen on sports too. He was very happy that I was on the high school teams and so on. First of all, they had a course in ancient history-- Greece and Rome. Then they had courses in drama and they had courses in history that included some art. It wasn't art history but it was more like--

GARDNER

Western civ[ilization], that kind of thing?

LEE

That kind of thing, but on a senior high school level. They had a drama teacher who-- I can't remember her name, but she was a powerhouse. Middle-aged, grizzled, grayed. But she really knew a lot and she could articulate it very well, in terms of historic theater and modern theater. I did very well. I got straight A's. Because they didn't recognize any grades from any other school, I graduated magna cum laude and was the second in the class. The valedictorian was--I remember her because I dated her--the daughter of a brigadier general or something like that. May Fielder. She wasn't a great beauty, but she was very intelligent and very quick and a very good wit. It was just, you know, a different kind of environment. I really liked it. There was a beautiful blond girl up the street named Virginia Kane, and Grandmother thought she was a little questionable. But I dated her. And next door there was a rather attractive brunette, but very sort of proper and weak. Grandmother thought she was terrific, but I didn't. She kept trying to fob her off on me, but I kept dating Virginia Kane. I took her to the senior prom and so forth. But Father didn't like Washington. Father was definitely not a society type, in the sense of being interested in moving up. He didn't like those people

much. He was a good solid radio engineer, and that was what he wanted to do. And he didn't like Washington with all the frippery and foofaraw. So he asked to go back to Detroit, and they sent him back to Detroit. They made the area bigger, so he was in charge of the whole northern Middle West, including Chicago. The office was in Detroit. At that time I had to choose a college. My family never had much money, I think in large part because of my mother's illness and my illness. Grandmother was, I think, a real trial to my father, because she was very straitlaced and she wanted things done just so. I think it was tough on him to have Grandmother around all the time. So we went back and we looked around at schools. I didn't like the idea of going to a big school. I wanted to go to a smaller place that was more-- I like a little degree of privacy; I didn't like a big place. So we finally settled on Albion College, and I went there.

GARDNER

Where is that?

LEE

Albion, Michigan. And it was a disaster. The first time I'd been away a long time. I was pledged by Sigma Chi. It was a big fraternity college. I played on the fraternity basketball team--you couldn't go out for a team your freshman year. I remember a history professor who I thought was pretty useful and good, but I don't remember too much. But I remember it was really a kind of jock college. I just got off on the wrong foot. I was unsympathetic to them and they were unsympathetic to me. And what was more, I had been raised by Grandmother: I wasn't a jock type. I remember I went fishing; I went out squirrel shooting. There was one student there I knew and he liked hunting. But it was just a disaster. I just told my parents, "I gotta get out of here." And they didn't know what to do. And then I remembered, or my grandmother remembered, that there were these scholarships at American University in Washington, D.C., one for each state. And they took care of tuition and so on, but not room and board, as I remember. So we applied posthaste, and we found that the scholarship for Michigan had not been awarded. So I got a scholarship, and I transferred mid first year down to American University. That worked out very well. I graduated from American University. Now we get into

areas where we're getting into more memory, and I don't know how much you want.

GARDNER

Well, in a sense, I'm interested in what interests you. At this point also, we're getting you closer to your career.

LEE

Yes, that's right. Do you want me to emphasize that part of it--which to me is the most significant part--that led to my career or--?

GARDNER

Well, if there are other things that come into play, we can talk about them as well.

LEE

Well, start off this way: I was starting, really, with a clean slate, because Albion had been so very unpleasant. I must have been very unpleasant as well. It was just total incompatibility. So, in a sense, it was a clean slate. I remember almost nothing of the courses that I took at Albion, except that I didn't like any part of it. So I had decided that I was going to major in physics. My first semester there I took a course in physics from Dr. Rouse, who was a terribly nice man, very patient. I built a spectroscope and began working with spectroscopy just enough to get through. But in math, at the end of the freshman year, you hit permutations, combinations, and probability, which would be leading you up to second-year math, which was calculus. Brother, I was totally at sea. I was interested in the English literature course. The English literature course had a very good system, which, I don't know, I don't think it still applies, because I don't see any evidence of it. Your second semester in English, you were required to write a long paper with full scholarly paraphernalia. And your topic was assigned, you didn't pick it. I was assigned the problem of who was Vanessa in the life of Swift. I worked like a Trojan at the Library of Congress. I got the paper done, and I think I got a C+. But it was the most-- Because you had to do everything according to the book, note cards and the whole schmear. It was a real experience and very humbling. You realized how much went into this and how much you missed. So I decided that

I was going to major in history. I thought history-- I'd always been fascinated by it, I liked it. That second year, that was 1934-35, when [Robert Maynard] Hutchins went to [University of] Chicago. A lot of professors left, and some very good ones came to American University, partly because it was in Washington, D.C., and the Library of Congress was there and these professors could really work. They had Dr. Richard Bauer in history. He was a medieval historian. They had Dr. Eugene [N.] Anderson in eighteenth-century and nineteenth-century European history, French Revolution and other things. And later, when I was in graduate school doing my master's [degree], Dr. Turner, intellectual historian--Ralph [E.] Turner, who later went to Yale [University] and was a full professor, a tenured professor there, and wrote some very good books. Anyhow, there was some real sort of intellectual stimulation there. It was a school of four hundred students. I was one of the people who founded the tennis team. We had the first tennis team American University ever had. We played in the conference and we won. We were undefeated the first year and we were almost undefeated right down through for four years. We won the conference championship every year. I made the basketball team. I was a starter and I played basketball, not very well. Anyhow, it was exciting. I took a course in medieval history. I took a course in the Renaissance. There was another professor who came, a young professor in English literature, Donald Weeks. I became a very good friend of his. There was real challenge going on. And I took a course in English lit[erature]. This was as a second-year course. I dropped math. I was doing well enough with the French I had--I did a little French. I was doing well enough so I could handle it okay, but I was not terribly adept at language. So I began more and more to be interested in history. And then the third year, junior year, there was a course in art history. You think today about art history, it's a big industry and so on. This was 1936, '37, and there was one teacher. His name was Will Hutchins, and he had a B.F.A. from Yale. He was a painter. The painter who had taught at Yale, I'm pretty sure, was Willard Metcalf, who was an American impressionist. Hutch[ins] painted in American impressionist style. He felt Cézanne was not all that great and he didn't much like Cézanne. And Picasso was something impossible. I took my first course in art history. Hutch had been an ambulance driver in World War I in Italy. He had brought back books and reproductions of Italian art. He spoke Italian quite well. He was not a trained art historian, not a systematic art historian. He was also the drama coach. And he was an old ham and quite

wonderful. He and I went sketching, impressionist style, around the university, which was all open country, just beautiful open country, and also across the river in Virginia. I learned something about the impressionists' ideas and the ways of painting. I took art history and I took Weeks's course in modern poetry and in modern literature and I took more history. I took Anderson's course in intellectual history, in the French Revolution, and so on. I just felt that art history was terrific. It had a proper mix, to me, of intuitive aesthetic understanding and historical context and research and organization. I decided I really wanted to be an art historian. I decided in order to do that, I had to do two things: one was wait and get more history before I went into art history--so I would take my master's in history--and secondly, get some more painting under my belt. Not that I would be an artist, because I don't have the talent for it. But I felt it was very important if you're going to be a good art historian to know something firsthand about the artistic process and what happens and how it happens and how it affects what you do. And what's the difference between canvas and panel, and how does it affect what you do, and so forth. So I made a plan. Well, end of my freshman year, I went on a blind date. I'd gone into a local fraternity at American University. I can't even remember the Greek letters now. Doesn't make any difference. I was asked to go on a blind date. It was rigged up by a gal named Phyllis Sloan, who was in Ruth's sorority. I met Ruth [Ward Lee] at the dance, at this blind date, and we hit it off right away. And Phyllis was furious, because she was trying to-- So from that time on, that is for my sophomore and junior year--because Ruth was one year ahead of me--I was going steady with my future wife. As I got, in my sophomore year, more and more into history and literature and culture, I joined the drama club. In my junior year I was in *Two Gentlemen of Verona*; I had one of the lead parts in that, Proteus. And I got more and more fed up-- I was living in the dormitory. I was living in a room with another guy, who was a football player named Joe Brittain. He was short and muscular and he came from a steelworking family in Pennsylvania and he was pretty coarse. There was too much noise and I wanted a place of my own. I told my parents they had to pay for a dormitory anyhow, and I could eat in the dining facilities, but I wanted a room off campus. So I looked around and I found a very nice house, not far, just two blocks from American University, and a very nice room. It was a colonial house, and nice people, an elderly couple. I had a room there. Then I could study and read and I could stay up if I wanted to, read if I wanted to. I

was my own boss and I loved it. I was going steady with Ruth and everything was just fine. Professor Weeks, Donald Weeks, had an apartment in a house somewhere some blocks away. There was a guy in my class named Franklin Bartle who had terrible problems with asthma and was perhaps the most unathletic person who ever lived. He could barely walk down the sidewalk without falling over. Not because he was a cripple or anything, just because he was so poorly coordinated. But he was an absolute shark on classical music and a tyrant about it. His word was law. I mean, he was fantastic. There was a political science major named Lou Frank who was president of the class and on the debating team. He was a prelaw student, typical prelaw student. Bartle and Frank and Donald Weeks shared this big kind of apartment. I used to go over there and listen to classical music and listen to Bartle orate about the right way to listen to it, what to like and what not to like and that Haggin was the greatest music critic that ever lived, and so forth--B.H. [Bernard H.] Haggin, I guess it is. Donald was tutoring me in poetry. Then, my senior year, I was given the part of Hamlet in the Shakespearean play. They had a modern play in the fall and a Shakespearean play in the spring, and I was to play Hamlet. I was making a real hash of it, turning it into a condition of delirium. Donald told me, he said, "Look, you've got to study this thing and you've got to do it and do it right, or you're going to be a disgrace." He was a little bit ahead of his time in the way he taught drama. Hutchins loved histrionics, and he was the drama coach. But now all of a sudden it's a revenge play and it's got to be played in a very straightforward way. Particularly you've got to get the subtleties of the poetry into the thing and not turn it into a Barrymore, ranting performance. I saw Maurice Evans as Hamlet. I saw [Sir John] Gielgud's Hamlet, which I thought was marvelous. I really worked at it. This group, plus Hutchins, my art teacher, were also very much interested in the visual arts. And the Phillips Gallery, I went there quite often. I was introduced to the avant-garde, because Donald and Bartle were both interested in what was then considered to be avant-garde music, Sibelius, Milhaud, Georges Auric, and others--and jazz. We went up to New York. I'd go to the galleries and look around. We'd go up, five or six of us, to New York. Ruth went up once with us. We would go to the galleries to see works by Paul Klee and Rouault and so forth. And the Phillips Gallery was a big stamping ground for us. The Corcoran [Gallery of Art] we used more as a base for looking at old masters, because they didn't have the National Gallery [of Art] yet and the old masters were not

in good supply in Washington in those days. But nineteenth and twentieth-century painting was terrific at the Phillips Gallery. Now, looking back on all this-- I was quite an innocent, and one of Father's principles was to watch out and protect me. Once when some guy tried to pick me up on the tennis court-- He was on the faculty of Cranbrook [Academy of Art], and Father, being much more streetwise than I was, could see what was going on and brushed that off very quickly. Looking back now, I could see that probably the majority of people in this group were homosexuals. Donald Weeks certainly was. I guess Bartle was, I don't know. But it was the group on campus that was really interested in the arts and really knew a lot about it and was constantly learning more. In the process of learning more, we grew increasingly impatient with Hutchins. Because he hated, just hated Picasso. So it was a tremendously sort of volatile learning experience, typical of the kind of thing that happened on a much bigger, higher scale in other places: New York, Berlin, you name it, Paris, and so on. But it certainly educated me and got me started.

GARDNER

Did they guide you towards works of art history as well?

LEE

Oh, yes.

GARDNER

Are there any you recall as standing out in your mind at that period? Writers or art historians?

LEE

[Bernard] Berenson, certainly, in the Italian field. Roger Fry-- I was interested also in painting techniques and so on. At the Phillips Gallery, I paid attention to what they wrote in the labels and what Duncan Phillips wrote in his essays. But Roger Fry and Clive Bell in the modern field are the two really significant ones. I read under Hutch's tutelage in American art, particularly-- Well, Walter Pach was supposed to be more advanced in the modern movement, but especially Roger Fry and Clive Bell, and [Henri] Focillon in medieval. Oh, yes, Hutch liked work by a writer in Italian painting named Tancred Borenius, who I

think is not considered very much today. But anyhow, I remember reading him. Then there was a book on Italian fresco painters, beginning with Giotto and ending with Michelangelo. I've forgotten who the author of that was. It was sort of typical undergraduate general art fare. Nothing like the kind of more specialized and intensive work on a higher level that was then characteristic in very few places but Harvard [University], Yale [University], and Princeton [University]. History of fine arts was just beginning, really, with the Germans coming over.

GARDNER

Were you aware of those at all?

LEE

Not really, no--a complete innocent in my junior year. So that's how that particular interest developed. I had no knowledge of oriental art at all, none whatsoever. But my family lived in Detroit. I was in Washington. When I went home, I went down to the Detroit Institute of Arts. I enjoyed very much the collection there. I went up to New York as often as I could--it was fairly easy to do in those days by train--and did some of the commercial galleries. I tried to do some of the smaller places, thinking I could find something to buy, but I didn't have any money. I remember, for example, seeing at Buchholtz Gallery a small Paul Klee watercolor for \$90, A Machine for the Examination of a Candidate for Doctor of Philosophy. It's now in the Museum of Modern Art. It was \$90, but I didn't have \$90. I remember Weyhe Gallery, the bookstore and gallery where Carl Schniewind was in charge. He was later the great print and drawing curator at the Art Institute of Chicago. There was a Rouault watercolor, Portrait of Mr. X, which was \$110, which is also now in the Museum of Modern Art. But I just didn't have that kind of money. And my parents were not interested. They didn't have that kind of money. But I really don't remember going to the Freer art gallery [Freer Gallery of Art] when I was an undergraduate. I may have gone-- I think I went to see the Peacock Room, because of Whistler. But I didn't register any of the oriental stuff.

GARDNER

Did you stop to think, at any of these points, what the possibility of making a career in this would be? You were getting interested in art history, but the

notion of career has not really entered this discussion yet, except at the time that you decided not to go to Brooklyn Tech.

LEE

I decided that I wanted to take my master's in history because I thought that was essential to go on in art history. I would say that my senior year--the end of my junior, beginning of my senior year--I was going to be an art historian. That's what I wanted to do.

GARDNER

And you knew that there was such a thing as an art historian and that you could be one.

LEE

Yes. Except what I thought was an art historian might have been moderately acceptable in 1937, '38, but certainly not today. People forget how little art history there was before World War I, even before World War II, and in the oriental field there was almost nothing. People don't realize how little there was. As an example of that, in a recent College Art Journal, some professors did a lot of research and wrote an historiography of American art. I didn't know, but the first doctoral dissertation in American art in, I guess, the world was mine in 1941. Nobody studied American art in art history. But the reason I did that dissertation had nothing to do with that I was burning to do something in the field of American art. It had to do with simple opportunity--or lack of it--because of the beginning of the war in 1939. Of course in my history courses with Anderson from the University of Chicago and Bauer, University of Chicago-- They were constantly working with works of art, literature, music--Anderson in particular--as part of intellectual history at the time. So it was simply very heady and very stimulating. I thought it was terrific, and that's what I wanted to do. My father thought I was nuts. Mother thought it was okay. And Grandmother thought it was all right. But they really didn't know what art history was. They would go, "Art history. What?" I forgot to mention, when I first decided that physics was not for me, and mathematics was certainly not for me, that I decided that I would go into prelaw. That's one of the reasons why I went into history. I took a course in constitutional law, which was a very good course, given by another one of these guys that came

from Chicago. I can't remember his name. I did very well in it. And I even went that summer with my parents--that was the year after my sophomore year; that would be '37--to Michigan to see about possibly getting into law school there after finishing. And he said fine. And I really was interested in doing that. But when I hit this cultural group and scene and got into it, that's what I wanted to do.

GARDNER

You've talked about the places and so on. Did you get to meet many of the people who were behind the art scene, in a sense, in Washington? Did you get to meet Duncan Phillips in those days, for example?

LEE

I'll tell you about that when we get to my master's program, and also in writing my doctoral dissertation, which was a critical survey of an American watercolor painting. I got to meet a lot of people. I mean, [John] Marin and Waldo Pierce and William Zorach and Alfred Stieglitz. I studied painting under Karl Knaths. Outside the academic curriculum, one of my best friends, my best student friend in college, was Sidney Zink, who was majoring in philosophy. We were both on the basketball team. Our junior year, the team had had a terrible reputation. I think the first year, they had always been losing. The first year I think our record was something like three won, fifteen lost, and the sophomore year it was slightly better. But the junior year we were just getting it turned around and we won. I think we won thirteen and lost twelve or won twelve and lost eleven. Sidney was the captain of the team and I was the center, because I was so tall for that time. And the coach, whose name was Young, Bill Young--awfully intense but a very decent guy--brought this team along. Then for some reason or another he was out and we got a new coach, who had been a player a few years before, named [Stafford] Cassell. He had big ideas and he had a new system he wanted to use. The starters were basically seniors, and he decided that they were out. He just benched all the seniors and he got some new people and started this new system. That sort of pissed us off. We were really quite angry. And so we just quit, said forget it. So I didn't have to spend time with basketball; I could spend more time on culture and art and literature.

GARDNER

All this time you were dating your wife as well?

LEE

Oh, yes, sure. I resigned from the fraternity. That caused a sensation--you just didn't do that. But it just seemed so childish and idiotic. Here were all these football players with all these big muscles. It was boring and it just took too much time from the things I was more interested in. So I resigned. My wife was so upset, because I had given her my fraternity pin, of course, and I said, "I've got to have it back. I'm through with this stuff." And she had to give back my fraternity pin. That was cruel. I quit the fraternity and I stayed on the tennis team. We had a great, great season senior year. In the meantime-- One person on the faculty I must mention, because he was a chemistry professor-- Dr. William B. Holton. He was professor of chemistry and he was also the coach of the tennis team. He was also an ardent trout fisherman. We used to go off every now and then, weekends, up to where the president's retreat is in Maryland. What's the name of it? Camp David?

GARDNER

Camp David.

LEE

Well, it wasn't any Camp David there then. That's a trout stream comes through there. That's the stream we went up to and went fishing on. We used to do very well, and it was a lot of fun fishing up there with him. In my first year, of course, I took chemistry, because I was on this big science thing, and I was no good at chemistry. The only reason I ever passed was because, one, he was the coach of the tennis team and I was a good tennis player. Two, he was a trout fisherman and we went trout fishing together. So I was glad to wash my hands of chemistry. But he was an interesting guy. So then I graduated magna cum laude.

**1.3. TAPE NUMBER: II, SIDE ONE
APRIL 7, 1992**

GARDNER

We left off, I guess, where you're about at graduation. By this time I guess you had decided that you were going to pursue the master's in history.

LEE

Right. Well, I graduated. Ruth [Ward Lee] had not really met my parents in any full way, so we thought it would be a good idea to have her go up. So she went up for three weeks in the summer to their house in Detroit. And it was all right, we had a good time. About the last week, my mother [Adelia Baker Lee], who was sort of informal and impulsive, said, "Why don't you two get married now? What are you waiting for?" Well, we thought that was a fine idea, so we did. We got married September 3 [1938] before going back to school. We spent the summer after graduation, and she spent three weeks in Detroit with me. Then we went back to Washington [D.C.]. We got married there, in Washington, on September 3.

GARDNER

Was her family from the Washington area?

LEE

Yes. Well, Ruth's father [George B. Ward] was a naval architect and worked for the Navy Department. He had started his career building the Panama Canal back in 1912 or '13. Ruth was born in the Panama Canal Zone. Then he retired early and he purchased land in his wife [Inez Weaver Ward]'s town in western North Carolina, in Weaverville. She was a Weaver from Weaverville, which was just outside of Asheville. He worked there for a while, but it was Depression time. So he finally went back to the Navy Department and they moved to Washington. They were living in Washington and she went to American University as a-- What do you call a student that comes from the city and goes daily to the campus?

GARDNER

Commuter?

LEE

Yes, a commuter student. So we got married on September 3. My mother told my father [Emery H. Lee]-- When he expressed some horror at the idea-- "What will we do?" she said, "Well, you're going to pay for his tuition and his board and room while he's taking his master's degree, aren't you?" He said, "Yes." She said, "Well, just pay him, and that will do it." Ruth said she had

studied some library science. She majored in liberal arts, but she was going to take a job down at the main library, that white marble building down in Washington on New York Avenue, which is now in the middle of devastation land. Ruth said she was going to work, anyhow. We agreed that we could manage it if Father would pay what he was going to pay anyhow for me and Ruth worked in the library. I'd only had one job in my life up until that time, and that was when I was at American University. American University ended just before the Washington high school year ended, and began after their opening. I had graduated from Western High School, which was very close, and the principal of Western High School, who knew me because of my being a student there, asked me if I'd like part-time work trying to get some order into their bookstore at the beginning of the semester, when all the textbooks go out, and at the end when they all come in. I guess they had been having a lot of problems. I took over in charge of that store at the beginning and end of the school year. I did it two years. That's the only time I'd ever earned a nickel. I never delivered papers. I never did anything like that. My parents, my father and grandmother [Carrie Johnston Baker], they all indulged me. I had a brother, my brother David [Lee], who was born about seven or eight years after I was born. And he was a football player at Cooley High School, where I had spent one year. He became an architect. He was the architect for the University of Louisville, until he retired recently. But he was practical and athletic and not interested much in literature and culture and music and so on. So we were not terribly, terribly close. Also the fact that I'd been away at school and so on at the time when he was growing up. But my father was very decent, and he didn't see why we should work. He didn't think it was necessarily good for children to work. His experiences hadn't been so that it was necessarily good for you. So I was privileged in that respect.

GARDNER

Then you could go camping and trout fishing instead of spending the summer pumping gas.

LEE

Yes. I didn't go to any fancy boys camps. The only camp I ever went to was when we were living in Brooklyn. I thought it would be a good idea to go camping, and I was sent to camp somewhere up in-- I think it was up in the

Catskills. And I hated it. Once I got there, the first week, I just hated it. Grandmother insisted that I be indulged and removed; Father wanted me to tough it out. But she said, "No, the young boy must come home." So I did. But anyhow, I had started earlier about marriage. We got married. We got a small apartment on Wisconsin Avenue. I started to take my master's program in history. At the same time I decided that I wanted to go study painting at the Phillips Gallery [now Phillips Collection] for a year. I thought that was important. I was thinking in terms, basically, of Western art. Now, I'm sorry I forgot to mention this. I need to go back.

GARDNER

No, that's okay. That's how the process works. Our memory is not always linear.

LEE

When Ruth came up to meet my parents and so forth, I had been taking-- Father paid for me--graduate courses at the University of Michigan summer session. I studied painting under Jean Paul Slusser, and I took a course in Italian Renaissance sculpture from Professor Donaldson, who was a Princeton [University] Ph.D., but then again, an old-fashioned art historian, not one of these terribly grim, probing intellects. I saw that there were two courses offered by Professor James Marshall Plumer. One was called Early Chinese Art, and the other one was called "The Life of the Buddha according to the Lalita-Vistara at Borobudur." Well, I was taking the sculpture course for credit, I was taking the painting course for credit, because I must have it. I decided I could take the Early Chinese Art course for credit, but that sort of filled me up. So I took the Lalita-Vistara course, Life of the Buddha, as an auditor. Jim was deaf. He used a hearing aid. He sort of shuffled around. He had been in the Chinese customs. The Chinese customs, as you probably know, was manned by the British, Americans, Germans, and French, because nobody trusted the Chinese at that time. Well, that was the assumption anyhow. He was an inspector for customs at the port of Fukien Province, Foochow. He had gone back in the hills and had discovered a kiln site of the Sung dynasty where the most famous tea bowls were made, called by the Japanese temmoku. He published an article in the Times illustrated supplement, or whatever that was called at that period. They used to have a publication on slick paper. Good illustrations but serious,

and popular. He gave a course, and he was not your sort of European-style art historian either. First of all, I think he had an A.B. I don't think he had an M.A. or Ph.D. And he had his A.B. from Harvard [University]. He had studied under Langdon Warner, who was the first one to teach oriental art at Harvard and who was also not your standard type of art historian. He didn't have a degree and they would not give him tenure at Harvard, though he was the most famous man in America in Chinese art and taught all the first-generation curators and professors in Chinese art. But they wouldn't do it because he didn't have his-- I think he had his master's but maybe not. Plumer was a pupil of Langdon Warner. He gave lectures, but he also had his private collection of shards and saggars and pieces from the temmoku kilns. He had other things: bronzes, things that he collected from this and that. So we had a hands-on experience in the field of Chinese art. He loved doing things like this: We'd be learning about the different wares of the Sung dynasty, and he'd put a blanket in the middle of the room. The students would have to get down, and underneath the blanket would be four or five pieces of Chinese Sung dynasty wares--different wares. You had to reach under and hold the ware, feel it and identify it. Well, you got to where you could almost be one hundred percent, if you were really interested and paid attention. But it's that kind of hands-on teaching that was informal and not one hundred percent academic that really worked. Then the Life of the Buddha course-- Jim was one of the group of people--and this is very important--who were under the sway of Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy. Have you heard of him? Ananda Coomaraswamy; a French so-called philosopher/writer called René Guénon; Jacques Maritain; and a man who wrote about Tibet named Marco Pallis--I still have his book. Coomaraswamy was sort of the linchpin in that group, and they advocated-- You know Joseph Campbell? Well, Campbell developed out of this thing. They advocated a kind of return to what Coomaraswamy called a medieval, or true, philosophy. They believed in a caste society. They believed in the superiority of oriental wisdom. They believed that Europe and Western civilizations had gone totally downhill since the end of the Middle Ages, etc. The syndrome is well established. Jim Plumer taught this class and he taught this kind of thing in his class, especially in the Life of the Buddha class. Well, that made an impression on me. That's when I was first exposed to oriental art, and I was really interested. So I went to my classes at the graduate school of American University. And they were not held on campus, they were downtown. They

were very close to the old State Department. There too had been some [University of] Chicago castoffs. One of them was Ralph [E.] Turner, the intellectual historian. Brilliant guy, tough, very tough. And there was an anthropologist named Helen Ware, who had been a pupil of Ruth Benedict. So I signed up for the course in anthropology and I signed up for the intellectual history course from Ralph Turner. Then I had to write my dissertation. And I chose a subject on the secular art and representation in medieval England, basically fourteenth-century England, which involved, especially, cathedral bosses and misericords. I was taking a course at the Phillips Gallery and I was doing one other thing. There was a history course which I took out at the main campus from Dr. [Richard] Bauer, who was a medieval historian.

GARDNER

Before you embarked on your graduate career, did you look into the possibility of going someplace that specialized in art history? Or were you not yet ready for that?

LEE

I'm trying to remember. I went either just before I went into the master's program-- I think it was the year after I went in, after I finished. It was when I finished my master's. Then I went to look at the Institute of Fine Arts [New York University], and I talked to Walter Cook. I went to Boston to talk to Coomaraswamy, who was the curator of Indian art at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. And I went to the Freer [Gallery of Art] to talk to John Ellerton Lodge, who was the director of the Freer and had been the chief curator of oriental art at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. It was Henry [Cabot] Lodge that confronted Wilson in the United Nations, and John Ellerton Lodge was his brother I think--brother or cousin. Cook said, "You can get into the Institute of Fine Arts, that's fine. But you'll have to do something about German, because if you haven't had German you're going to have to do that before you can be admitted." And Coomaraswamy said that if I was interested ultimately in going into the oriental field, I would have to get languages. And Lodge said that "If you're going to do anything in Chinese art, you've got to get the language." So there it was. I knew French and I knew English. But we were married, and later on our first child [Katharine Lee] was born, in 1941. And that's another story that comes out later on.

GARDNER

I got you ahead of the story, so I'll get you back again to graduate to American University graduate school. Get back to the question I asked you a little earlier about Duncan Phillips and the Phillips Gallery. Can you tell me something about what that is all about?

LEE

Yes. That I can now talk about. I had the course in anthropology, the course in intellectual history, I had the dissertation, and I had the course in medieval history out on the campus. But they also gave me some credit for studying painting. It was a formal program at the Phillips Gallery. So that's how the mix worked. Before the Phillips Gallery, the painting I'd done had been with Will Hutchins. He taught me sort of the basic elementary American impressionist landscape technique. When I went to Phillips Gallery, it was interesting. The first day I went there, I went in-- The studios and the classrooms were upstairs on the third floor, and we went in and the teacher was Franklin Law Watkins, the head of the school. His assistant was Robert Gates, who was a very good painter, a young man in the Washington area. And we were all seated in the studio room, and there was a stand for the model. We were all seated around, and I was sitting there innocently looking up and listening to Watkins. Somebody came and sat down next to me, I could see out the corner of my eye. And she was wearing an unusual costume, which was a blue taffeta robe. And who was it? It was Alice Applegate, who was a classmate of mine at American University. Or was she your classmate, dear?

RUTH LEE

[laughter] No, she was yours.

LEE

Yes, Alice Applegate. And she was the girlfriend of--

RUTH LEE

Beautiful, Victorian-looking girl.

LEE

She was a dancer. And wasn't she the girlfriend at that time of one of those big football players?

RUTH LEE

I don't know about that.

LEE

I'm pretty sure she was.

RUTH LEE

She wasn't in my crowd. I always admired her--with her clothes on. [laughter]

LEE

And of course she was the model. She goes up there stark naked and takes a pose.

RUTH LEE

Sherman was a very sweet and innocent boy. I've tried to give that impression, but it's true.

LEE

And she was the model. I wasn't prepared for this, so I was sort of all thumbs and fumbling and so forth for the first few days. But gradually I got used to it. Anyhow, we went through-- We did direct painting, we studied glazing techniques, we studied tempera painting, we studied the model--some anatomy--we did still life. Then there was a six-week section where we studied under Karl Knaths. Have you ever heard of him? No? He's in all the books, you'll find him. He was German--came when Hitler came in and came to America. He was a considerable painter and he has a reputation. He worked in a semi-abstract style that is still sort of postcubist with greater emphasis on synthetic cubist manipulation of planes in a restricted space than the deep, solid stuff of analytical cubism--and quite a good teacher. We studied for six weeks under him, and there were two projects in that six weeks. At the end of that six weeks they had an exhibition of selected works, selected by the staff, down in the basement of the Phillips Gallery. Selected from work before Knaths or work we'd done during Knaths. And I got two pieces in the exhibition. One is in my study, which is an abstract painting, sort of à la

Knaths. The project involved having angles all slanting from right to left not greater than forty degrees, and one had to do something with that. The other picture was a picture I had done when I was studying just the previous summer under Jean Paul Slusser up in Ann Arbor [Michigan]. It was a picture of the side of a rough and dilapidated brick building with two big billboards on it. One billboard was advertising gum and the other one was advertising gas. There was a third painting that was in the exposition, which was a picture in a rather muted tonal study of a factory on the outskirts of Ann Arbor with a big pile of coal and steelwork and so on. Well, I had been interested in the art of Niles Spencer. Do you know him? And there was a Baltimore painter named--his son is now an art historian--Herman Maril. That's what I was interested in, and in the Gum and Gas picture I really sort of let go. There was lots of impasto, very direct painting and great simplification of the billboard picture representation. Fine. But lo and behold, the picture in Karl Knaths's manner got first prize, I think, for that particular exercise and Duncan Phillips bought the Gum and Gas picture. It's still in their collection.

GARDNER

How about that.

LEE

Yes. A few months ago, I got a letter from the curator, a new curator there, who is preparing a catalog and handbook for the Phillips Collection. She wrote and asked me-- They were collecting this material, and she sent me a Xerox of the page of the unofficial catalog where there is Gum and Gas. And she wanted to know the background and so forth. She didn't make the connection between my name and *A History of Far Eastern Art* [1964], though she had a copy of it, she used it. When I told her that's who I was, she was quite excited, very interested. I told her about Niles Spencer and Herman Maril and the background of that. But Duncan Phillips bought the picture. Of course, we were poor as church mice, and anytime somebody would give us twenty-five or thirty dollars, we were very, very happy. They had a little sort of tea for the thing, and Duncan Phillips congratulated me and so forth and so on. I never was part of the inner group there because I was living at home with my wife up on Wisconsin Avenue. I wasn't at all the events there. I was sort of an outsider, and so I didn't get to know him terribly well. Students were invited to

a picnic out at the Phillips house and farm. Marjorie Phillips was of course a painter who studied under Bonnard and painted very much in the manner of Bonnard. I remember she was sort of very fey and very informal. Duncan, of course, was very-- He was very good and very staccato--I think he was basically a very shy person--with a red mustache and red hair. He was good, but I certainly did not get to know him. They set a lot of store by the Barnes Foundation things too--the Barnes approach. Of course [Albert C.] Barnes was an ogre. But Phillips's approach was basically Roger Fry, that kind of aesthetic. He had a terrific eye, and his wife was very good. It was a real education to be able to go in that place every day and live with those things all the time.

GARDNER

Were you tempted at all to take on the life of an artist?

LEE

No. I may be dumb, but I'm not stupid. No. I did it, I enjoyed doing it, but I was frustrated because I knew I really didn't have that kind of talent.

GARDNER

Most artists would give at least one arm to get in the Phillips Collection. It's remarkable that you did it coincidentally.

LEE

It's an accident. It's an accident.

GARDNER

Did you get up to the Barnes Foundation at all during this time?

LEE

No. I'll tell you about the Barnes Foundation later on.

GARDNER

Okay. I'm sure once we discuss museums and so on.

LEE

But, see, in Washington at that time--this was now 1939, fall of '38, '39--they began to have art activities. And there was a gallery there, the Bignou Gallery.

They opened a branch down in Washington. And I remember there was one picture they had of a still life with skulls on the table by Cézanne which is now in the Phillips Gallery. Duncan Phillips bought it out of that show. I think it was something like \$7,000. They had exhibitions at a building not far from where the Bignou Gallery was. They had a competition show with a lot of pictures without labels, American paintings. You were supposed to go through and identify who the artists were and so forth. I think I missed one or two. Anyhow, I didn't win the grand prize, but I was mentioned as having completed a lot of them. The master's thesis went along very well. Of course, this was '39. The war started in Europe. We didn't have any money. And the thesis was done basically from all the reproductions available in different books and so forth in the Library of Congress. I spent a lot of time there going through all the architectural publications and everything for bosses and misericords, very little secular sculpture anywhere else. I read a lot of Piers Plowman and a lot of historical and sociological studies of the British farming class in the Middle Ages. [William R.] Lethaby, a guy who wrote on medieval sculpture. Some of it is becoming very fuzzy with me. But the point is, in studying under Ware, the anthropologist, and [Ralph] Turner, the intellectual historian, and dealing with secular sculpture in the Middle Ages, I became, for the first time, exposed to an attitude towards art and history which was not a traditional one. It was one that was interested in ordinary people. It was not one which was interested in faith, but rather its opposite, because of the secular sculpture satire and semi-pornography, especially in the misericords. My committee for acceptance or rejection of the dissertation included my old professor that I had at the campus, Will Hutchins; Ralph Turner, the intellectual historian; and Dr. Bauer the medieval historian, from off the campus. Hutch was absolutely horrified by the dissertation, because Hutch was a good Episcopalian. He was the warden of the National Cathedral. He was very much involved in that. This was all blasphemy as far as he was concerned. I had to defend my dissertation, and there they sat, and Hutch with his blast. I said, "Oh, my God, this is going to be the pits." Then Ralph Turner spoke up, and he just laid into Hutch in some terrible way. I was embarrassed. And Bauer said, "Yes, that's right." So two to one they accepted the thesis. And that was it, it was done. Then I went around, as I told you, to talk to different people about where to go next. Finally, I went to my professor friend, Donald Weeks, who opened my eyes to art, but also to literature. He

was from Cleveland. His father was an architect. He was the architect, he and his firm--Walker and Weeks--for Severance Hall, which was a very distinguished building. Donald suggested-- I think he was very smart, for I know I was certainly not a sophisticated, well-trained, well-educated graduate student. If I had gone off to one of those bigger places, I think it certainly would have been a long, long, long haul. And since I was also definitely interested in actual objects and things--I'm object oriented--he suggested that I might explore the possibility of going to Western Reserve University [now Case Western Reserve University] because of the [Cleveland] Museum [of Art]. There was a program at the university, and it was run by the art historian on the faculty, a man named Lamberton, again Princeton and very dry. Still, you could learn something from him, but he was not one of their distinguished graduates or Ph.D.'s. I think it was very good advice. Anyhow, we went up to Cleveland, and the head of the education department at the museum was Dr. Thomas Munro. It was a joint program, but it wasn't officially a joint program and it wasn't fully developed. But the head of the museum part of the program was Dr. Munro. Do you know who he is?

GARDNER

Yes.

LEE

He was a pupil of John Dewey and a Scotch rationalist like the eighteenth-century Scotch people, Hume and others. He had been at the Barnes Foundation as director of education there for several years and had written many books. His degree under Dewey was in philosophy and aesthetics within philosophy. He was very encouraging. Cleveland-- I thought the museum was marvelous. Of course the cultural situation in Cleveland is a very positive one. The orchestra is terrific; we met a couple of teachers who were very interested in drama; and the Cleveland Play House had a big reputation. It all seemed very, very encouraging. I would have to get German. Okay, fine. So we thought about it and talked it over, and we decided we'd go there. We went up and we found an apartment, sort of an alley type of corridor apartment just a block and a half away from the museum, and started to go to work. Ruth was able to get a job at the library. She'd been working in the library in Washington, and she got a job working in the library in Cleveland. I taught

children's classes on Saturdays in the morning. I think I was paid two or three dollars a week, which in those days--this is 1939, '40, '41--was ten dollars a month. It helped. Tommy Munro's courses were basically all worked into his developing project for his big four-part work on aesthetic and art criticism. He lectured and there was not much discussion. He lectured and it was recorded, and his secretary would type it out. It was really the production of his major book. Tommy, some people thought, was not very profound. He was part of that Scotch rational tradition, pragmatic, rational tradition. He was a pupil of John Dewey's. But he had a wonderful gift for organization and a logic in proceeding, like a good philosopher: one, two, and so forth and so on. And I learned a lot from him. He was interested in all forms of art. He had written the first book in English, along with Paul Guillaume, on African Negro sculpture [Primitive Negro Sculpture]. He had written a book on theories of art criticism. The magnum opus was what he was working on now. He used Persian rugs, he used classical art, Greek vases, Chinese art. The world was his oyster as far as art went and handled in a dispassionate, objective, logical way. Just what I needed. I really hand him a lot of credit for sort of getting people organized so they don't miss things. Because the organization-- You've got to have it here, in your head. Lambertson gave courses-- He had majored in Italian Renaissance painting. I took several course from him. We met William [M.] Milliken, who was the director [of the Cleveland Museum of Art], and saw him occasionally. We met, Ruth and I, the curator of oriental art, Howard [C.] Hollis, who was a pupil of Langdon Warner's and who was a friend of Jim Plumer's. That was one of the reasons also that I thought Cleveland would be a good place to go. And we hit it off, professionally and in terms of social life, very well. He had this office up in the curatorial corridor. The collection then was very, very small. The Far East barely filled two and a half to three of the smaller galleries. But he said, "Would you like to help in the oriental department?" I said, "Sure, I'd love to." And he said, "We can't pay anything." William Milliken said they couldn't pay anything. I guess they didn't have any money. I said, "That's all right. I should pay you." He got me work as a volunteer assistant in the department. He was then in the process of preparing something on one of the few subjects that I knew anything about.

1.4. TAPE NUMBER: II, SIDE TWO
APRIL 7, 1992

GARDNER

Why don't you start again with the beginning of just this last class, just this last professor.

LEE

You mean Hollis?

GARDNER

Yes, Hollis.

LEE

Ruth and I met Mr. and Mrs. Howard Hollis, and he was the curator of oriental art at the museum. She [Helen Hollis] was a musician. She was a very good pianist. And we hit it off socially and Howard and I hit it off professionally. He asked me if I would like to serve as assistant in the department. He couldn't pay me; the director, William Milliken, said there was no money. I said that I would be happy to work on a voluntary basis and it would be valuable experience and so on. He was in the process of preparing a major exhibition, probably the largest exhibition held in America up until that time of Chinese ceramics. That was one thing that I did know something about because I had studied under Jim Plumer. He was a friend of Jim Plumer's and he was a pupil of Langdon Warner's. So that worked out very well. I was able in the process of that first year, when we had the Chinese ceramic exhibition, to really be of substantial help and use. I learned a lot, for the first time, about the inner workings of the museum in a curatorial sense.

GARDNER

Did that interest you particularly?

LEE

Oh, yes. I was still basically art history oriented, but this was very, very exciting and very interesting. The exhibition was very successful. The museum bought, from the exhibition, a whole group of things. And Howard and I worked together. I had a part in working to decide what to select. He was very, very generous and understanding and very helpful. To set the stage: Now, there was also in Cleveland the curator of paintings, Henry Sayles Francis, very nice

man, a Harvard student with an A.B. I don't think he had a master's degree, and he was basically dominated by the director, William M. Milliken. Milliken was Princeton and had studied under [Charles Rufus] Morey and others. He was a medievalist basically, but he was a generalist. His particular area of interest was decorative arts, and medieval art was one of his strongest points. As I said, he dominated the painting curator and the painting department was weaker than it should have been. The curator of textiles was Gertrude Underhill, a nice old New England lady but not a scholar, not serious. There was a very good curator for classical and Egyptian art, Sylvia Wunderlich, German, well trained. She was the editor for The Bulletin [of the Cleveland Museum of Art] also, the bulletin of the museum. The senior person under Dr. Munro in the educational department was Milton Fox. Milton was a dynamo. He was a painter, quite good. He had studied enough that he knew about art history and knew art criticism very well. Very keen mind and very, very good influence. He did not teach any courses. I got credit for a voluntary assistantship. I got credit in my hours-of-credit program. I took, as I said, courses in Italian painting from Lamberton. But basically the main course load was Tommy Munro. The problem that developed in terms of my own development-- Howard Hollis, who was a New England Hollis and who had-- I think his parents were quite well-off, but they had lost something or he had lost something. He was not all that well-off. But he was accustomed to being well-off and he loved society, Cleveland upper, wealthy society, as did his wife, who was most beautiful, tall, big blue eyes. She was marvelous. But Howard had one terrible flaw, which was that he had swallowed hook, line, and sinker this Coomaraswamy medieval thing. He was reactionary in his attitude towards all social problems, quoting from Coomaraswamy and René Guénon constantly. And since Henry Francis and William Milliken and Tommy Munro were liberals, that kind of isolated him.

GARDNER

This gives me a good opportunity to bring up something. We're both running out of voice I think, so we will need to stop soon. What about your own politics? That's something that we didn't talk about all along the way. Did you grow up with any kind of political view?

LEE

My family was Republican. They thought Al [Alfred E.] Smith was a menace. They thought [Franklin D.] Roosevelt was a traitor, etc. Grandmother [Carrie Johnston Baker] was a very conservative Republican. My mother [Adelia Baker Lee] was apolitical; she just was not there for politics. I was under their sway. I really didn't think anything other than their political way of thinking until I was midway through college. But with this new group of people I opened my eyes to the world of art and culture. They also were more liberal, very liberal politically, and they certainly moved me somewhere from right to left of center. But a couple of them were ardent communists and so forth, and that did not appeal to me at all. I never have been interested in that kind of solution to social justice. Munro, as I said, was liberal. Howard was a big influence on me because he opened my eyes to museum work, he let me in on the inside, he was very kind and helpful. He was able to get some money for the museum occasionally so we could make a trip to New York and go visit the dealers. So I met a lot of the dealers very early on. But his political outlook really rubbed off heavily on me. It was very, very difficult, because on the one hand you had Milton Fox--dynamic and very, very left. On the other hand you had Howard Hollis, who was very right. And it got to be difficult. We're now hitting the beginning of the war and so forth. The German consul in Cleveland was a man named von Heyden, I think it was. He was a part of the Hollis social arena and was often a guest at their parties. It got to be very funny because Howard would tell me, "Now, you've got to be very careful, because if you're too friendly with Milton Fox, you're going to get into big trouble because he's so far left." And then Milton would come up to me and say, "You've got to be really careful with Howard, because he's really so far right and that's very bad." So I was caught in the middle. There is a certain seduction in the Coomaraswamy medieval approach that you find also in Jacques Maritain--the kind of thing that produced a sort of neo-Thomism. It has the answers and it's very subtle and the talk is very logical if you don't question certain premises. It certainly affected me, and I became sort of like Campbell, like Joe Campbell. This all changed later on. One thing, Tommy's courses provided a good antidote and I think kept things balanced somewhat. And so it went on.

GARDNER

Since you wound up with Joseph Campbell, that takes us inferentially into the area of religion as well. Politics and religion are the two things you're never

supposed to discuss, and I'll ask you about religion next. What sort of religious upbringing did you have?

LEE

My family was Methodist. My father had, I think, some ties early on to a typical New England Christian Science. Grandmother was Methodist. I was never very convinced by any religious doctrine. I would say I was a conservative, a-religious type up until I got somewhat under the sway of this medieval neo-Thomist point of view. The kind of thing that [William] Buckley did. That's very much part of it. Campbell is the more mystic side of it; Buckley is the more Thomist side of it. And incidently, in the oriental field it was very dominant, because Langdon Warner believed in it and Coomaraswamy was the chief curator of the movement. There are a lot of people in Japan-- [Daisetsu] Suzuki, the Zen man--who were right in with the militarists, the medieval-loving militarists in Japan. It was not a crazy thing to follow, but it was definitely something in the air. And of course the activities of the Nazis and the breaking out of the war put it into real focus. I never had any interest in the political or social side of it. I was interested in the attitude towards art, and it has a very consistent, believable, and useful philosophy of art. It may not be right--nothing perhaps is right--but it's not wrong. And one can learn a lot from it. I read quite a bit of these different people. You got it in Aldous Huxley, you got it in Marco Pallis, and so on. Traditional society. It made a pattern of culture and living that seemed superior to the one that we were living in. On the other hand, the anthropologist Dr. Ware had taught me quite differently, and so had Turner. So I was uncertain but leaning to this sort of romantic medievalism.

**1.5. TAPE NUMBER: III, SIDE ONE
APRIL 8, 1992**

GARDNER

We were talking about your graduate school experience at Cleveland when you left off.

LEE

At Western Reserve [University (now Case Western Reserve University)], right.

GARDNER

I thought we could pick up there. And I suggested off tape that we begin with your dissertation, but if there is something else you would like to talk about--

LEE

No, I think that-- See, I entered the Western Reserve graduate school in the fall of 1939. Is that correct? No, that's not correct.

GARDNER

Yes, it should be, shouldn't it?

LEE

I graduated in May of '38. I entered Western Reserve in the fall of '39. As you all know, Mr. Hitler started his operation in '39. I had several conferences with Dr. [Thomas] Munro about what could be done about a dissertation. At that time, before World War II, graduate school was a serious business of course, but it had not yet developed into the kind of high tech factory that it developed into in the sixties and seventies. Except for Harvard [University], Yale [University], Princeton [University], the Institute of Fine Arts [New York University], and probably [University of California] Berkeley and perhaps [University of] Chicago, there really weren't any major graduate schools in art history. And the number of people even in those places was relatively small. The idea of taking an enormous length of time to obtain your doctorate was not nearly as widespread then as it is now. So Tommy [Munro] and I had several conferences, and we decided that, particularly since my wife [Ruth Ward Lee] was working herself very hard, working going all over Cleveland as a substitute librarian, and you know it just isn't fair-- So we decided that the thing to do was to try to get the thing over with in the shortest possible time and to concentrate on American art, because that was something where one could deal with originals here. You couldn't get to Europe, you couldn't get to the Orient, and so on. So we zeroed in on what could be done. I frankly am not the type of student that is going to become a profound, meticulous scholar. I'm much more interested in a broad view, overview. I'm much more interested in original works of art than I am in documents, and I had some experience in painting. I had always been a great admirer of the Phillips Gallery, where one saw a great many of them. I met there, for the first time,

John Marin, and Winslow Homer appealed to me enormously. He was an extraordinary watercolorist. And of course he was very much the hunting, fishing type. Nothing much had been done with American watercolor painting at that time. Very little. There were no works on it. There were no books on it. There were some articles, but it really hadn't been looked at. So we decided that I would try to do a critical survey of American watercolor painting. I was able to get a Raney Fellowship at the university, which gave me some money for travel. And so we started out in the summer of 1940 on a big tour through all of the northeast to the various libraries and museums and historical societies, and also some of the artists, such as John Marin up in Maine and William Zorach, who was a sculptor but a great watercolorist who was at Boothbay Harbor, and Waldo Pierce, who was nearby. And we went to a lot of those small historical societies, rummaging around for watercolor paintings. We found quite a bit. This was totally unexplored ground, really. And a lot of material came to light, and a lot of it I didn't get. We of course did Chicago, and we also did New England and New York and that whole area quite thoroughly. We went to Winslow Homer's place at Prouts Neck and we saw the private collections up in Massachusetts, Q. A. Shaw-McKean and the descendants of Homer up in the Prouts Neck area. And we visited Marin in his new place out above Mount Desert Island, a small island beyond there. Material piled up and I got quite a bit of new material. I went to all the dealers in New York who had significant watercolorists on their rosters, like [Alfred] Stieglitz. That's where I had met Stieglitz once before, but I went there maybe the better part of a week working through the stuff he had. He had a lot of Demuth, which I was very interested in-- Charles Demuth. Stieglitz was an extraordinary character, and he was then not terribly well. He was at his gallery, an American Place, up in an office building down on Park [Avenue] or Madison Avenue about Fifty-sixth Street, something like that. He had a cot in a room at the side of the gallery. That's where he spent most of the day. He'd be lying down, and someone would come in and he'd get up and talk to them. He talked to me quite a bit and encouraged me. He was quite testy, but still he was interested that I was working on watercolor painting. He thought it was a good idea. We did the New York Historical Society very thoroughly because of the Audubon material there-- watercolors which were extraordinary. Not much had been done with them, because everybody was concentrating on the prints for The Birds of America. Philadelphia, where there was quite a bit of

Demuth-- I couldn't get into the Barnes Foundation. Dr. Munro had been Barnes's curator of education, but that didn't make any difference to Dr. [Albert C.] Barnes. Tommy wrote a letter for me and I wrote a letter, and I got sort of a form letter back saying, "Sorry, you can't come." Basically, he had a ban on all people who were in academia. If you were a graduate student, it didn't make a difference what you were doing, you just weren't human. So I didn't get any Barnes material, but I was able to study some photographs of that material. So I started writing in the winter of '40-'41 and wrote it at home in the kitchen, on the kitchen table. I don't type and I never have and I never will. So I'd write everything out in longhand; then my wife would type it up as a first draft. Then I'd get it to the typist, and she'd produce the final draft. I worked right along at it, every evening and every weekend, and finally got it done. And I was able to qualify and the dissertation was accepted. I had finished my course work, passed my French and German examinations, and I got my Ph.D. in May of 1941.

GARDNER

Was there any discernible impact on what you did, since the field was so small and producing so few Ph.D.'s?

LEE

I'll get to that in just a minute. It's very interesting. Ph.D., May of '41-- In the meantime my wife was pregnant--early stages--and we had our first child [Katharine Lee], as a matter of fact, in the fall of 1941, after I had gotten my degree. William [M.] Milliken, the director of the museum, was a great pal of the people at the old Whitney Museum [of American Art]. It was directed by Juliana Force, and I had been down there, of course, and worked with their material during that summer preceding. But William mentioned to Juliana Force that they had this graduate student who was writing his dissertation on American watercolor painting, and had finished it. As a matter of fact, I did an article just sort of summarizing the thesis for Dr. Munro for one of his publications, a journal, which he asked me to submit to. William introduced me to Juliana Force up in the galleries of the museum. We sat down and talked. I said I thought that it would make a very good exhibition. There had never been an exhibition of American watercolor painting, and it could be a real contribution and would make the material I did the dissertation on more

available to the general public. She agreed that it was a very good idea, and she asked to borrow the dissertation over the summer. I said okay. I let her have a copy. And so, towards the end of summer, she sent it back with a letter saying she had studied it carefully and it was very interesting but that she didn't think it was something that they would do. It was two years later that they had an exhibition of American watercolor painting at the Whitney, with a small catalog and text by Lloyd Goodrich, which included some things he had to have gotten out of my dissertation. Well, that's life.

GARDNER

Transcriber should note that Dr. Lee shrugged his shoulders. [laughter]

LEE

That's life. There were other things to worry about. One thing I must add about my stay at graduate school at Cleveland: Dr. Munro [of the Cleveland Museum of Art] had certainly the best educational department of any museum in the United States. He also had a Carnegie grant, which he'd had for some time, for study of children's art education and children's art. And he had two psychiatrists on his staff who were working on this project. One was a Dr. Barnhart. I can't remember where he was from. And the other was Dr. [Betty] Lark-Horovitz. She was German. We usually had lunch together. We also had meetings with them in connection with teaching children--I taught children's classes on Saturday mornings--and I learned a lot about children's art education and also a lot about psychology of art. It was a very useful and very interesting experience. And working in that project, Tommy would ask me to come to meetings and so on. I really learned a lot about that. Along about February, I guess it was, before the dissertation was actually completed and the degree was granted, Ruth was pregnant. I needed-- We needed a job. Howard [C.] Hollis had gone to William Milliken and asked-- Because he was alone in the oriental department and we had done all that work together on the Chinese ceramics exhibition and I'd helped him in some research with Indian material, he asked William Milliken if they might find a place for me, at a low salary, as an assistant in the oriental department. And William said that he would love to do it, but he said no, he just didn't have the money. A week later he announced the appointment of a fellow named Cheney-- Tim

[Timothy] Cheney, who was the son of the Cheney silk family in Connecticut-- as an assistant in his department. I was learning fast, I was learning fast.

GARDNER

How the game was played.

LEE

So I had been scrounging around. I got a letter from the University of Maryland, in response-- They had an ad in the placement thing, and I'd sent my curriculum vitae in and so on. They said they would hire me at \$1,600 per year, which was standard beginning instructor's pay in the university. They would hire me! We were very elated. Just wonderful! We finally saw that we might have a roof over our heads. And about ten days later I got a letter saying, oh, so sorry, but the state legislature, in their wisdom, had struck that position off of the university budget. So there we were with no prospects, I think, at all. I'd applied for an advertised position at the University of Texas at Austin, and I got a letter from them saying they were interested and that they would pay my expenses to go down to Austin for an interview. At the same time, just about the same time-- I had been rather friendly with a graduate student from the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University, who was studying for his doctorate. He was from Cleveland and he was working in the Cleveland Museum library--Charles Cutler, who became a specialist in Flemish painting. I think the last I heard of him he was at the University of Iowa. And he was looking for a job, too. I was on the elevator with him, going up to the gallery, and he said, "Have you heard about this position up in Detroit?" I said, "No. Which one?" He said that the Detroit Institute of Arts was advertising a position of assistant curator, and it was a civil service position, so there was going to be an examination. He gave me a copy of the thing. I had to copy down the essentials. And I applied and was told that I could come and take the examination. But before the examination, I went down to Texas. That was a very interesting little jaunt, because I had never been down there before and went down on the Missouri, Kansas, and Topeka Railroad--the "Katie." And for breakfast in the morning, they had real corn bread and grits and so on. It was really something, something you read about in literature of the early twentieth century. But there it was, in 1941. So I went down to Austin, and I knew one person there, Gibson Danes, who was head of the department. I'd

met him. And then there was a sculptor there who was from Cleveland, Bill [William M.] McVey. They interviewed me, and they were particularly interested in my qualifications for American art and wanted me to teach American art, but they said I could teach a course in oriental art if I wanted to. And they offered me the job at \$1,800. So I said, "I'll let you know in a very short time." I went back and went up to Detroit, to the examination up there. Now, these were hard times, especially for people studying art history, and they had about forty to fifty students there from Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Institute of Fine Arts, Chicago, all up there to take this examination. The position paid \$2,650 per year.

GARDNER

A princely sum.

LEE

I took the examination and went back and very quickly got a note saying that I had come in second in the examination. That meant that, I think, the first three people-- The second and third are put on a standby list. Then I found out that the man who had placed number one was, oddly enough, John S. Newberry Jr. of the wealthy Detroit family, who had been working on a sort of volunteer basis at the art institute [Detroit Institute of Arts] in the print and drawing department. He had come in first. The next week I got another letter saying that Mr. Newberry had been called up because he was in the naval reserve, because we were using all those patrolling boats and convoys, although we were not in the war yet. He said he would not be able to take the job, and I had it as assistant curator. So we danced a couple of times around the table. I called Texas and told them that I was terribly sorry but I had another position that I thought was much more attractive to me and I would decline. And that's how I went into the museum field. Really, a coincidence.

GARDNER

Or a series of them.

LEE

Or a series of coincidences.

GARDNER

Let me ask you a couple of questions that occurred to me while you were describing this. First of all, the jobs at Maryland and Texas, were they in the art departments? There were not departments of art history at that point.

LEE

They were in the art department. But you were called an art historian-- professor or instructor in art history.

GARDNER

You talked about Munro having worked for Barnes. In the time that you spent working on the dissertation, was any of the Barnesian method passed on to you? And if so, what?

LEE

Well, Barnes got some of his method from, of course, [John] Dewey. But I think he got some of it also from Tommy. There are certain elements, such as the analysis of what they call components of line, texture, color tone, hue tone, , because in that you have the most complex kind of orchestration in all the work up until that time. So that's rather foreign construction, simple repetition, variation, and contrast. That kind of logical, old Scotch, rational approach, to a certain extent, is in Barnes too. Barnes added to it, added to Tommy's ideas I think, some things that Tommy didn't at all care for involving evaluating concepts about tension and so on, which are there, but they can't be pinned down the way Tommy liked them to be pinned down. Tommy occasionally talked to me about Barnes and said he was a terribly difficult person, etc., etc. He said he was not surprised that I couldn't get in despite his letter, although he was a little bit miffed about it. But I would say that Tommy used Barnes's books, especially the book *The Art of Painting*, but then also the book on Renoir [*The Painting of Renoir*]. He was very much influenced by Spencer: One sort of mode developed from simplicity to complexity. The more complex things, they were somehow on a higher level than those things that were simple. So, for example, he thought of all the impressionist and postimpressionist painters, and indeed in many ways all painters-- That Renoir was the greatest master because he was the most complex. He did more with color and texture than did the others. He thought, for example, that one of the greatest musical compositions was Ravel's *La Valse* to Barnes's concept,

though Barnes did think that Renoir was the best of all the late nineteenth-century painters. There were ties, but there was no systematic following of Barnes on Munro's part.

GARDNER

So no inculcation of the method into you as a pupil?

LEE

No, no.

GARDNER

Well, what about Milliken? We'll talk more about him later when we arrive at the job that you did get. What were your impressions of him in those days?

LEE

Well, I was just a graduate student, and I was very, very far down on the totem pole. I didn't see William in direct, personal contact very much. William had a private dining room across the hall. The male curators--Henry Francis, Howard Hollis, Dr. Munro, Milton Fox, William Milliken, Richard Godfrey, the photographer (before that there was another photographer, whose name escapes me)--were always there. And the comptroller, Mr. [Walter A.] Croley, regularly had lunch there. I was invited in with Howard fairly often when there was an extra seat. Some of the people from the art institute [Cleveland Institute of Art], which was nearby, [would also lunch there]. Notably, Henry Keller, who was a great watercolorist, incidentally, and probably the dean of Cleveland painters; Paul Travis, who was an important painter in the region; Bill McVey, who had come up to the art institute from Texas, was there quite often. Dr. [Leopold] Levis, who was a Jewish German refugee art historian, who incidentally taught me German, got me so that I could get through the examination okay, and a very amusing guy. He was also working in the education department on the Carnegie grant thing. Dr. Barnhart and occasionally Lark-Horovitz, the German psychologist--she was the only woman I remember being there. Tommy Munro hated lunch there because, though William Milliken was a great museum director--he had a very good eye; he'd built a wonderful medieval collection--he could be a very, very, I think, unpleasant person. If I was a grandma's boy--brought up as a grandma's boy--

William was a mother's boy. He lived with his mother across the Wade Park pond in the hotel across there, the Wade Park Manor, with his mother. And she lived to be quite, quite old. I think she was still alive when I was there as a graduate student. The lunch thing was sort of William sitting at the head of the table and dominating everything and Tommy sort of eating away morosely. Milton Fox occasionally tried to get a word in edgewise. And the photographer was the butt of William Milliken's remarks; he was the fall guy in the group. It got to be just a routine that went on and on, and people got terribly bored with it. But when Henry Keller was there--and Henry Keller had a wicked sense of humor--he would get William all stirred up and lead him on into something that was slightly very much off-color. All of a sudden William would realize what was happening. William was very straitlaced about any kind of dirty jokes or anything like that. Every now and then Barnhart, the psychiatrist, would make a joke and everybody would start laughing at it. And William would finally get it and he'd turn quite red. He would push back his seat and throw down his napkin and rush out of the room. It was just extraordinary. And when this happened, Tommy Munro would try to hold his laughter in and his lips together, and his face puffed out and turned almost purple until William finally jumped up to leave the room and Tommy would explode into laughter. It was a very, very sad scene. He was a very difficult, very emotional man. He had his favorites, and he was very much criticized in Cleveland because he played favorites in the local painters. He was a pal of Clarence Carter's. He ran the May Show, which was the local regional show. He always invited hack jurors who were amenable to him. Also, they were amenable to his directions and what was to be done. He even went so far, on several occasions-- We know definitely because we saw it. The jury had rejected somebody from the show, and after they'd go, he'd put them back in. He ran that show as his thing, though it was presumably a jury exhibition. But he also was very-- He played favorites among the dealers. He had certain dealers that he would work with and buy from. There were some dealers he wouldn't see. He would never go to Wildenstein [and Company]. And whatever you may think about that firm--some people didn't like Georges Wildenstein--they had super, super paintings and so on. I was learning while I was there, because when I went to New York I also made appointments to go to Duveen [Brothers] and to go to Knoedler's and so on. I got to know some European dealers and the American dealers, like Betty Parsons and Marian

Willard and the old boy at Babcock Gallery--I can't remember his name--and MacBeth at the MacBeth Gallery, who handled Winslow Homer's watercolors. So I knew a lot of those people. But I didn't know anything about Europe. I had never been to Europe; there was no way to go. But I would say that William was a very fine museum director. Did you read that essay about William in there [in the museum's seventy-fifth anniversary publication]? That's a very objective report by a very good and intelligent scholar, Henry Hawley. He didn't know William that much personally, as I did, but he did a lot of work in the archives and he dug out what he did there. I think that we agreed he was an excellent museum director. He built a wonderful collection for Cleveland while he was there. As a matter of fact, he put it on the map right after he became the director by buying the twelve pieces from the Guelph treasure. That definitely was the thing that put Cleveland on the map for the first time. He accomplished a great deal, but he was not, in my opinion, an admirable person. This comes later, but when we were building the 1958 wing addition, I was curator of oriental art. They made me assistant director when they started the work, so I was supposed to help William with the supervision of the architecture, working with the architects and so on. There was some question about where the new wing was going to be in relation to the 1916 building. It was a crucial matter of how much projection there was on the west wing in relation to the old building. There's a glass connection. Leonard [C.] Hanna [Jr.], who was the principal donor who gave the money for the new wing, was very concerned about that. The architect was [J.] Byers Hayes, very straightforward. A little difficult, somewhat irascible, but very honest and straightforward. The trustees had asked William to have the architect put out stakes to show exactly where everything was going to be. The day came, and William went out early in the morning, before eight o'clock, and saw where the stakes were and moved them back because he thought that Leonard and Harold [T.] Clark would be very upset the way it was, and I think they would have been, too. But Byers Hayes, the architect, just said, "I can't have this. These stakes aren't in the right place." And a lot of uproar. So they made me associate director, with full responsibility for the liaison between the trustees and the contractors for the finishing of the building. Of course William hated that very much. It was a terrible time, I must say--very hard work. William was very peremptory about it. He wanted what he wanted when he wanted it. If I was working on something and he wanted something, I would have to leave it.

Things got rather strained. He blew up in front of my wife in the garden court of the museum because I was three minutes late or something like that for an appointment. Anyhow, it was not going well. When we finally got the damn thing finished and the collections installed, I came down with the flu. I was worn to a frazzle. We went down to Tryon, North Carolina, which is in the thermal belt--lovely, even climate--so I could recover down there, and then I came back. This was right after the opening of the museum. But William-- We stayed very clear of him, but he was very much liked. He was very friendly with the old families, all the old families, and especially the ladies. Mrs. Mather, Mrs. Prentiss, and Mrs. Ingalls, and so forth and so on. And when I was finally named director, for the first couple of years it was very difficult because I was the child usurper, and that made life very difficult. But, anyhow, that's about all that I would say about William. We were not personally friendly. That's very simple.

GARDNER

We'll talk more about that later, I guess, in a different context. One more question on the dissertation, and then I'll let us proceed. Later on in your writing you refer quite a bit to [Henri] Focillon. Had you already run across Focillon?

LEE

No, not him personally. The first thing, of course, was his book on the Middle Ages and all its art, which was called *The Art of the West in the Middle Ages*. I had used Emile Mâle a lot earlier on, when I was working on my English misericords and cathedral bosses. Focillon came to Yale. But that book he did [*The Life of Forms in Art*], I recommend it to my students all the time--a small book in which he had the essay "In Praise of Hands." I found his ideas very, very stimulating and very sympathetic. Tommy had suggested that I read some things by R. G. [Robin George] Collingwood. He discussed in music the same thing that Focillon discussed in drawing: the influence of the movement of the hand and the rhythms of the movements of the hand in terms of how the music sounds and how your mind moves with it in terms of interpreting, in an intellectual way, the music. Focillon had the same idea about what your hand does when you're drawing. I found that very stimulating and very sympathetic. Later, when I became friendly with a professor at Yale, Sumner

McKnight Crosby, I heard a lot of stories about Focillon, because Crosby was a great friend of Focillon's and had been instrumental in having him brought to Yale. So, yes, I liked what I read.

GARDNER

Okay. Let's start out now with the Detroit Institute of Arts. What were your first impressions on arriving there?

LEE

Well, first of all, remember that I had gone to [James] Cooley High School in Detroit. My family lived in Detroit, so I knew something about Detroit. I had been a visitor to the art institute. When we arrived there, we first found a half of a house not too far north, off of Woodward Avenue. We had no car. As a matter of fact, the first eight years of married life, we had no car. But it was a comfortable place. There was an English professor at Wayne [State] University who lived across the street with his wife and children, and we were friendly with them. It was much better than we had been living in before--\$2,650 was quite a bit for us at that time. I went to the institute and its inner workings, and there were all these very difficult people. First of all, the institute itself was just beginning to emerge from the Depression. During that period, they had really been up against it. Because they were a municipal institution, their operation budget was from the city. They had a dual system. They had the city, which supported their operations and most of the salaries, civil service, and then they had the [Detroit Institute of Arts] Founders Society, which was a private, incorporated, not-for-profit group who had some endowment which was used for purchases and also for salaries and salary supplementation. I think [William R.] Valentiner's salary came from the Founders Society. It's a curious system, especially for someone whose only museum experience up until that time had been as a voluntary assistant at [the] Cleveland [Museum of Art], which was a private institution. This was a little bit strange. Secondly, I was a complete stranger to the art world in Detroit. I knew none of the trustees. The director was William Valentiner. Originally, of course, Wilhelm Reinhold Valentiner. He was a pupil of [Wilhelm von] Bode and had begun life in the field of Islamic art and came to the Metropolitan Museum [of Art] in 1912, I think it was, from Berlin as curator of Islamic art. He had gone back to

Germany during the war. He was in the artillery reserve. He fought on the German side, but a more unlikely soldier I could never imagine.

**1.6. TAPE NUMBER: III, SIDE TWO
APRIL 8, 1992**

GARDNER

If you can continue, your description was just getting exciting.

LEE

Valentiner. After the war he was in Germany. He was friendly with the German expressionist painters. He knew them and collected them. Then he became a scholar in the field of Italian Renaissance art. But he also knew something about oriental art. He was a friend of Ernst Dietz, who was an orientalist in Berlin. He was a genuine man of the world and interested in all kinds of art, including modern. He came to Detroit as director back about 1924, '25, something like that. The assistant director and administrator was Clyde Burroughs, who was not trained as an art historian but had become knowledgeable about American art. He was the curator of American painting and assistant director--Excuse me, not assistant director, something corresponding to administrator. The assistant director was Edgar Preston Richardson--E. P. Richardson--who definitely was beginning to be a major specialist in American painting. The curator of European art and classical art was Francis Robinson, who was a very, very nervous and excitable person, very kind, but very nervous and excitable, totally overweight and totally unathletic--the antithesis of that. Very staccato way of talking and wide knowledge. He had been at Princeton, and his basic field was medieval art. The curator of textiles was Adèle Weibel--Swiss. Her daughter Liselotte [Moser] was a painter--very good painter--who had been crippled somewhat with polio and walked with braces and a cane. Adèle Weibel smoked cigarettes in a long cigarette holder and had a very thick German accent, as did her daughter Liselotte. Mrs. Weibel was very short, and she was getting on in years. She must have been, when I went there, in her late fifties. Seemed old to me. The curator of prints was Isabel Weadock, who was from an old Detroit family. I don't think she'd had much training. She was a very nice person and very energetic. Jack Newberry had worked in the print

department, particularly on modern prints and drawings. It was a good department. Just before I was there, just before I arrived, Walter Heil had been there. He had left just a few weeks before I arrived to be director of the M. H. de Young [Memorial] Museum in San Francisco. But the curator's corridor, beginning with Valentiner's office and the director's and trustees' room-- Richardson worked in the trustees' room. Valentiner's office was next to that. Then the other offices were strung out back, Heil's office and then Robinson's, and then I was moved in with Robinson, so we shared an office. Weibel's office was in the corner. That corridor was called "Berlin Allee." German was spoken there.

GARDNER

It's a good thing you learned German.

LEE

They spoke English of course, but you could hear it all the time. Valentiner was a big expert in the field of Renaissance art and also, in the old European tradition, gave expertise, endorsements on the back of photographs of pictures that this is indeed a genuine work of so-and-so and characteristic of the period of the 1620s and etc. He wouldn't give a value or anything like that, but authenticate the work, as did almost all European scholars outside of England. But this was considered very off-color by Harvard, Yale, and Princeton. Valentiner was not liked a great deal by the establishment, but he was an extraordinary man. His wife [Caecilia Valentiner] was a very, very sophisticated and interesting woman and very much interested in literature and poetry. Valentiner was interested in what was going on in art and, unlike other people who worked in the Italian Renaissance field or in old masters and so on, he was interested in contemporary art and collected it. He had beautiful German expressionist things--Paul Klee and others. He had been a friend of [Ernest Ludwig] Kirchner's and of [Emil] Nolde's and [Karl] Schmidt-Rottluff's. He bought many American painters before anyone else did: Morris Graves, Mark Tobey, and so on. He was a real gentleman, tall, thin, birdlike, thin nose, and a very kind man to me. He was very patient. He was in his office there, and then out in the corridor there was a big wooden bench with a back and so forth. Almost every day there would be some dealer there from Germany or from New York: a motley assortment of people. One of the people who was

there very often was Paul Byk, who was the senior partner in Arnold Seligman Rey, one of the best dealers in New York. Byk was a huge man with big, fat, very sensuous, thick lips--wore always a dark suit. He was jabbering away in German out there all the time. Then there was a small fly-by-night dealer from New York named Siegfried Aram, who sold pictures and would come to get Dr. Valentiner to look at a picture or look at a photograph and advise him. It was something happening every minute. Occasionally Valentiner would do something which I was incensed at at first, but gradually I realized that I had been right in principle but he had been right in practice. Notable example: Not long after I was there--I'd say a few months--a crate arrived and the shipping room called me and said, "There's something here for your department." I said, "I don't know about anything coming." He said, "Oh, it's for you." So I went out there. And there was a box from New York, and in it was a Japanese wood sculpture of an arhat. The registrar said that Dr. Valentiner had had it sent on from New York and they'd bought it and it was Kamakura period. I knew it wasn't Kamakura period, couldn't be Kamakura period. It was later. I was just furious, because he had done this without even saying boo to me about it, and I was very frosty and cold with him the next few days. But in the long run it wasn't Kamakura, but it was a very important and marvelous Edo period sculpture, and three more from the same set were in this country, one in the Met [Metropolitan Museum of Art] and two were in Kansas City. They'd come from a temple in Tokyo which was very important. He was right, maybe for the wrong reasons, but it was a good thing to have. So I simmered down and learned a lesson a little bit. He had been responsible for most of the really good Chinese acquisitions at Detroit because of his friendship with Ernst Dietz in Berlin. The great northern Wei gilt bronze, the dated gilt bronze of 520 A.D., and the big iron lion head, and notably the painting by Shên Chou with the calligraphy by Wang Ao, which is a masterpiece, a painting of the type that people didn't pay any attention to. He bought it just before I arrived from C. T. [Ching-tsi] Loo for something like \$300 or \$400. He was just interested in everything. He was also into making me a less provincial and ignorant curator. For example, when they had the first of the big Rembrandt shows at Chicago--I think it was in '42 maybe--he himself paid for my train ticket. And I went and met him--he was giving a couple of lectures or something--at the Art Institute [of Chicago], and he took me around the exhibition and tried to deal with me. I think I was very difficult and probably very arrogant at that time. And still am I

guess, but I know it--that's the difference. I didn't know it then. I remember we were looking at the Lucretia from Minneapolis, and I allowed as to how I really didn't like the painting. He said, "Now, you must look at it very carefully. Remember it's by Rembrandt. And if it's by Rembrandt you'd better look, because he's more likely to be right than you are." Well, that's true. I've learned not to just offhand throw away, discard, discount something just because my first reaction is negative. First reactions can be very, very good, but negative first reactions can be very wrong. And that's one thing I learned, definitely, at that particular time. We continued to be friends for a long time. He went to Raleigh, North Carolina [North Carolina Museum of Art] as their adviser/director before they ever had a building, after the war. He was the director of the Los Angeles County Museum [of Art], and, just to anticipate a bit, when I was out at Seattle from '46 to '48, I saw him occasionally in Los Angeles. He recommended when he retired in '51--I guess it was '51--to the board at Los Angeles County that I succeed him to be director of the art section. They then had a science and history and art-- And I thought about it, and I decided not to do it. Cleveland had been in contact with me that they might be getting some funds, so they might be able to have an oriental curator and would I be interested. So I knew that might be in the offing. And it's fortunate that I did that, because I would have been director and it would have been a mess, because after he left, the whole thing exploded. They had to separate natural science and history, and then there was that whole operation of building on the [La] Brea Tar Pits. It was just one damn thing after another. So I escaped that. Valentiner occasionally came up to Seattle, because he was very friendly with Mark Tobey and Morris Graves, and I knew both of them quite well. He loved the woods up there. He loved that. He simply was a very, very, broad-gauged person. I know that some people say, and I believe them, that he could be very difficult. I don't think there was a crooked bone in his body. It was simply the European tradition, to give expertise. He didn't get much for it. He was very generous to other people. He was really my only direct contact with the old German tradition, which began with Bode, and there was Valentiner, and then I was his pupil, as it were. Before he left for North Carolina, he gave me a leather suitcase, a wonderful old-fashioned suitcase which had been given to him by Bode. I felt very proud to have the suitcase of Bode by way of Valentiner.

GARDNER

What was your job? I mean aside from the title. How did you find yourself occupying your days?

LEE

I had three main tasks: At my request--and Valentiner said fine--I was made curator for oriental art. Two, at that time there was Alger House, a mansion by Dan Fellows Platt, a famous neoclassical-style architect who built a lot of big houses in that area, and one of them was the Alger House--for the Alger family. It had been given to the museum. It was Renaissance style. It's on the shore of the lake there out in Grosse Pointe, and it was turned into a museum of Italian Renaissance decorative arts, a branch museum. It was perfect for it. They had good furniture and majolica and so on out there. I was curator of that, and two days a week I had to go out there. Valentiner's apartment was in the wing, the servants' wing, of Alger House. That's where he and Mrs. Valentiner lived. Three, I was editor of The Bulletin [of the Cleveland Museum of Art]. So I had those three things to do. Being in charge of Alger House was no big deal, because it was a fixed collection, except they had some small rooms up above where you could have special exhibitions. I started something there which I don't know if they still continue or not, but I started having at Christmastime a sales exhibition drawn from material, inexpensive material, from the New York dealers. You could get some wonderful stuff then for very little. I included oriental material in that. It caught on and we sold quite a bit, and some of the pieces came to the museum. So you could have little exhibitions up there. I had an exhibition of Rajput painting up there, I remember, once. But the permanent collection was fixed. Valentiner and I had somewhat different ideas, occasionally, about how things should look. He was of the old Kaiser-Friedrich[-Museum] school. He loved to have Renaissance textiles and things around, including Renaissance velvet runners on tables and so forth. I was the Shaker school of pristine purity.

GARDNER

And simplicity. [laughter]

LEE

I went to the Alger House every Tuesday and Thursday. I'd get there Tuesday morning and I would remove the-- There were two runners that annoyed me

particularly. I would remove the two runners off the table, and it just looked wonderful. Then when Valentiner came back, either Tuesday night, or sometimes he'd wait until Thursday, he'd put the runners back. We wouldn't say a word. I didn't say anything to him about it and he didn't say anything to me about it. So maybe two days out of the week it was simple, and the rest of the week it was velvet. I just learned an awful lot from him. He believed in the Kaiser-Friedrich system of installation, which was an attempt to recreate the context of the individual works of art. So the rooms at Detroit-- The quattrocento room had moldings done in quattrocento style, had quattrocento furniture; the Venetian High Renaissance room was different, and so on. He bought a small chapel to house some of the Gothic and stained glass, just as it was in the Kaiser-Friedrich. Now, I learned the contextual argument from him on that. At the same time, I realized that it was phony. It just didn't look right if you really knew it. He ignored the bad parts of it. He wouldn't look at it--just didn't see it. What he saw was what he knew from Europe, and it was a context--it would have worked. But I think the purist thing is just as bad the other way. I think it is a terrible mistake to hang Renaissance paintings or baroque paintings in a pure environment. It may look marvelous with Mondrian or modern sculpture, but it just doesn't have the tone and the flavor that the paintings have. It is very hard to get, and you can make mistakes. All this was percolating and filtering through, and I was learning, very definitely.

GARDNER

You'd been at Cleveland, in a place that had a very strong education program with Thomas Munro and so on. Was there anything like that at Detroit?

LEE

There wasn't much education. They didn't have any money. They were still pretty well broke. They began to work more on education, I think, after I left in '46. I think Isabel Weadock did some lectures for adults. There was a man--I think he came a little later, after I was basically out of there--named John Morse. They had sort of a lecture program with mostly travel talks, you know: Branson De Cou-- And who was the one who did the movies, the travel movies?

GARDNER

Lowell Thomas?

LEE

Lowell Thomas. Those kinds of things, which were popular, and they made some money on it I think. Occasionally they had lectures too, and that was John Morse I think. But the educational effort was really relatively minimal. Burroughs was a very pleasant man, easy to talk to; you could go in and talk to him at any time. Valentiner was always really very busy. He worked awfully hard. Burroughs was very amiable but not very energetic. He bought a few things in the American field--good ones--but he wasn't really a builder. Richardson was. We got to know him quite well. His wife, Constance Richardson, was a painter. A very good one. Sort of a latter-day-- Her work looked like early George Inness. Rather meticulous but very nice, nice mood landscapes in New England and other regions. They always traveled every summer. Ted and Constance would travel to a new place. They went once up to Duluth [Minnesota] and she did some landscapes up there--very nice, with these very spacious, long views and peculiar light. She was a good painter. But she was-- Definitely not malicious, but a little-- She liked to provoke people a bit. Just a slight acidic quality. But we got along very well. Ted was very serious. She had a very good sense of humor; she was quite bubbly. Ted was very serious and he worked very hard. He had to. Valentiner was like a bird-- he was here and there and so forth. Ted, as assistant director, had to keep the thing on an even keel, which he did very well. He was very painstaking. He had a very good eye and a very serious understanding of American painting. He did an absolutely superb job, I think, in building that American painting collection there, ahead of everyone else, when it could be done for very, very small sums of money. I had a lot of respect for him. He was rather dry. No sense of humor--a little, not much. He was very much aware of my being a bumptious youth, and he tried to keep me calmer. We had one contretemps, which I'll mention in a minute. We were very friendly with Weibel. She was kind of a window onto the world of European gossip. She loved gossip and she had contacts all over the place. She was a very knowledgeable expert on textiles and built a very fine collection there at Detroit. Well, I got to Detroit, and I was very ambitious for the oriental department. Despite the fact that I knew something about Chinese and Indian art from my work with [James Marshall] Plumer and my work with Howard Hollis, Japanese art I knew very little about,

because at that time Japanese art was very unpopular. The Japanese gallery was dismantled during the war and the Japanese material was removed. But I decided that the collection didn't have anything on Indian art and certain aspects of Chinese art, so I wanted to buy things for it. And lo and behold, there was indeed a dedicated purchase fund, the Sarah Bacon Hill Fund, which was restricted to works of oriental art.

GARDNER

Bravo.

LEE

So the first piece I bought-- I had been introduced to all the dealers in New York by Howard Hollis. As a matter of fact, C. T. Loo, who was the biggest dealer in Chinese and Indian art, before I had a job, offered me a job at his place in New York. I said, "No, I don't want to go into the business." But Loo had a few Indian sculptures, including bronzes, that he had acquired through the French expert who lived in Madras [India]. There was a French sort of concession in Pondicherry, near Madras, and there was that scholar named Jouveau-Dubrevil who picked up stuff, including bronzes, and sold them to Loo to augment his income. Loo had this Indian bronze female figure of Uma, a big, wonderful-quality, early Chola period. Really just a splendid piece. It was \$2,500. Today it would be half a million dollars. And the Sarah Bacon Hill Fund had more than that in it; it had about \$3,000. So that was the first purchase. Valentiner thought it was terrific and Richardson liked it. It was wonderful. So I was able to use that Hill Fund for purchases. We bought the bronze Uma. We bought from H. Kevorkian a stone sculpture, a splendid tenth-century Rajputana sculpture from Khajuraho that was down in his basement. That was, I think, \$1,800. We bought a very fine Chinese gilt bronze warrior figure, T'ang dynasty. Then I was in Pierre Matisse [Gallery]-- Because if I went to New York, I went to the modern dealers, too. I always went to see him. He was a terribly nice man. He had a glass case in his own private office in which there were various nonmodern things, including a splendid Cambodian bronze Garuda with big wings spread out. A marvelous piece, \$1,000. So I grabbed that. Then I'd been introduced by Hollis to the French dealers in ancient art and Indian and Cambodian art, Paul Mallon and Margot Mallon. They had another Cambodian bronze, which I think was \$1,500, Vishnu. That goes with the

Garuda, because Garuda is the vehicle of Vishnu. Then I bought a Chinese painting from C. F. Yao at Ton Ying and Company by Kuo Hsü, early Ming dynasty, one of the few Ming paintings that were bought before World War II. So I was able to develop a little bit the collection with pieces that are still well worth looking at. But I wanted to have an exhibition. You can't be a man unless you have an exhibition! I was still somewhat full of [Ananda] Coomaraswamy and that whole bit, and there had never been an exhibition of Buddhist art. Since Buddhism is one of the great and important world religions and so forth, why not have an exhibition of Buddhist art? So I proposed this and tried to establish a budget for it which would be acceptable. Valentiner said okay. Richardson was skeptical. He thought it was a little bit iffy. Anyhow, I had to have it, so we went ahead with it. We had the special exhibition. Japanese art was not included, because it was 1942. It had to have a catalog. We had to do a catalog. I did it on a shoestring. There were two artists who were working in the Detroit area. One was Ernest Mundt, a designer who later became the director of the California School of Fine Arts, and Richard Lippold, who has since become very famous. Lippold was a sculptor then too, always. They became very friendly with Mrs. Valentiner. As a matter of fact, Mrs. Valentiner, I think, later on ran off with Mundt. I talked to Mundt. He said he'd do the design of the catalog for nothing. I had him do a rendering of the Trishula and Wheel of the Law at stupa three at Sanchi to put on the cover. He also did a map of the movement of Buddhism through Asia. We did this catalog, and I had it printed at a tiny little press out in Ann Arbor. We printed three hundred copies, I think. I think it cost \$400. I'll get it for you. I just remembered where it is. Well, the exhibition catalog was put together on a shoestring, but we did get it out. And it sold pretty well. I think, as a matter of fact, the catalog just about broke even or maybe made a little bit. But the text of the catalog is a little bit on the Coomaraswamy mysterious East side. The first thing I did was a tiny little picture book--handbook--for the oriental collection, which was very much a Coomaraswamy-style introduction. But this one I was beginning to recover a little bit. It was reasonably well received. I had a big contretemps with Richardson. In retrospect, I think he may well have been right. We had a Buddhist fresco of substantial size, maybe three feet wide and ten feet high. I wanted that moved into the special exhibition galleries, to go in the proper place in the exhibition so that it would be part of the context. Richardson said it was foolish to move it because people could

just go over to the other gallery and look at it. I insisted that it should be in context. So we moved it, with considerable difficulty, and Richardson and I were not speaking to each other for a couple of weeks. But quite a few people came, and I think it was reasonably successful. It was my first experience at doing a special exhibition, except for my assisting Howard Hollis in doing the Chinese ceramic exhibition at Cleveland. But in general there was not that much interest in oriental art in Detroit. There was a little bit, but not an awful lot. Detroit basically is an automobile town, and those people are interested in other things. We never knew until-- We met a Chinese couple through the Buddhist exhibition. He was an engineer and he took us once to something we didn't know existed, which was a large sort of supper club and gambling joint where all the automobile moguls and people were all the time. We knew nothing about this. We really knew none of the trustees. The trustees were Valentin's bailiwick and also Richardson's. We met Mrs. Ralph Booth once at her house. I think there was a dinner there. But basically we knew people at Wayne University and a few people on the staff. We were pretty much on our own. By then we had our first child, Katharine, and Ruth was very busy, naturally, with that. I remember several things that happened that are of some interest. One, I got into a big debate or argument by mail with Margaret Mead, because we had a photographic exhibition, which I was put in charge of, on Bali. I, still in my mysterious East phase, took exception to some of the anthropological approaches that were in the labels connected with the Balinese religion, and I had two or three letters to her. I received letters from her telling me how mistaken I was, which I was. Then there were lectures in the auditorium, and one of the programs was W. H. Auden. He came to the museum and was going through the galleries. I met him and I think he was trying to make a pickup. But anyhow, we went to a bar not far away and had a very interesting discussion. Then I said I had to go home to dinner with my wife and child. And off I went, and he went off. I at least had a good hour's discussion with him about the Coomaraswamy approach. He was of course, at that time, somewhat interested in the same region of ideas. Not those specifically, but he was interested in what was called traditional society. Across the river in Windsor [Canada], Wyndham Lewis was spending his time. We saw him a couple of times and got to at least be able to speak for a few hours on his experience with vorticism and also this business of traditional society, etc. So we were still connected with all kinds of interesting things and

ideas. But Katharine was born in fall '41, and we were doing all right. I had a deferment in the draft because of family, and I was increasingly, you know, uncomfortable with working at the museum while the war was going on. Remember I told you I was working in spectroscopy. I asked around, and Edsel Ford, who was president of the board and a terribly nice man, a real gentleman, said, "Well, you know, if you want to do something--" And I said, "Can I get a job doing something that would be part of the war effort?" He asked me what I knew, and I told him all the work I'd done in science, and that was spectroscopy. He said, "We're making Pratt and Whitney airplane engines for the army and the navy. They have a rigid quality control for the metal, and it's done by spectroscopy." So I went on and applied. And sure enough, I knew enough so that they made me assistant to the head of the lab that tested the special alloy of magnesium that went into the Pratt and Whitney engines. His name was Walter Bryan, and I was the assistant to the lab head. Then we had four workers who simply did the routine running while we did the analysis. So I went to work with Ford Motor Company in the spectroscopy lab.

GARDNER

How did the museum feel about this?

LEE

Well, I told them that I'd come in when I could--I'd come in on Saturdays to try to keep things going, on a voluntary basis--but that I hoped that they would give me some leave so that I could do this. And they did. It saved them money. So I worked in the lab there for a while. Let's see, I would say it was sort of early to mid '43 that I moved over there and started work there. I kept working there, and then there was one occasion where the workers decided to go out on strike for reasons that I thought were absolutely pointless. I didn't believe that they should strike anyhow because of the war. What they wanted was perfectly ridiculous. So Bryan and I-- They went out on strike, four of them. We ran the lab, got all the analyses out, did all the work, and still had time left over so that we could play chess. These four workers were just unbelievably unproductive. And then I got some experience: I got a threatening phone call from somebody, anonymous, about my being a scab, etc. I retaliated by simply saying that at least I'm not a traitor and so on. The usual stuff. Then things went on and Ruth was pregnant again. And I was

increasingly uncomfortable. Finally I said, "I think I ought to volunteer. I frankly would much rather be in the navy and I would rather have officer's training than to be a doughboy." So I signed up for officer's training. In February or March of '44, I went into the officer's training program in the navy at Fort Schuyler, outside New York. Then I went to pick up my ship in Astoria, Oregon. Well, before going there to pick up the ship, I had gone to the Bremerton Naval Yard in Seattle, where I was born. Now I was curator of oriental art in Detroit, and I went to the museum and made myself known to Dr. Richard Fuller, who was the president of the board, the chief donor, and the director of the Seattle Art Museum. And we hit it off very well. He was an object person. He didn't know anything about paintings much, but he was a real object person. We hit it off very well, and he said, "You know, I need help here. Why don't you think about coming to the museum?" I said, "Well, I don't know. I've got this job at Detroit--"

**1.7. TAPE NUMBER: IV, SIDE ONE
APRIL 8, 1992**

GARDNER

You were about to describe your embarkation at Seattle.

LEE

Well, I was then, let's see, twenty-six. For the navy, that was not old, but older than a lot of the recent college graduates who were there and also in officers training. The training was uneventful, except Bill Dickey, the New York Yankee catcher, was one of the new officers being trained there. It was very interesting playing pickup softball with Bill Dickey behind the plate. I did rather poorly on the mathematical test, but they told me that I had the best score on the visual perception test. So I came out an ensign.

GARDNER

And that validated your choice of career as well.

LEE

Yes. Ensign. And we commissioned our boat, the APA--attack transport--175, the U.S.S. Karnes, and set sail. We practiced and trained off Catalina Island, and we were into Los Angeles and into San Francisco. Then we took off for the

war zone, going to Honolulu, where we picked up troops. We were just transferring. They didn't think, I think, that our ship was quite ready yet. We were taking troops somewhere down there that was recently captured and moved on. We stopped in Honolulu, and there I made a point of going to the Honolulu Academy [of Art], of course, and seeing the collection there. Gump's had a very good store there run by Mrs. Bowen, who was also a trustee of the Honolulu Academy. I met her, and she was very friendly and took pity on the poor ensign who was eating this lousy food. She had a big avocado tree out in her garden. Her house had beautiful Chinese antiquities and things. I would pick a bag full of avocados and take them back to ship, before we were going to ship off, and put them in the officers mess refrigerator with a sign on it saying "S. E. Lee Personal Property." Nobody liked avocados except me, but I loved them. The shipboard activity was very interesting. I was the first division officer. That meant I was in charge of the fore part of the ship, the unloading of the equipment and the discipline in the troop barracks, or hold where they were quartered. I also took the occasion to work on my navigation, because I'd been very good in trigonometry and geometry. That kind of mathematics I was pretty good at. I studied carefully, because I thought being in the navigation department would be much more interesting than being a deck officer. Finally we had troops that were going to go to the Philippines, and we took them through Ulithi and then we landed them. We arrived just as things were getting under control and landed troops outside Manila. Then we went to Guam and loaded up some more troops and we went to join the invasion of Okinawa. We were at Okinawa, anchored out with a destroyer protection screen which-- My brother [David Lee], incidentally, was on a destroyer unit.

GARDNER

Were you aware of that? Did you know the two of you were that close?

LEE

No. Not then. I knew he was somewhere, but I didn't know he was right out there. We were present for the invasion and the Battle of Okinawa. I remember my only close contact with combat was a very scary one. We had arrived and we were unloading ammunition from both the fore and the aft holds--high explosives. It was daytime, and they had various sorts of fog-making things to keep things so that the kamikaze planes would not have a

clean shot at anything. It was a pretty good breeze and things were blowing away. A kamikaze plane came up right-- We were anchored about two hundred to three hundred yards from a cruiser, a Cleveland class cruiser. We were there with all our holds open, high explosives and everything. And this kamikaze plane-- We saw it coming and we got to our guns and began shooting. The cruiser began shooting. He had antiaircraft fire all around him. He just came right up half way between us, over. You could almost say you saw the pilot look down and make his choice. And he picked the cruiser. So he dove and hit the cruiser on the number two turret and killed about a dozen people. But if he'd come for us, the whole ship would have blown up, out of the water. Everybody would have been gone. Well, that was a very interesting experience.

GARDNER

Sobering.

LEE

Sobering experience is right. But that was our one major action. Then I was made assistant navigator. That meant that I would get up early, three thirty A.M. or four A.M., well before dawn, to get ready for the dawn-star sight as soon as the horizon became visible. And in the evening, we'd do the evening-star sight. In the middle of the day we'd do the sun sight for the midday position. We were a small department. We had a quartermaster and a couple of assistant seamen who assisted in maintaining the navigation shack. But you could read. As a deck officer, I was in a room with three other officers, double deck. As the assistant navigator, I had a single small room. I could paste up reproductions of paintings; I had my little shelf of books to read. It was a much less confined, more interesting life. And I enjoyed navigation. It was fascinating. I enjoyed the sea and the sky at night and in the morning. On the Philippines bit, we were in that big typhoon that hit and destroyed quite a few ships. That was frightening but was also quite an exhilarating experience to go through with waves coming over the top of the ship sixty, seventy feet high. It was nature at its most powerful and its most awesome. That really was an experience, and I'm glad I went through it. And I'm glad I got through it. It was something. But then we were informed of the war's end. I'll never forget the day. We were sailing in convoy at night, following the zigzag pattern that you

do to avoid submarine attack. We knew that things were getting ready for the invasion of Japan and we were supposed to be going to pick up our troops for the invasion of Japan. We were supposed to take troops in on Kyushu, at the harbor of Sasebo on the western side of Kyushu. Word came through that the Japanese had surrendered and that there had been this big explosion. All very unclear. But anyhow, if the Japanese had surrendered, there would be a message to stand by. It went on for maybe half an hour, forty-five minutes. But then the word came through from the admiral, from the admiral's flagship, to light ship. We had been traveling for two years--at least I had been traveling for two years--at sea at night with portholes closed and everything absolutely pitch-black. Here was this big convoy--we must have had well over a hundred ships--and all of a sudden they gave the command to light ship. And all the lights turned on, on all the ships. It was just fantastic, just fantastic. And everybody cheered. It was much more exciting than Duke [University] beating [University of] Michigan. Then we were informed that we were going to take occupying force--marines--into the place we were supposed to have invaded, Sasebo. And here I was, assistant navigator, a lieutenant junior grade instead of an ensign. I had gotten to know the captain. He was not regular navy--he had been in the merchant marine--but he was in the naval reserve. He had been given this ship. He was captain, but he was not Naval Academy, and he was treated rather badly, I think, by the navy. But he was a fly fisherman, so we conversed on the bridge at night. We had a lovely relationship. Here I was on this ship, and we were going into Sasebo harbor in that narrow opening in the angle, docking to unload troops and equipment. And it was Japan. This was Japan! I had never been to the Orient, I had never been to Europe.

GARDNER

The curator of oriental art.

LEE

The curator of oriental art had never been. I didn't know much about Japanese art. But anyhow, I asked the captain, "We're going to be docked here for a while and the navigation department hasn't got anything to do. Can I duck off and see if I can get in?" We were only about twelve to fifteen miles away from the famous Arita porcelain kilns, which produced some of the great Japanese porcelains of the seventeenth and eighteenth century and still are in

operation. He said, "Well, you know, we're coming in to occupy this country." I said, "Well, the war is over, isn't it?" And he said, "Well, sure, go ahead if you want to. But you be back here by evening, because I don't know when we're going to pull out of here." So I went down and I scrounged around and found a marine lieutenant who was busy-- Everybody was going souvenir hunting. He had a jeep, and I said, "Well, how about letting me borrow your jeep? I've got my map here, and it's a very simple drive to this place where they have a porcelain manufactory--a famous old porcelain manufactory." He said, "I'll go along with you." So we hopped in and we just took off from Sasebo, up the road. The first town we came to was not Arita proper but was in that area, and here was this big shop. In Japan at the kilns they have their own galleries, as it were. Nice wooden buildings, traditional, but inside just loaded with ceramics. I didn't have much money or anything, but we went in. I suppose that we could have been greeted with people with spears who wanted to-- But very polite. No English, no Japanese. We bought a few porcelains--very nice quality--and we took off and went back. So that was my first direct contact with Japan. We left there, and lo and behold, the next thing that happened was we were to go and take marines to Tientsin [China]. The harbor of Tientsin is called Tangku and the bay of Chihli is very shallow, and all the troops had to be unloaded into troop boats and ferried to the shore. We had a lot to do and we had no orders that I knew of. This was weeks later, after I'd been in Japan. I went to the captain. I remember I said, "Look, I'm sorry, but here we are, we're about forty miles from Peking, and I'm supposed to be a big expert on Chinese art and so forth and I don't know nothing, and I've got to get there. I've got to see Peking." He said, "Well, you know, how are we going to get there?" I said, "I've been told that the trains are running, that there are a lot of guerrillas around--" The communist guerrillas were in the hills outside Peking and north of Tientsin. He said, "Well, I'll tell you the same thing. I don't know when we're going to leave." He said, "I think we'll be here at least three days, maybe four, but beyond that, I don't know. If you want to go, go ahead. I'll have my skiff drop you at the beach. But if you aren't back here when we lift anchor, you're AWOL, and that's going to be very, very hard." And I said, "Thank you, sir." I got the money I had together. I had borrowed some money from some of the other officers, and I put it in different places. I took a bag with some spare clothes and went to the beach, and there were a lot of marines around, milling around with jeeps and so on. I got one of them to give

me a ride into Tientsin. He dropped me off at a seedy-looking Russian hotel which was very close to the railroad station. I went right to the railroad station. There was one Chinese in the ticket office who could speak some English. I asked about trains, and he said, "No trains." Then he said, "Maybe train tonight." I said, "Well, you see that hotel over there? I'm going to be in there, and if you get any idea that there is going to be a train, please--" I gave him some money. I said, "Send me a note and I'll get it." So I went to the Russian hotel, which was really a sleazy place, red sort of velvet, old red velvet walls, bugs and the whole bit, and this old lady with hennaed hair at the desk. I said I was going to take a nap, but that if anybody came to please wake me up immediately. Well, lo and behold, about four A.M. a message came that a train was going to be leaving. So I grabbed my stuff and ran over to the station. And here was this train and it was packed. People in, hanging on the side, hanging on top. So I elbowed--I was in uniform--my way in, got on the train, and was standing there, and there was a shepherd who was sitting and then there was another man there. This shepherd elbowed the other man out and said something to him and then asked me to please have a seat, which I did. And he smelled to absolute high heaven and he had goat cheese, which he offered me, and I took some. I happen to like stinky cheese. So that was fine; he was very kind. And then there were soldiers on the train with guns and so on, live ammunition. And we started. That train ride usually takes about two hours--two and a half maximum--from Tientsin to Peking. It took us nine hours and we stopped every so often. Troops would get off and go up into the hills and there would be gunfire and so on. But anyhow, we moved along. The train would be coming up from Tientsin and would come up here and then you'd see the walls. You saw the walls of Peking there, and then the train would turn and go right along and then turn again and go into the station. So you went right past the walls, about a quarter of a mile away. Oh, I was beside myself with excitement. I got off at the station and then I walked through the south gate all the way in and through the inner gate, all the way up to the area where the hotels were. There was the Grand Hotel des Wagon-Lits, which was one of the better hotels in Peking. I got a room there with no problem. The city was empty of foreigners. The Japanese had gone and the Russians hadn't come. I was one of the few Western people in Peking. At the hotel they spoke French and of course some English. I could speak French well enough. I got a very comfortable room and I got a map and I just started out. I

went to see all this, and I was just in seventh heaven. Then that evening I asked if they knew of a rickshaw boy--they had rickshaws still then--who spoke a little English, and they got me one. I told him I wanted dinner--number one dinner, good. He took me to a restaurant which was a typical old Chinese restaurant. Chinese, almost like a small palace. I was the only one there at the restaurant. They greet you at the door, they get your name, and they call out your name, that you're coming, and they do it again when you get to the next court. And then there was a room for me. There was a raised platform, almost like a throne, and a table and-- What a meal. It was fantastic. That was the end of my first day in Peking.

GARDNER

We're about to eat lunch. This will raise our appetites if you could tell me something about that dinner. Since they got you sitting there in this--

LEE

Well, the thing I remember best was it was the first time that I had really very good, delicious, well-made Chinese dumplings. And I remember every bite. Because, you know, food on the ship is good compared to food in the army, but it is still not all that great, and a surfeit of beef. But the dumplings were very thin pastry and flexible, and inside would be a little bit of either minced pork or minced chicken or some fish or something. And then the gravy, the liquid, was inside too and was pinched tight and then steamed, so that when you pop it in your mouth and you chew, this flood of delicious consommé with the meat explodes in your mouth. It's just heaven. When we're in China, we always have as many dumplings as we can get, because they're wonderful and totally unlike the usually very sad things you get in Chinese restaurants here.

GARDNER

No wonder you can't eat in restaurants.

LEE

Then there was a wonderful steamed fish too, which was something like a grouper, which was just wonderful and just as tender as could be. And fresh fruit. So that was a great experience. Next morning I got up very early, before dawn. I had my rickshaw boy waiting, and he took me out, way out to the

north gate. Outside there, it was just as if you'd gone back into the days of Marco Polo and Kublai Khan, with the camel caravans forming up to go north into Manchuria. Just outside, it was just unbelievable. The Imperial Palace was very run-down. And guards, Chinese army people, Kuomintang, didn't seem terribly friendly. But then I found the street in which the antique stores were, which is Lulichang. Today it's sort of a tourist thing, but still it's Lulichang, and that's where the antique stores are kept together. I went in here and there, and they were surprised to see anyone, especially anyone who knew anything. I did know something about Chinese art and ceramics and so forth, and I saw some marvelous stuff which was very, very cheap. I'd saved this money, and I bought a Tz'u-chou pillow, I think for two dollars; I bought a Chinese bronze fitting for a few bucks and a couple of jades; I bought a nice--really very good--nineteenth-century embroidered coat for my wife; and I got a couple of other embroideries for a couple of the officers who had given me some money. I had a lovely time there, and one of the dealers was one of the big ones. I knew nothing about the dealers in Peking. I should have perhaps known, but I didn't.

GARDNER

Well, that country was mostly closed off during that entire period. The Japanese had taken it over--

LEE

Sure, sure. So anyhow, that. Then that was the second day. The third day I went down to the Altar of Heaven and I went to see a couple of pagodas. Then I began to get a . I got there, went up the gangplank, and there reported in. The captain said, "Good idea. We're leaving first thing in the morning." And then-- You know a uniform--there's a sewn place for your pencil or pen. I had very carefully rolled up a twenty dollar bill, tight. I had put it in there for safekeeping, and of course I forgot about it. When I got back to the ship, I discovered that I still had twenty dollars that I hadn't spent. And that just killed me, because I could have gotten some other nice goodies. little nervous. So I got the train, which went back very uneventfully. It went back in short order, no more than four hours. I got to Tientsin and the marines were still around. I got a jeep ride back to the beach and hooked a ride with one of the navy boats--there were a lot of them on the beach--and he took me out to the Karnes Then we went back and were told we were going to decommission

the ship and get our papers out at San Francisco. So we went to San Francisco, and we were about halfway through decommissioning, during which you have to inventory everything and account for everything that was issued in your department. We were halfway through this and we got word: "Stop decommissioning, get back in service. You're going to be decommissioned in Norfolk." So we had a day to get back in shape and took off. We went down through the Panama Canal. The captain had some old friends in the navy--widows, two widows--that he had to meet and pay respects to in Panama City. He asked me if I would mind coming with him to be the fourth, because he said he didn't feel comfortable taking anyone else. I said, "Sure, I'll go." So we went--captain's gig--to the wharf and then we went to this very nice typical tropical hotel, had a lovely dinner, and then came back. Then we took off and went up past Cuba, towards Norfolk [Virginia]. We hit Norfolk harbor. You have to go through a channel to get to the inner wide channel. The captain was very antsy. He wanted to get ashore. I was very antsy and I wanted to get off fast, and there was a fog so thick you couldn't see anything--just terrible. The captain said, "Do you think you could possibly get up through this and into our berth in this weather, or do we have to wait out here until it lifts?" So I got my best radar officer-- by that time I was navigator--Ensign Polley. I said, "You think we can bounce that thing off all these buoys as we go in and pilot our way down the channel?" And he said, "Sure, why not. I'll be on it myself all the time." So we got started. The captain kept headway so the ship wouldn't drift much. We started down the channel and we zeroed in on each buoy as we went by. We marked it and kept going. By golly, we took it right in, took it right up to the mooring ball. The captain said, "If you get us in, you can leave the ship. I'll let you go with your papers as the hook goes down." I had my bags all packed as we were coming in. I had everything ready. We tied to the buoy and the captain said, "Lower the hook." As they lowered the hook, they lowered the captain's gig with me in it, and I was off to the beach waving good-bye to my comrades, who still had to decommission the ship. I went through the discharge office I think as fast as anybody ever has and grabbed the train from Norfolk to Asheville, North Carolina. I got off the train in Asheville, North Carolina, and got a ride to Weaverville [North Carolina]. In the meantime our second child, Margaret [Lee], had been born. I had seen her very briefly when I had a leave. I was able to take a leave and be in Weaverville for two days when we were in San Francisco at the end of the

war, and that was the first time I'd seen her. I saw her for those two days, and I had to go back to the ship and on out. But then I got to Weaverville and we were reunited as a family, all together again, and that was just terrific. That was a great, great day for everybody.

GARDNER

Oh, I bet. What had the Detroit Institute of Arts done all this time?

LEE

They just got along without a curator.

GARDNER

So you didn't have a job to go back to there?

LEE

Oh, no, I did. We went back and I was full-time. They kept the position open. They were saving money; they didn't want to spend money, you see. I was technically on leave of absence without pay. We went back. [William R.] Valentiner had gone, and they gave us the apartment at Alger House that he'd had and we lived there for a few months. I think we got back to Detroit in June. Then in September came word from Howard [C.] Hollis that he was going to be going to Japan as officer in charge of protection/preservation of Japanese cultural property. He had to have an assistant, and did I want to come? Well, we'd just gotten back together, and my family couldn't come with me until-- They had a system in the occupation where your family could come, and the speed at which they could come depended on your war service, if you accumulated a certain number of points for war service. It would mean a delay. I would have to go in late September, and they would be coming in December, because I had some points.

GARDNER

You had never seen your second daughter.

LEE

Once, when I was on that two-day leave from San Francisco. Then, of course, when I got out, then we were together again. That leave was very emotionally disturbing, because of course she didn't know me from Adam. She was already

about five, six, seven months old and she didn't know who this person was. That was not very satisfactory. But now we were together again at Alger House. They could swim in the lake outside. And one of the Ford sons-- I don't know which one. Ruth [Ward Lee] knows. Anyhow, his brother and he and our children would play together at their house, and Grosse Pointe was not far away. Of course, this was a big house. We were living in the servants quarters, but still it was better than anything we'd had before. Everything was just going along when this thing came up about Japan. Ruth and I talked it over. She agreed that we just couldn't resist it. Plus the fact that it was a very good salary. I was a civilian and I would have the assimilated rank of major, which meant that I would have priority for various things, in terms of housing and so on. So we decided we would do it, and I left for Japan. The plane went to Seattle and Seattle to Anchorage and Anchorage to Tokyo, I guess. It was a long flight. I stopped in Seattle and met Dick [Richard] Fuller again and told him what I was doing. He said, "Well, why don't you come out here? I'll pay so much, and you can be assistant director. We can work together on developing the collection." I had told Detroit of this offer, which would be very, very good for everybody concerned. And they said, "If you want to go, go." I don't remember-- I think it was left open. I don't know if it was a leave of absence or not. I think it was left open. Dick said, "Please, why don't you do this." And so I said okay. Ruth agreed. We liked Seattle and we agreed that we would do it. I sent a letter of resignation to Detroit. Then Dick said that they would take me on whenever I came back from Japan at such and such a salary. So I got to Japan and moved into the Dai-ichi Hotel. The colonels and better could stay at the Imperial Hotel. The Dai-ichi Hotel was one of the several hotels. I stayed in another hotel part of the time, too, called the Yashima Hotel, but the Dai-ichi Hotel was right downtown. Howard Hollis was in the Dai-ichi Hotel. We started working at the Radio Tokyo building on the protection/ preservation of Japanese cultural property.

GARDNER

What did that mean? Describe exactly what your charge was.

LEE

It was the same thing as the Arts and Monuments Division in Europe except we were civilians. Howard had the assimilated rank of a lieutenant colonel. I

had the assimilated rank of a major. We were in the Civil Information and Education Section of Supreme Commander for the Allied Power. We were responsible for the protection of registered cultural property, whether in private or public hands. We were responsible for national parks. We were responsible for the encouragement of the living artists and to encourage the democratization of Japanese museums and to see that there was evenhanded fair play. In Japan they had these different living-artist societies. They each held an annual exhibition, and it was held at the municipal gallery in Ueno Park. There had been all kinds of problems with this group and that group, and we were supposed to see that the contemporary scene in Tokyo went smoothly. We had two allied inspectors. One was Captain [Alfred] Popham, who was primarily an architectural gardener, a garden architect, and Charles Gallagher, who was a shark at languages and was interested in the arts and spoke Japanese very well. We had two interpreter clerks, one male, one female; we had a secretary, Georgina Potts, a great big woman; we had, in each prefecture in Japan, a native representative, who was usually either a professor, art historian, or a member of one of the museums. In each prefecture we had that representative who reported to us. We were in the Civil Information and Education Section, the same level as the Education Section, the Religion Section, the Information Section. We reported to the head of the Civil Information and Education Section, who was Lieutenant Colonel Nugent, USMC [United States Marine Corps]. His assistant was a woman captain. I can't remember her name right now. She was a terrible, terrible woman. From the beginning, Howard Hollis had had a running battle with William [M.] Milliken all the time I was there [at the Cleveland Museum of Art]. He was the kind of person that kind of got obsessed with something and he would look for problems. He was there first and I got there a week or two later. But by the time I got there, already he was having problems with Colonel Nugent and his captain assistant. It gradually got so that was all he was doing, and he wanted to stay in the office to make sure that he could carry on this fight. So I was sort of the senior officer. The fieldwork was largely mine. Captain Popham loved to go to places where there were parks or gardens. That was his interest especially. Charles Gallagher would go anywhere. He was very good and very helpful. I knew nothing about Japanese art, except I read a few books, because you couldn't see collections just before or during the war and so forth. So I wanted to see everything that I possibly

could. But first I had to get ready for my family to come. I went looking for a house. And all the people who went looking for houses all wanted to get the biggest, most lavish Japanese house that they could. With a big house came lots of servants. Unbelievable. That's how they fed a lot of the Japanese. But also every day--I got there in September; in October it began to get cold--a house would burn down, because Americans liked things too hot. There was no central heating. They had electric heaters everywhere, and if an electric heater didn't give them enough heat or it blew out a fuse, they would fix the fuse by just wrapping copper wire around it until it worked. And then the next day or the day after or the day after that, something in the house would go. You had this constant flood of officers and families moving from houses back into the Imperial Hotel, or a hotel, and then out again into another house. I said to myself, "Now, this is really very silly. We want something that is easy to take care of and we want something that we can easily keep warm. We don't want anything big." And I found a little house, Western style with one Japanese room, in Aoyama Takagi-cho, not far from the Red Cross hospital.

**1.8. TAPE NUMBER: IV, SIDE TWO
APRIL 8, 1992**

GARDNER

You were describing your exposure--

LEE

My house. It was perfect. It had a wall around it. So I signed up for that house. Then in December I got a Christmas tree and had it up and everything. I had everything ready. It turned out they weren't going to get there by Christmas. And then they were going to arrive, I remember, the very beginning of January, the first few days in January. It was cold. I went down with flowers to wait for the Marine Falcon to dock. I expected to see them come bouncing down the gangway and so forth. Everybody was coming down, coming down. I looked up and there was my wife up there. She said, "Come this way." So I went up and both kids were in bed. They'd gotten in a storm and they had a terrible crossing. The ship's doctor was selling liquor to the crew. Everybody was sick, seasick. They had to send a helicopter and a boat out to lower medical supplies and so on to the Marine Falcon. I had the great pleasure of

greeting my family. Fortunately Ruth was reasonably well, but both kids were ill. They went directly off the boat into an ambulance and into the hospital. By this time the Christmas tree had lost all its needles and it looked very pathetic. Well, Katharine [Lee] recovered very quickly and she was able to come home within a day or two. But Margaret was there for a week or ten days. She had a flu bug and she would not cooperate with anyone. She would just stand in her crib and scream for twenty-four hours a day. Anyhow, we finally got through that. We got into our house, and it worked out perfectly. We had a housekeeper, two lady servants, and a driver who was, as I describe him accurately, a failed kamikaze pilot. We began living there, and it worked out beautifully. Across the street was the house of one of the members of the imperial family with big grounds. Their housekeeper's children and our children and some other children had a ball. And the kids picked up Japanese just like that, you know. They had a wonderful time.

GARDNER

And you learned Japanese too at this point, I gather?

LEE

Not really. I learned barely enough to get around. [tape recorder off] As soon as I got there, we decided we'd make a state visit to the great center of the early art of Japan, which is Nara, where all the great--almost all the great--early eighth-century temples and sculptures-- And the Nara National Museum is there and the Shosoin [Imperial Treasure House]. The visit was absolutely essential in protecting and preserving cultural property, because if you let the occupying troops do what they would, they'd take souvenirs, they'd ruin the temples, the gardens, and so forth. The army, almost immediately when they arrived, placed certain places offlimits. We had the right to put anything that we wanted to off limits. So we really had to have the cooperation of the military governor of each prefecture, and especially Nara prefecture would be the most important one in all Japan. So we got on the train and went down, Howard and I, to Kyoto and then took a day-- We had a jeep and a driver, and he took us to Nara. The train from Tokyo to Kyoto took-- You left at about nine o'clock at night and you arrived at eight in the morning. Now, on the fast train it's three hours, but then it was a coal-driven locomotive. It went through lots of tunnels, and when you got out you were black. We arrived in Kyoto and got

the jeep and went down to Nara, where our agent and our Japanese representative for Nara prefecture was Osamu Takata, a specialist in Indian art, a very, very fine man and later a very famous scholar. He's now dead. He met us with the military governor of Nara prefecture, Lieutenant Colonel Roland Henderson, U.S. cavalry-- "Swede" Henderson. He was a great big sort of gaunt guy with huge hands. He was a very rough-and-ready type. He looked at us as being art boys. He was a military man, and we could see that there was sort of an arm's length relationship. We introduced ourselves and we were taken to the barracks. They had commandeered a big Japanese pavilion house on the lake in Nara and we had quarters in there. This is where the officers club was. By that time-- You see, we got in about eight or nine o'clock. We had the jeep and so-- The train today from Kyoto to Nara takes about forty-five minutes. We got there about three in the afternoon, because the roads were all totally disrupted. Some of the areas had been bombed. So we got there sort of mid-afternoon. It was too late to do anything. Colonel Henderson said, in any case, he'd set up a schedule for us and we were to be received by the abbot of Todai-ji the next morning at nine o'clock for inspection of the temples and the registered objects in the temple collection. So that night he asked us if we'd like to have cocktails. We had cocktails and then we had dinner. Then they had an entertainment which was for all the officers. We were invited too. It was sort of a helter-skelter--Japanese girls dancing and doing stripteases, bad jazz music and everything, and lots of drinking. As the night wore on, Colonel Henderson perceived that we were not just art boys. As Colonel Henderson warmed up under the influence of alcohol and everybody was having a good time, everything was just going very, very well. The next morning we all had terrible, terrible hangovers--just terrible. It must have smelled like a distillery--all of us. Swede was in his uniform, all dolled up in his ribbons, and we were just up, but we were really in sad shape. Nine o'clock, there we were at the temple. The abbot in his purple robe received us, and we went through the ceremony and tea and then spent all day looking at the temple and objects and so on. We got a list of requests from the abbot about things that needed to be done, and Takata-san told us a few things about certain areas where the buildings were in very bad repair and needed attention. Swede didn't stay with us all day, but the next evening we had cocktails again. Swede had decided that we were okay. It was very, very important because Nara prefecture had the majority of the great early

monuments. From that day on, Nara prefecture was ours. When we arrived in Nara prefecture, Swede put at our disposal-- We had a jeep and a driver, what we called "the glass house," which was an old Pierce Arrow limousine, which was the official vehicle for the Japanese governor of Nara prefecture. That was ours. So we'd go tooling around the countryside, having a hell of a time getting through these villages with this huge Pierce Arrow. But it was very impressive, and everybody did everything they could to help us out. We made our inspection--I think we were down there for about four days--and from that time on, anything we wanted, anything we wanted done, any pressure on the local prefectural treasurer to make funds available for architectural reconstruction and so forth, we got it. It was being sort of roughneck types-- we were able to get a lot, I dare say, that some others might not have gotten. That was our introduction to military governorship in Japan. Howard became more and more involved in his internecine war with Colonel Nugent and Captain what's her name. So I did most of the inspecting and big trips. I got to know every major temple, every major collection, all the registered objects everywhere. Also, Howard and I met on a monthly basis with the Ministry of Education, with the people responsible for cultural property, and a representative from the treasury department, in which we looked through all the budget requests and requests for emergency things. Our job actually was to act as spokesmen, pleading for the Japanese responsible for the protection of cultural property to see that they got a fair shake with the treasury that didn't want to give them a nickel. We would cajole, bully, and do everything we could to see that some degree of justice was done for the arts and monuments activities in Japan. We went to all the openings of the art exhibitions in Tokyo. We had nothing to do with the sword situation. Some Japanese swords were registered art objects. Japanese swords were under the jurisdiction, direct jurisdiction, of the army, because they were considered weapons. That was good because that's a nightmare to try to figure that all out. In the course of this I got to know a lot of people. The interpreter for the ministry of education was Bunsaku Kurata, who later became a leading Japanese scholar, director of the Nara National Museum, and a good friend of mine. We also got to know, in the course of examining private collections, some of the big old daimyo family collections and collectors, like Marquis [Moritatsu] Hosokawa and Marquis [Saburo] Inouye and Baron [Taro] Masuda and Mr. [Tomitaro] Hara in Yokohama and Mr. Matsunaga, all kinds of

collectors everywhere. We also got to know a lot of the dealers, because some of them owned objects that were registered. Also, on Saturdays and Sundays we had the day off, of course. We'd go around and look at the dealers and see what was there, and if we could afford anything and it wasn't a registered object of course, we might buy something. I built a small collection of Sung slip decorated stoneware called Tz'u-chou ware, which was a pleasure to do. Howard and I were very friendly with Hara in Yokohama and the Masudas, particularly with the young [Yoshinobu] Masuda, who was a painter and later became president of the Japan art association. We just saw so much that nobody else had seen. Howard found that he couldn't get his family over because he hadn't served during the war, so he had no points. He got increasingly morose. Combined with his battle with Colonel Nugent, he finally decided to go back. He left in, I think, June of '47. They made me officer in charge. They didn't bump me to the actual title, but they made me officer in charge of the operation, and we kept on until we came home in June of '48.

GARDNER

The purpose of it was to make sure that none of the treasuries got looted?

LEE

No. There were several things that happened very specifically that indicated the major problems and also the extraordinary measures that might be taken to deal with them. We got a complaint very early, not long after I got there, from the civilian representative of the diplomatic corps, Damon Gifford--he was in the foreign service in Korea--about Americans who had moved in there, because Japan had been kicked out, to protect Koreans. At that time North Korea was no big problem. They were there as an occupying force to let the Koreans come back into the political world. But, according to this informant, who had sent a protest to general headquarters, the army was endangering Korean cultural property in the Korean capital, especially stone monuments in the Duksu Palace enclosure. We got a chit down from headquarters saying that somebody from our office had to go to Korea and make an inspection and report after the inspection first to the commanding officer of the army in Korea, who was General [Luther] Hodges, and then to the military governor of the Seoul area, who was General Lerch. So Howard said, "You go." I got a ride on General Hodges's plane, which was a bucket seat B-29 and went to Seoul,

right around Christmastime. This is when I knew that the family was not yet going to be on time--they weren't coming until January. I was there for about five days, in Seoul and around. I met the director of the Korean National Museum and became a very good friend of his--Chewon Kim. His daughter stayed with us quite a bit when she was studying at Harvard [University] later on. Indeed, the army was routing trucks through the compound, and you could see things knocked off the sides of some of the stone pagodas and so forth. The museum was closed. It was in pitiful shape. They had no heat whatsoever; it was as cold as a barn. Everything was really a mess. So I wrote a very strong report and reported to General Lerch's office. Hodges I didn't see. Lerch I did. I gave him a copy of the report and he seemed rather upset. I said, "Well, General, I can only report what I have actually seen. I think this is very bad, and it's going to reflect on the American army. It's really very unfair to the Koreans, and it can be prevented very easily by just not using this enclosure with trucks." And he said they'd see what they could do. But he made no commitments and was not very cooperative. I went back to Tokyo and gave my report to general headquarters. I later heard from Gifford, the man in the foreign services who had complained, that they had indeed made the Dukso Palace area off limits and had stopped the more obvious things. We got continual reports and rumors from Korea about a lot of artistic looting. Not registered material, not things that were in the museum. That was in terrible shape, but enclosed and protected. But there was a clear distinction between Korea, which was a military government, and Japan, which was under GHQ [general headquarters] and was a kind of military government, but it was set up with different departments and ministries, or sections, which corresponded to the ministries in Japan. It was clearly a long-term government, interlocking thing. In Korea the army was there and everybody else had to just watch out. That was very illuminating. Then in the fall of 1947, there had been a constant stream of complaints from the Chinese mission, which was the Chiang Kai-shek Kuomintang, then representing China-- Constant complaints from the Chinese that the Japanese had looted important Chinese art from the mainland and that they were hidden in imperial locations, including the Shosoin. Basically, it's almost a hundred percent ludicrous on the face of it. But they were very persistent, and finally I got a direct order from GHQ--from General [Courtney] Whitney, acting on orders directly from [Douglas] MacArthur--that I was to make an inspection of the

imperial repository in Nara, the Shosoin, as soon as was convenient. Now, do you know about the Shosoin?

GARDNER

Tell me.

LEE

The Shosoin is an imperial repository. It's a huge log building divided in three sections. It was built in 756 A.D. to house all the works of art and goods in the imperial household of the late emperor Shomu, who died in 753. It was given as an offering to the Buddha at Todai-ji, the great Buddha which the emperor Shomu had caused to be built. It had been in there ever since that time, undisturbed, complete, thousands of objects. It was one of the great wonders of Japan. It was never even looked at before the Meiji era. But after Meiji there was a growth of interest in ancient art in Japan. With the development of the national treasure system and the cultural property protection section of the Ministry of Education, it had become a great, great treasure. It belonged to the imperial household, the emperor's property, but housed in the original storehouse at Todai-ji. And gradually after World War I, the practice began-- They always aired the Shosoin, in order to let fresh air circulate through, in the fall for a period of a week, and the practice grew up of inviting distinguished heads of state--diplomats, whoever, but very high people, the highest in the hierarchy--to the fall opening to view what was available in the interior. There were shelves and shelves and boxes and boxes. But they'd get out a few pieces, and that was an absolute-- Anybody who was interested in art would give their eyeteeth to do that, but very few people got in. Sir Percival David and people like that, the British ambassador, went together in '34 I think it was. But it was sacrosanct. The Japanese never saw it. The ordinary Japanese people--or even art people, professors and so on-- never saw it. There was a catalog published, black and white illustrations, some color. But I got the order I was supposed to inspect the Shosoin. I then went to the Ministry of Education and said, "I got this order. I know and you know exactly what the problems are, and I know and you know that the Chinese are just making trouble and that there ain't anything in there that is looted. There are a lot of Chinese objects there, but they're eighth century and they've been there ever since the eighth century. But let's get on with it. I certainly am going to be

delighted to make the inspection, because it will be the first time in a lifetime that anything like this has ever happened." So they understood. They never had allowed any electrical stuff in the Shosoin. When they had the openings, it was just the natural light which happened to filter in from the three doors of the three sections. So Swede Henderson got a big army truck with a generator; we got a big army truck with a generator. We got a whole battery of lights and things. Some of the Japanese couldn't wait to cozy up and get in on the act. I had Professor [Rikichiro] Fukui, the great scholar from Tokyo University, and I made sure our friend Osamu Takata, our inspector in Nara, got included, and there were other people. So we had an inspection, and not for just one day. I had three days in the Shosoin, ten hours a day, with lights. This was a miracle of all miracles. I encouraged them. I said, "Now that this has happened, which sort of marks a change--" I encouraged them to have an exhibition of the Shosoin material for the public. They were keen to do it too, as part of the general trying to rebuild some degree of pride and also rebuild the image of the emperor and the imperial household. I think I inspected that thing in early October. Shortly after that--I think it was late October or early November--they had the first public showing of a selection of some thirty objects from the Shosoin in the Nara National Museum. Since that time they've done it every year. They've even had one or two showings in Tokyo. They select thirty or forty objects. The Nara railroad station is approximately three miles downhill, west of the center of town and of the museum. I think the exhibition was opened for three weeks. Every day there was a double or triple or quadruple line of people stretching from the Nara museum down to the railroad station--three miles long--shuffling through this exhibition. It was unbelievable. Now, that comes in with the heading of both protection of cultural property and getting the Chinese off the backs of Japanese. The Chinese followed that debacle by having a showing at their own embassy of some stuff they dug up that they claimed was looted Chinese cultural property. It was the most awful bunch of late jade screens and real sort of rich Chinese taste, which didn't convince anybody about anything. But that shows that positive side. One other positive thing, in terms of the democratization program, was we encouraged very definitely--it was our prodding--Professor Fukui to agree to head a committee of Japanese scholars to produce an exhibition in the Osaka area of Chinese and Japanese works of arts from private collections. They had never been seen, a lot of them. The Hakutsuru

Museum, a private museum which is one of the best private museums in the area, agreed to show and to be the venue for the exhibition. Fukui took charge and had a few people to help him. He was a very prestigious figure. He was an older gentleman, and that gave it a stamp of panache that it needed. They had this exhibition and it was a big success, with a catalog. And again, crowds and crowds of people came. Since that time, the holding of exhibitions and the opening of private museums and the holding of private as well as public exhibitions has increased--along with the rest of the world--in Japan a great deal. Before the war there weren't that many real special exhibitions, except at a place like the Tokyo exhibition hall or occasionally at the national museums. But now it's a regular practice. That exhibition, I think, was certainly the first of any of the material of the Osaka region. It included national treasures and important art objects and lots of things like that. So that was another sort of positive step for the democratization program.

GARDNER

Were you in touch with the people who were doing the same thing in Europe?

LEE

Not much. The Japan office that Howard went to, as the first officer in charge of arts and monuments in Japan, was set up by three art scholars. Two of them had been in the European theater and had been in the Arts and Monuments [Division], which was a military organization in Europe. They were all officers, not regular, but reserve. They came to Japan right after the occupation began, inspected the situation in Tokyo, and advised on a setup and staffing for an arts and monuments section in Japan. It was George [L.] Stout, who was a conservator for the Fogg [Art] Museum, and I think he was a captain in the army, and Tommy [Thomas C.] Howe, who had been one of the officers with the European Arts and Monuments Division, and then Laurence Sickman, who was then the curator of oriental art in Nelson Gallery of Art in Kansas City. He had been stationed in Chungking and the other town where we had air force bases in southwest China, Kunming. Larry knew Chinese art very, very well and certainly something about Japanese art. They made the arrangement of the organizational setup of the Tokyo, Japan, office. I think Larry would have been the first head of that office, but my understanding is that he said that he didn't want to do it. He was not terribly interested in

Japanese art first of all, and he wanted to get back to Kansas City and so on. He suggested Howard Hollis. So that's how Howard happened to get taken into it. It was a continuing program of checking and helping and doing what we could with a very small American force. After Howard left, there were two inspectors, myself--that's three--and one secretary. We had the two Japanese-- Very small, as was the religion section, which was right next door to us. They had charge of the dismantling of the state Shinto system, among other things. It was a lot to do, but it was an absolute one chance in a hundred years or more. I'm sure I'm right in saying that I was able in that two-year stretch to see more original Japanese works of art, especially registered, important materials--Chinese or Japanese and Korean--than anybody ever has before or since, simply because of that position I had. If I wanted to see something, all I had to do was call down to our Japanese representative in a prefecture and say, "Set up a meeting at such and such a time. I'm going to inspect registered objects at so and so and so." And there they were all laid out for us when we got there. Of course our Japanese inspectors were usually scholars or museum people, and they were delighted, because they hadn't seen this material either. Before the war, the old art materials were really in the control of the upper, upper strata. The ordinary people didn't get a chance to see anything. Even scholars would become experts in the field without having seen some of the most important things in the field. So they were keen on doing this too. There was no way anyone could see all this material. And I was educated. I knew a lot more about Chinese art and Indian art when I went to Japan than I did about Japanese art. I knew very little about Japanese art. But I really worked at it, and I can say that I was pretty well educated on the subject by the time I got out. A two-year seminar with all of Japan as your laboratory-- I should have paid the government for the opportunity.

GARDNER

Did you ever compare notes later with some of the people who were in Europe?

LEE

When the Association of Art Museum Directors would meet, of course, there were people like Tommy Howe and Jim [James J.] Rorimer and George Stout. There were at least fifteen or twenty well-known American scholars who were

either in universities or in museums who had been in the European operation. The Nazis had a systematic looting system, and that meant lots of work and lots of trouble. The Japanese did not, and it was a much smaller operation. Also the Japanese, in general, take very good care of their registered material. Of course the fact that the American military deliberately avoided the bombing of Kyoto and Nara meant that the vast proportion of the very early great material was not in serious harm or danger. That was not per se true, certainly in the Tokyo area or Nagoya area. So that helped cut it down. Plus, Europe is a much bigger area and involved many more countries and more objects too. So the office was much smaller in Japan than it was in the big military operation in Europe. Now, the third or fourth example that I want to cite specifically, which is a tragic one, but one I think deserves to be in the record-- It's already going to be in the record in an article being written by someone else, who interviewed me for the magazine *Orientalism*, at some point in the not too distant future. But one of the things that was going on when we arrived in Japan, at the most important single site in all Japan-- The seventh-century temple complex at Horyuji, the earliest complete wooden buildings in the world, also with dozens of great early sculptures and hundreds of other objects and great things. It has the same status as the Vatican collection or something like that. And in the Golden Hall, the main building-- seventh century--there are on the walls paintings dating from about 710 [A.D.] which are world famous. The Ministry of Education had employed a group of Japanese artists to make copies of the wall paintings. They had taken the sculptures off the altar platform and moved them to the warehouse and had moved in electric lights and facilities for the artists, and this team was doing the copies, basically one artist per wall unit. There were a lot of lights and wires and so forth. The artists in the wintertime were very cold. There was no heat, except that they had heat pads for their little platforms that they knelt on and sat on while they were painting this thing in front of them. They also had a couple of hot plates for heating tea, which was absolutely *de rigueur*. You can't live in Japan without tea. I got more and more nervous about all this stuff going on and I kept thinking about the houses in Tokyo burning--the modern wooden houses. So finally, all on my own, I just went down there and I went over everything and I watched everybody and I made a chart up. They'd all started at the same time, sometime before we arrived, in mid '46 I think. And yet one man was 90 percent done. Another man 80 percent done. I had

them all charted out. One was only 15 percent done, and most of them were less than half done. I talked a little bit to a couple of the artists, and I talked to my friend Takata especially. He said that this was a Japanese WPA [Works Progress Administration] project. Some of them were working hard and some of the others were not. So finally I drew up a memo--I remember it was two pages--and I sent it to Colonel Nugent just before I left in June of 1948. Now, my successor was James Marshall Plumer, my professor from Michigan, who was still a mysterious-East-type Coomaraswamyite. I had long since passed-- I wasn't doing that anymore. I sent a memo to Colonel Nugent with a copy for the file. I said, "I strongly urge that the work on the copies being made of the frescoes in Horyuji be pushed by pressure, heavy pressure, from both this division and from the Ministry of Education, so that work is completed, by the latest, in--" I'm not exactly sure about all this chronology. I left in June '48, and I think I gave the time limit as January 1, 1949. That gave them six months, from June 1, to complete the job. But the whole place burned down in February of '49. The frescoes were almost totally destroyed. The Kondo [Golden Hall] was severely damaged but has since been restored and rebuilt in February of 1949.

GARDNER

Oh, dear. And they hadn't finished it?

LEE

Of course they hadn't finished--they were still there.

**1.9. TAPE NUMBER: V, SIDE ONE
APRIL 8, 1992**

LEE

Jim [James Marshall Plumer] was very inclined, very much in sympathy with, and mixed up with the Mingei folk art movement in Japan. Its leader was Soetsu Yanagi. We may have had our faults. We were sympathetic to the Japanese certainly, but we did try to be objective and tried to see that everything was done fairly with sort of equal time for all parties. Jim was inclined to think the Japanese knew better how to do things than we would, which in many things maybe they do. But I don't think that enough pressure

was brought to bear. It should have been brought to bear, and I feel, just as a matter of historical accuracy and on the record, that we have to recognize that there is some American responsibility for the tragic events of February '49. It's all water over the dam, but-- The Japanese were responsible in the sense that they continued to permit those artists to do that and to have unsafe electrical conditions. The fire was determined to have originated in a heating element of a heating pad in one of the artist's platforms. But there is a degree of American responsibility, because they didn't press hard enough to accomplish the stated purpose of that memorandum.

GARDNER

Is the article that's being done strictly on that event?

LEE

No. It's just part of a general article by friends of ours in Japan, Professor [Howard] Rogers and his wife Mary Anne [Rogers]. She did an interview with me two years ago in Kamakura, generally, just about Japan. That's one of the things that I think is going to be in that. I don't know, we'll see. Other significant things-- Oh, for instance, as I told you, we--Charles Gallagher and Captain [Alfred] Popham and I and a lot of other people, friends of ours who were in the government section who were interested in Japanese art-- collected in a modest way while we were in Japan, being careful to avoid anything that was in any way official or registered. On two occasions where I discovered or found a piece and where I was requested by a museum-- In the case of one I found a very nice red and green Tz'u-chou piece in Osaka. Yukio Yashiro was the dean of all the Japanese art historians and had studied under [Bernard] Berenson in Italy and had written a book on Botticelli. He was a good friend of ours. He said he would love to have that piece for the new museum he was developing outside of Nara for the Nippon Kinki Railroad. I said, "Take it, it's yours. Just give me what I paid for it and you can have it." And another case there was a piece I bought up in Tokyo. It was a marvelous, very important Chinese celadon. I traded in a lot of the painted wares I had gotten in order to get it because I thought it was so wonderful. Ten days after I bought it, the dealer I bought it from--who I still know; he is still alive--called me up and said the Tokyo National Museum was kind of upset, that they wished they could have had that piece, though they hadn't seen it first. I said,

"Let them have it. Just give me back the stuff I traded. Let them have it. I don't want to take anything that they want." But it was fun on Saturdays and Sundays to go around to the different dealers and see what was on the market. Some of the Japanese were collecting too. Everything was very inexpensive everywhere then, but especially in Japan. At the same time I got to be very good friends with one dealer whose name was [Inosuke] Setsu. He had barely any English. I had very little Japanese. But we communicated pretty well. I used to visit him every Saturday in his little place down not far from Ginza. He would show me stuff and tell me about it and explain techniques and so on. He was a very, very knowledgeable man. He had a wonderful collection of his own of early material, and I learned an awful lot from him. We tried to save his first son, who had a big illness. We were able to get some drugs flown in from the states for us and helped him and he was very, very, very grateful. His other son has become his successor and is a big dealer in Tokyo now and we know them very well. We've always had a good time with them. So we were able to both get many, many friends and we also were able to learn an awful lot. I think the proof of the pudding-- We left Japan in '48 and went to Seattle, and Ruth [Ward Lee] and I didn't go back to Japan until, I don't know, the mid or late fifties. My first trip when I got to [the] Cleveland [Museum of Art] in '52 that took me outside of the United States was in '53 to Europe. My first trip to Europe, which they let me do, paid for my way. I had to go by myself, because Ruth had another child. Just before that she had three daughters to take care of. We went back together in I think it was '60. We landed at Haneda, because they didn't have the new airport, Narita. We had left in '48. All our friends then had no cars and they were scrambling around. We arrived in Haneda, and there were about fifteen or sixteen cars. Big cars. And there were the Masudas and the Setsus and the Haras and the Hirotas, Yashiro, [Osamu] Takata. They were all there at an ungodly hour, too; it was very early in the morning. And we couldn't pick any one person. There was no way we could say who we were going to ride into town with. Fortunately, my friend Yuji Abe had been to Cleveland a couple of times before. He is a mounter, mounts paintings. His grandfather and his father worked for the imperial household mounting paintings, and he also is a leading dealer in contemporary Japanese prints. He had a little car there and he was alone, and so we went with him. We said, "He's very close to us, to where we're going." But we've always kept up a very good, firm relationship

with almost all of them. They gradually have been passing away, but we still look upon them as our best friends.

GARDNER

Well, I guess now you move on to Seattle.

LEE

Well, the link between Japan and Seattle is very easy to make and is very spectacular. Dick [Richard Fuller] sent me a letter and a check about a month and a half or two months before we were to leave to go to Seattle. He said, "Here's some money." It was \$5,000, a check for \$5,000. He said, "Here's some money. Spend it as you wish. See what you come back with for the museum." So I did. I went to all my dealer friends and said, "Seattle Art Museum wants to do something. I've got some money. Let's see what we can do." We were able to get for the Seattle Art Museum on the open art market in Japan-- One or two pieces I bought from private collectors that I knew, and they were sold through the dealer who shipped everything, Junkichi Mayuyama. But they were almost all from the open market. There were, I think, eleven or maybe twelve pieces in all. Five thousand dollars. There was a ninth-century wood sculpture of Bishamonten, which is quite (subsequently, the remains of that were registered), one of three known rolls, which had been cut up by the owner; a section of another scroll dated 1278, the famous in Japan, not registered, from the Masuda collection and five feet high; a section of a famous late twelfth-century handscroll of the scenes of hell, Jigoku Zoshi Kitano Tenjin Engi; the section of another scroll showing a battle scene of the thirteenth century; a section of another scroll of the life of Priest Honen, also thirteenth century; a Chinese gilt bronze figure of a bodhisattva dated 485 A.D.; a small gilt bronze altarpiece with Amitaba in the center and two figures and guardians, a six- or seven-figure altarpiece, T'ang Dynasty; a Chinese porcelain, blue and white, what is called a "pilgrim-flask shape," marked in the reign of Hsüan-Te, early fifteenth century, Ming dynasty; a small, early Chinese bronze figure of a dragon woman, dating from the fourth century B.C. And I think maybe that's it. That was all for \$5,000. One turned out to be a fake.

GARDNER

Which--?

LEE

The dragon woman. It was recommended by the greatest Japanese scholar in the field, Sueji Umehara. When I got it to Seattle and began to look at it carefully with a view to publishing an article on it, I began to get worried, and I finally scratched it and took it apart. The head was genuine, the dragon was genuine, but from a belt buckle. The rest of it was made up. And the proof of it was twofold: one, there was sand inside it to give it weight because it was hollow. The construction was hollow. And there were fragments of a Shanghai newspaper inside too, which had been used as a sort of stuffing to keep the sand in place before they covered it. Umehara refused to admit it was wrong until finally I sent, through Mayuyama, a letter with photographs of the newspaper and the sand and so forth. And I said, "If you don't at least confirm that this is wrong--I don't blame anyone; I just want you to recognize this is wrong--I'm going to publish this in a Japanese newspaper." And he sent a nice letter and one to Mayuyama saying the piece was wrong and so forth. But everything else has just been-- And I mean, today-- There were four or five of those--any one of them would today cost as much as a half a million or even a million dollars. It was just a unique time. Dick, of course, was delighted. It made a point that now this was going to be a wonderful time to try to do something more about Far Eastern art at the Seattle Art Museum. So when we went back, Dick had picked out a house for us. See, I asked him to get us something so we wouldn't have to live in a hotel or something. I explained, and of course dear Dick-- He was a great friend of ours, but he was not terribly practical. He got us a corner house right near the museum and on a street that all the young, upbeat, upscale socialites were living on. You could stand on a staircase--this ladder going up into the attic--and look out and you could see Mount Rainier beneath the cracks that were there. I mean, it was pretty much totally uninsulated. It was small but it was pretty good, and it was all right. Dick was very sweet to arrange to get it there. We paid for it over a period of time, and we really were settled in and it was a unique situation. But the thing about the opportunity for Seattle was that there was one head, Dick Fuller, one supplier of money, Dick Fuller, and we could act immediately, within minutes, if we wanted to. We also had a couple of trustees: Emma Stimson, who was a great friend of ours and whose husband [Thomas Stimson] had

been killed in a plane crash some years before. Lumber business. And there was Mrs. Frederick, whose husband [Donald E. Frederick] had been president of Frederick and Nelson, the biggest department store in Seattle. And he died. His widow lived out in the Highlands, which was the place for anyone with a lot of money to live. There was Norman Davis, who was a brewer, a very, very nice man who was interested in classical art. There were a lot of interesting people. There was Mark Tobey, Morris Graves, Guy Anderson, Kenneth Callahan, who we knew very well--all painters. So it was a very sympathetic place to be. Dick had a couple of dealer friends. One was a man named Kleikamp who was originally from Holland. And then there was the Indian dealer in New York, [Nasli] Heeramaneck. Both Kleikamp and Heeramaneck were always short of money at the end of the year and they would come fly out or take the train out to Seattle with a suitcase full of stuff. And Dick would say, "I'll take this and this" and "How much can you give me?" So it was a very active place. Dick was an insatiable collector. We just started making hay as fast as we could.

GARDNER

What was he like?

LEE

Dick was average height. A dolichocephalic skull--very, very round--and bald on top. He was a geologist, Ph.D. in geology. Distinguished geologist. He was chairman of the geological committee that studied that volcano that erupted outside of Mexico City while we were there. I forget the name of it. [Paricutin] He was very absentminded. When he was in deep thought or in a state of some annoyance, he had a habit of humming in a very piercing kind of drone. He was a very sweet man. He didn't get married until shortly before we left in '52. He was a bachelor and lived with his mother at a house not far from where we lived, very close to the museum. She was Scotch and her name was Margaret [McTavish] Fuller. She was called "M. E." Always called "M. E." for her initials. She was very short, white hair, tiny, tiny figure, and always sat with a little footstool--she was so small--whether she was seated at the table or whether she was seated in the living room. She liked collecting too. Her husband had been a medical doctor in Philadelphia.

GARDNER

Oh, really?

LEE

He had made great success and he invested well, I gather. And he had been to Japan. He took his son Dick and M. E. I think they went to Japan before World War I. Is that possible? Let's see. Dick, in '48, would have been about fifty-two or so. That would take him back to an 1898 birth. Yes. So that would be just before World War I. Dick had contracted appendicitis on the way to Nikko and was operated on by his brother in a factory hospital room or factory medical room on the route up to Nikko and fortunately survived. But they were interested in the Orient from the beginning. Dick, because of his geological training, had first collected snuff bottles, small jades, some inro and netsuke. But small objects. And then had branched out from that into porcelains and then into stonewares, ceramics, and gradually into sculptures and so forth, and had built a very good oriental collection. He was interested also in ancient art, Persian art, that kind of thing. He was not much interested in European art, in part because he thought it was too expensive and in part because the emphasis in European art has always been on the so-called "fine arts" and he was much more object oriented. They made a wonderful combination. We went to their house many, many times for dinner and went to quite a few things together. Dick always had martinis, as I do, before dinner. He made very good ones and he made a lot of them. At dinner, we always had some kind of soup first, usually a clear soup or something like that, and M. E. would put in the sherry. She would just ladle it in. I've never seen anyone put so much sherry in soup in my life. She was very bright, very chipper, and she was well into her seventies, I think, when we first went there. She died in her late eighties. She could be irascible, but we got along fine. Emma Stimson paid for some of the things in the group of things that I bought in Japan for them, and she later bought other things. She had a very good eye. She was just marvelous. It was a very nice place to be. It's great outdoor country, and I hadn't had much chance in the last ten or twelve years to do any of my fishing business.

GARDNER

Well, I'm surprised that you didn't go fishing in Japan.

LEE

I did. Oh, I did! I forgot. I went fishing on the emperor's trout stream up near Nikko, which was a very interesting experience. Very good fishing too. The curator at the museum was the painter Kenneth Callahan. The museum was very informally run. Dick was there and I was there. If we were going to change the gallery, move sculpture, do anything, Dick and I would go up-- Dick loved to wrestle with heavy sculptures. He made a point of honor to try to get the heaviest ones. Oh, yes. We had no guards. There were no guards in the museum. If we were going to change a gallery or have an exhibition, we all went up and pitched in. It was just like a family affair. I was the only professional person on the staff. We had Kenneth Callahan as curator. There was another artist who acted as an assistant. There was a very nice superintendent, Mr. Faris, and an assistant superintendent, Mr. Hazlitt, who later became superintendent. They were good carpenters. We did it all, did everything ourselves. It was very good training because, if you get the idea, you go to a big museum and everything is done sort of by the book and done by "utility men." You don't get the kind of experience and direct knowledge that I think is necessary or at least useful. Kenneth Callahan had a place up on the Stillaguamish River in the mountains, a log cabin. He and his family went up there all the time, and during the summer, he was up there continuously. We went up there off and on. There was an old man who owned twenty acres--that's a quarter of a section--just a little bit above the Callahans' on the Stillaguamish River. And twenty acres could be bought for \$1,000, so I bought it. We bought twenty acres and we owned-- Almost all the twenty acres was on one side of the Stillaguamish River, but it crossed the Stillaguamish, so we had fishing rights.

GARDNER

Your very own place to stand.

LEE

My very own trout stream. That was a good, good river. And I built, with my own two hands and the help of my wife and my two children--three children then--a cabin. There was a cedar mill just a mile and a half away where we could get cut cedar for \$25 a thousand feet and we could get finished cedar for not much more. So we built a cedar-outside, board-and-batten cabin. Inside it was smooth cedar, and Emma Stimson gave us oak flooring. So we

had a beautiful oak floor. I got an expert in to build a fireplace because I didn't think I was up to that. I laid the lead pipe for the water from the spring down to the house, and we had a nifty place up there which we finished and began to use not long before we left. It was just very, very nice. Dick was very upset that I didn't like to fly. I wouldn't fly and my wife wouldn't let me fly then. So twice a year I'd get the train, go to New York, and spend a week and go to dealers and so on. Twice a year, I'd drive down to San Francisco. There were some good dealers in oriental art down there, and also sometimes I saw [William R.] Valentiner down in Los Angeles, because there began to be a few dealers there. We really developed that collection. The four years I was there, we really made great headway and gave it a strength, particularly in painting and sculpture, that it had never had and added to its strength in ceramics and other things. The one thing, as I said, that they didn't have was European art. The occasion arose to do something about both of these things, but it was a little bit like pulling teeth. Mrs. Frederick, who had paid for some of the nice oriental acquisitions, expressed the strong desire to have a memorial for her husband. She was quite religious, and I suggested that the museum had nothing really important in medieval art and that maybe we could get a case of material together that would represent the best goldsmiths' work, enamel, and sculpture, and maybe even medieval textiles. I got together the material from Joe [Joseph] Brummer in New York, Arnold Seligman Rey, and one piece from Duveen [Brothers]. It all came to \$10,000. She was very keen about it, and she said okay, she'd do it. She came to the museum that day to pay for it so I could send the checks out to the different dealers. She came into the office and sat down, and she was so nervous and it was such an effort. It took her three attempts before she could get the checks right. The third check she finally got it right. The first two she made mistakes in the figure each time. So that gave us some medieval material. Dikran Kelekian was the other dealer we got stuff from for the medieval group. One or two of the pieces may not have worked out over the years, but by and large, I think that it was a good group. The Gothic head from the collection was superb. Then I would scrounge around when I was in the East. I found a nice Italian baroque painting at Charlie Childs's in Boston which is by-- Would you hand me the Seattle [Art Museum] handbook? Charlie Childs had this very nice painting by Jacopo Amigoni of Mercury and Argus, which is really a beauty, and it was, I think, \$200. And I got from Germain Seligman for the museum a very good Venetian

view by Luca Carlevaris of the Riva degli Schiaroni. That, I think, was \$1,800 or \$1,500. One could, in the late forties and early fifties, get very good baroque pictures for nothing. So those Dick would occasionally pay for so we could have the beginnings of a European painting collection. Oh, yes, there was a very nice G. M. Crespi from Schaeffer Galleries which was \$900. I remember that. But then I suggested to Dick that maybe Seattle could qualify for a Kress [Foundation] collection of Italian paintings. He was very reluctant to agree to take it up, partly because he really was not interested in painting in general, European painting in particular. It was a strong degree of justifiable pride in what he had accomplished--the Fuller family had accomplished--in Seattle, and the idea of bringing in some commercial type like Mr. [Samuel H.] Kress from the East to make a big splash may not have appealed to him too much. But I finally persuaded him to let me to try to do something about it, and I opened negotiations with the Kress people. At that time, Rush [H.] Kress was the principal and his partner, as it were, and really the executive for the Kress Foundation was Guy Emerson, who lived down in Greenwich Village in New York. And the chief restorer for the Kress Foundation was Mario Modestini. A scholar who worked for the Kress Foundation was Suida, Wilhelm Suida, who was an old-fashioned European-type scholar, who knew Valentiner quite well, incidentally. His daughter, Bertina Suida, had married Bob [Robert L.] Manning, and he collected and was an expert in baroque painting. So basically, those were the people we were dealing with. I went to them saying that Seattle had nothing and I thought they could be a big help to us. They said they would try to help. I told them I'd like to be able to, in a fairly small compass--perhaps fifteen, plus or minus, works--be able to give people some idea of Italian painting from the trecento to the baroque. Then time elapsed. They sent me a list of things. I knew some of these things from having looked at the National Gallery [of Art] and looked at some of the other Kress collections that had been given to different places. They sent me a list which was a very sorry list. Some of the collections they had given out I thought were very sorry collections. So I wrote back, and the copy of the letter is still in the file in Seattle. I tried to be as diplomatic as possible, but I really said, "This isn't good enough." Furthermore, I said, "I think it would be important to add a few pieces to what you already have, to buy a few pieces for the Seattle group that would give it a certain individuality and panache. For instance, the Paul Drey Gallery has-- You have a Tiepolo sketch of a ceiling. He [Paul Drey] has got the

ceiling, which has been transferred from plaster to canvas and it's suffered a bit, but still, it's the ceiling and it's very good. It would be marvelous to have the sketch, which is not on your list, which we would like to have with the ceiling to make something special." And then I said, "There is no sculpture in this. I think that we ought to have some sculpture, and Germain Seligman has a very nice marble sculpture of a cupid which is attributed to Giovanni di Bologna. It's very good quality and very, very close to him at the least and they're not expensive." Well, they fiddled and diddled around, and finally they did it. They let me come to their storage place, which was down in Pennsylvania at some estate where they had their operation. I went through their storage and all their paintings and made some new selections, and we got together a group. I think it was maybe nineteen or even twenty-five. Dick was reasonably pleased, but we got the smallest gallery in the building to put this in, to shoehorn this material in. It worked pretty well. The ceiling looked very well. We closed off the gallery and went to work and we put the ceiling up. We put a partition to get a little more wall hanging space, and we finally got it done. The big day came when there was going to be the grand opening, and Rush Kress and Guy Emerson and Modestini came out. We had the opening and they looked at it and so forth, and then Dick had arranged, as a special treat, for a boat trip on Lake Washington. We all piled down there on the boat, and then Mr. Kress got me to one side and he said he thought the room was terrible: it was too crowded and he didn't like it at all. He thought he might just take the whole bunch of stuff away. I said, "Well, I sympathize, but you understand the difficulties that exist." He said he understood but he felt something had to be done. I said, "Well, let's not get this thing all in an uproar immediately. I would be very grateful if you would indicate that you think it's too small. But please try and make it in a way so that there's room for negotiation and for development. Because this museum is never going to have anything unless we get this to start it off with in the European field. And though I'm interested in oriental art, I know a lot about European art and I know they need it. This Northwest area just doesn't understand the great European tradition because they haven't got any of it." So they finally-- By that time, I was ready to go to Cleveland. Dick worked with the foundation very cleverly. He said, "Well, maybe if you put a few more things in, we could get a bigger room." Finally, they added some very good stuff. They added a Rubens sketch, they added a big baroque bronze group by Soldani, and it's a very, very

credible thing now. It's now installed in the new building in ample space, and in the old building in a gallery which was twice the size of the one that it originally had. So it worked out finally. But it was a real hair-raiser.

GARDNER

You came there as assistant director and were promoted at one point to associate director. Was there a change in responsibility, or is that just a promotion of--?

LEE

That was just an excuse for a pay raise.

GARDNER

Was there a notion that you were going to succeed Fuller at some point? Was that ever part of a--?

LEE

Never discussed. Never discussed. We got along perfectly. It was just like a father and son kind of relationship. But we never discussed it.

GARDNER

With the course of today's conversation, we bridged the gap from your being a graduate student to your being responsible for purchasing lots of different kinds of work. What sorts of criteria did you use in buying things? And were they different for Asian and Western?

GARDNER

Well, I was taught by Howard [C.] Hollis and by some of the dealers that I came to know like Paul Mallon and Nasli Heeramaneck that the key thing was quality. I would agree with that, and I felt that basically. That was indeed what was taught at Harvard [University] and under Paul [J.] Sachs. And that's what everybody talked about in that generation in our museum. But the problem was I also had been taught by Tommy [Thomas] Munro about more objective and scientific ways of judging things, and I've been taught by anthropologists about context and so forth. Quality can be a very emotional thing. I mean, someone can just go into ecstasies about something and you look at it and you know it's a piece of rubbish. If you go see a dealer, a lot of dealers get terribly

enthusiastic about something and try to convince you that it's a great work of art and you know it's not. So this all has to be reconciled and made into some kind of a reasonable standard. At that time I began to develop my ideas-- which are not much different from a lot of other people's ideas, people I agree with, anyhow--that quality is indeed quality. There is such a thing as good, better, best, just as there is in athletics or sports, and it's important that you have quality. But quality exists in a context. It's quite pointless to try and compare the quality of a Chinese painting with a Western painting and quite pointless to try and compare the aims of Greek sculpture with the aims of African sculpture. So that the quality exists in context. Nevertheless, there is also such a thing as being trained in and apt for visual things. There are some people who study very hard and know an awful lot about something but who basically you would not trust with a five-dollar bill to go out and buy a good work of art. They just don't know it. In buying, for example, in Seattle oriental art-- For a while in that period in the late forties and early fifties where everything was fairly reasonable, you could insist upon absolute quality, which we did, basically, in the oriental field. Anything, especially that we paid any substantial sum for-- And a substantial sum for Dick Fuller was basically-- I mean, \$5,000 was about his top limit, and that had to be something spectacular. Now, that was not a lot of money even then, but it was something in the oriental field, as I tried to show you in the list of stuff I got in '48. But in the European field, you're just playing in a different ball game and you have to get-- Well, I remember very well when I was in New York at Schaeffer Galleries back in 1948 or '49, when I first went to Seattle, he had a very beautiful Rembrandt, King David with Harp, a small one, which subsequently was sold by Wildenstein [and Company] some years later to a New York collector for a million bucks. It was \$28,000, and he couldn't sell it in 1948 when it was \$28,000. Well, to Dick that was inconceivable. He said, "If that's the European field, I'm not going to fiddle with that. That's just too much." So in building the Seattle collection, for example, if I could buy a refined work by Luca Carlevaris--

**1.10. TAPE NUMBER: V, SIDE TWO
APRIL 8, 1992**

GARDNER

Now you get to finish the "if" clause.

LEE

If you can get a Carlevaris, a fine quality Carlevaris of an interesting subject, for \$1,600 and get the same quality, within his work, as a Canaletto, which cost \$50,000 at that time, the thing that was possible for Seattle was to get the best possible Carlevaris. So I didn't look for big names. I mean, I knew that things weren't possible. But we tried to get the best possible quality we could in smaller names. I think this kind of thing is constantly a problem for professionals in different museums, because in a big museum with lots of money you have one possibility for standards. In a university museum with not much money, you have another possibility for standards. Simply to stubbornly repeat over and over again, "We must have quality, the best, the finest" does not make any rational sense. You've got to balance and juggle and compare and constantly think about what is going to be best in terms of top quality within a given artistic context, which means what artist where and in the context of the museum. If you have a collection like Seattle, for example, that has a splendid oriental collection--in-depth--and you have a European collection that is just nothing by comparison, you can't insist upon getting a spectacular Rubens or Rembrandt when you know you can't get it. And if you settle for a third- or a fourth-rate Rubens or Rembrandt or a questionable Rubens or Rembrandt, then you've done the artist who painted it a disservice. You've done the people who come in the museum to look at it a disservice. On the other hand, if you get some really good quality pictures of interesting subjects and important in the context of their time and their place by lesser artists that will make things clear and, at the same time, provide some kind of aesthetic response, that's what you ought to do. So you have to have some degree of flexibility, and you have to constantly keep thinking in terms of both the context that the work of art was created in and the context in which it's going to be placed. In that way, you can gradually build a very fine collection. Once, for example, "Chick" [A. Everett] Austin got started at Hartford [Wadsworth Atheneum]--I think I mentioned him earlier--getting some good baroque paintings, he had a context in which he could get more baroque paintings and produced something that was really meaningful to a visitor, whether a layman or a scholar. On the other hand, if you go to lots of collections-- I shan't name them right now, but if you go to collections that

were formed usually by private persons where they're buying big names and you see one picture after another which is ruined and repainted or seriously damaged, badly restored, or a painting that is a very doubtful attribution, you just get bored out of your skull. It just is terrible. And yet there are a lot of people who still think that's the way they ought to buy. At Seattle, for example, I bought several pieces that were damaged pieces but that were (1) extremely rare and (2) extremely high quality. So the damage did not weigh much if you weighed those things and the fact that the price would be such that the museum could afford it. I remember this one here-- At C. T. [Ching-tsi] Loo's, one of the biggest dealers, there was a Ch'eng-hua reign, underglaze blue and overglaze green, small vase with a scroll decoration. There are only two other examples in the world. One is in England. It's damaged. One is in the Palace Museum in Taipei. It's complete, intact, perfect. This one had damage which could be easily restored. And it was \$200. Well, you buy it. And now everybody's keen about it because no more have turned up and it's indeed a very rare thing. It's one of the most beautiful examples of one of the highest periods in Chinese porcelain. Each work of art is an individual. You can't talk about classes. Each work of art is an individual thing. And you just have to judge it and think about it both emotionally and rationally and then come to some kind of a reasonable decision. This can be a matter of time. There are some things you can make up your mind and buy immediately. Usually this is true in objects more than in painting. Painting you really have to sort of test yourself and keep thinking about it. I think, in general, I would say that if you "sin in haste and repent at leisure," it's usually with a European painting or something of that nature. If you follow "He who hesitates is lost," [laughter] you usually will do better if you're in a world of objects. Jakob Rosenberg wrote an article on quality. I've written an article on quality for a book that was published just a while ago, a series of essays on quality in different fields. I think it exists. I do not agree with a contemporary deconstructionist type of thinking which places everything in a relative scale with no possible standards of quality. I just don't think that's right, because to me it's as the Declaration of Independence says, that we hold these things to be self-evident. I think it's self-evident that there's such a thing as quality and that art is very much concerned with that question as well as others.

GARDNER

Thank you.

LEE

Does that answer it?

GARDNER

It certainly does.

LEE

Now where do we go?

GARDNER

Well, we're in Seattle. Let me ask you one thing about Seattle. Since you brought it up in contrasting Cleveland and Detroit-- Was Seattle--a private museum--the model of Cleveland?

LEE

Yes.

GARDNER

It didn't have city--?

LEE

No. No city running. No, no. It was a private museum. And Dick was so disinterested in attendance figures that he insisted to the architect that the public toilets had to be on the outside of the museum. Not inside. For most museums, the one thing they wanted-- They want all those facilities that would pull people in, quote, "even if they don't go to the museum," on the inside.

GARDNER

Just they push the counter.

LEE

Yes. They push the counter, of course. [laughter] Now, Dick was unique and--

GARDNER

Has that changed in Seattle? Or is Seattle now--?

LEE

It's now much more like most museums. They're more homogeneous than they used to be. It used to be you could walk into a new museum and sort of just look and you could almost sense the flavor of the museum and know what kind of a museum you were in. Not that one was necessarily better than the other, but its distinctive tone as it were. Now it's very difficult sometimes to walk in and say, "Well, where am I? If it's Tuesday, it must be Brussels." They are all very much homogenized. One or two other things about Seattle that give you some idea of flavor and all that sort of thing, and they're fairly significant events: We acquired from Japan a very beautiful lacquer box, which is in this book [the museum handbook], I'm pretty sure. Look, it's labeled now "Gift of Mrs. Donald E. Frederick, '51-'78." I think it was about \$5,000. But it's the finest early Japanese lacquer outside Japan. A year later or so, Mayuyama cabled me and said he had this long section of The Deer Scroll by Koetsu and Sotatsu, which is one of the most famous things and was not registered. Miracle. Was I interested? I said, "Absolutely." I said, "How much?" He said, "\$5,000." I said, "Reserve it right now and I'll get back to you by cable." I went to Dick and I showed him the books. What happened was this scroll was all one complete thing, and the dealer, Mayuyama, got it and somebody persuaded him to cut it in half. So there was the end half with the signature and seal, and the first half was then cut again for tea ceremony fragments. They like to hang fragments in the tokonoma, so the first half of the scroll was broken up. The second half was still intact, and we could have it for \$5,000. I went to Dick and Dick said, "Oh, it's \$5,000. So much money and it's a painting. Are you sure it's okay?" I said, "Dick, for God's sake, this is an absolute once in a lifetime opportunity." He said, "No. I don't want to do it." I said, "Let me get back to you." Because my brain was working all the time. [laughter] I called up Mrs. Frederick and said, "I want to show you something. Can I come out right now?" I hopped in the car and I went out. I took a reproduction along. She had a pet Sicilian donkey that wandered around the house--she was very fey--and she loved this scroll of deer. I don't care if this was for the right reason or the wrong reason, but she loved it. And I said, "Look, you bought that box for the museum, and Dick was a little bit upset because he really likes that box. It's an object. But he doesn't like this painting.

Would you be willing to let him take over the box and you take the scroll? It's \$5,000, and we'll have your name on the scroll." So she said, "Yes." So I went tooling back to Dick and I said, "Dick, Mrs. Frederick will let you have the box if she can have the scroll. It will be a done deal." And Dick said, "Okay." So I cabled Mayuyama and told him to get it right over. He brought it over himself. Today, in Japan, that half of that scroll will be at least \$2,000,000 or \$3,000,000. It's one of the greatest Japanese painting and calligraphy scrolls outside Japan. But that was Dick with paintings. He just didn't vibrate to them. And Mrs. Frederick vibrated to small donkeys and deer [laughter] and it just was wonderful. The other little event that was kind of interesting as to how the Seattle museum was run-- We had no guards. One day, there was a theft in the museum--there were a couple of thefts of snuff bottles before, but Dick wouldn't have guards--and a scroll of a pair of not terribly important or expensive Chinese scroll paintings representing birds and flowers, hanging as a pair on either side of the case, was gone. Well, Dick was upset and I was upset. We thought it through. We thought there probably would be another effort, because it was one of the pair, and Dick just hung them up, put a nail in it and put a loop over it, and all you had to do to steal it was to roll it up and then just push it a little bit and quickly roll it up, stick it under your arm, and go. So we thought he would come back, and we thought he wouldn't come back immediately the first day but he might come back starting the second day. So we rigged up an electric line from the front door and a buzzer to a ventilator, to a button up in a ventilator system which had a grill that looked out on that wall. The second day, when we opened the museum, I climbed up and got in that damned thing and put some pillows on that, lay up there in the ventilating shaft, looking out. Sure enough, that day, about an hour, an hour and a half after we opened, this young man came in and looked around the gallery and then rolled up the other one. We had put up another painting in place of the other one so there wasn't a gap. He started out, and I pushed the button. The bell rang out at the entrance and they nabbed him. And we got back to the place where he had sold the other one, so we got the painting back and everything. But that's the way that museum operated.

GARDNER

Why didn't he want guards? Too expensive?

LEE

Partly, he didn't like the expense. Partly, he thought they were disreputable types, [laughter] anyhow, and they might be as much problem as the thief.

GARDNER

And besides, he didn't want people coming in anyway.

LEE

Well, yes, he did want people to come in, but he didn't want them if they came in for the wrong reasons. That's a so-called question of elitism, which it's perhaps not now the time to discuss, but it's something that is involved here. But later, perhaps.

GARDNER

Well, then I guess you get a telephone call from Cleveland at some point?

LEE

Oh, now, in the meantime-- This is important, you know. In the meantime, Howard Hollis had previously, in 1948, when I first went to Seattle-- Yes, he had called me up or he came through and he said he was going to go become a dealer. Howard liked wealth, and he didn't have much. He liked a sort of business society. He told me once he thought a Mack truck was more interesting and more beautiful than any work of art he'd ever seen. Yes. And he was going to become a dealer. He thought it was easy to make money-- things were so cheap and so on--and would I like to come in and work with him as a partner? I said, "No. I'm not a dealer type. I'm not interested. You go right ahead." He said, "I'm going to. I've got some backing from some friends in Cleveland. I've resigned as a curator there, and I'm going to become a dealer. I'm going to work partly with Mayuyama." I said, "Fine. Well, what are you going to do when you bring your stuff to this country? We have a custom service here [in Seattle]. Why don't you clear your stuff here? We can get the customs to agree to have stuff unpacked at the museum, where we have proper care to take care of these things and so on, and also then we'll have a look at what you've got and we can have a first refusal at your regular prices." So he thought that was a very good idea. We got some wonderful material from him because of that arrangement of having the material unpacked there. Incidentally, when Mayuyama first came to the states, he wanted to have an

exhibition. I said, "Why don't you have an exhibition in Seattle to show off the best selection of material you have for Japanese art?" And he said yes. So we had an exhibition of Mayuyama's collection, a dealer's collection. It's not quite such a kosher thing to do in terms of the big scene, but it was very effective. People loved it. He had some wonderful stuff, and we were able to buy from that exhibition a group of very important things at very, very modest prices. It worked out very well. Mayuyama arrived after we unpacked his things and hung them and everything was ready. He arrived the day before the opening and he walked in the gallery and looked around, and it was the first time I've ever seen this in a Japanese: he grabbed me around and burst into tears, sobbing away because he was so happy. [laughter] He was so unbelievable. But in the meantime, after Howard had left Cleveland to become a dealer, William [M.] Milliken had bought a few things from Howard, very good things. And he would call me up and say, "What do you think about that?" And then I would advise him just as a colleague. We had quite a few phone calls and then he said, "How would you like to come as a curator for oriental art? Howard shows no sign of wanting to come back or anything, and the trustees feel that there should be someone that-- It's not proper for me to be making decisions with a former curator on buying." This is quite true, and I didn't say anything about it. And I said, "Well, I think we like it--we like Cleveland--and certainly it's more active in terms of major purchases. Also, it's got a great European collection. I'd feel much more at home. I'd like to be somewhere where I can see some things. And it's got a better library, etc., etc. I have to say that Seattle is a wonderful city and the area around is beautiful. Wonderful but willy-nilly; it is remote. Psychologically, you feel that you are not quite in Western civilization, and we would like very much to get back to Cleveland." So we said we'd do it. Dick was rather unhappy, but he also was getting married, and we were not particularly au courant with the prospective bride. We thought this was the right time, so Ruth and I agreed and we went to Cleveland. We arrived in, I don't know, early fall '52 I think it was. So I'd gone back to where I had, in a sense, come from in graduate studies, and in a great museum with wonderful facilities. I thought this was a terrific opportunity and I set to work right away, you know, to try to further develop collections.

GARDNER

What kinds of changes did you perceive in the place at Cleveland? Had Milliken changed, for example, with the--? Now you've got over ten years.

LEE

No, basically it was very much the same. The library was run by two librarians who were always at each other's throats but couldn't live without each other. Books were still behind glass doors. It was very, very old-fashioned like Boston back in the twenties. The utility staff was all very much the same. The superintendent was sort of Irish-- What's the word I want without being too damaging? Well, he was a hail-fellow-well-met and played a lot of favorites and I don't think was on top of the job. The education department, Dr. Munro, still there, going along fine. Henry [Sayles] Francis was still the curator of the paintings. It was all very much the same. The one element that had changed was that there were now appearing on the walls some really important, significant impressionist and postimpressionist paintings. Not abstract paintings--that had not yet begun ever under Milliken. But nearly all were gifts of the Hanna Fund. This was Leonard C. Hanna Jr. That was his fund and his channel for giving. That was different. There was a very serious development in the field of especially nineteenth-century painting--and here and there in old master paintings--with gifts from the Hanna Fund. I think that this was also partly due to the donor himself. Leonard was very much interested. He had a very nice collection of impressionist and postimpressionist paintings. He was very interested in the art market and the good life. His love was theater. One of his great friends was Bea [Beatrice] Lillie and so on. He was in the set in New York. He spent all summer in Cleveland at his farm out near Mentor [Ohio]. That was what was different, and it also was what very much made it a different place.

GARDNER

Who was Leonard Hanna?

LEE

Oh, gosh! I wish Ruth were here. He was the grandson of Mark Hanna, and the family had made a fortune in M. A. Hanna Company, iron ore shipping. He had gone to Yale [University], where he had been a friend of Cole Porter's, among others. And he was homosexual. He was interested in theater, art, and began

collecting prints and things when he was still a student at Yale. A terribly nice man. Very kind. Very gentle. Impressive. Big head. Wide jaw structure. He had, I think, polio problems. Had to work from a wheelchair most of the time. He lived the kind of life that you would expect Cole Porter to live. He rose about eleven or twelve o' clock and was up until four A.M.

**1.11. TAPE NUMBER: VI, SIDE ONE
APRIL 9, 1992**

GARDNER

As I think we just agreed, we left off with your arriving at the Cleveland Museum [of Art]. We talked a little bit about Leonard [C.] Hanna [Jr.], who he was and his generosity. Let me ask you this to get started: Were there other board members who had contributed in a similar manner?

LEE

Oh, yes, on a smaller scale. Severance Millikin, who was the nephew of John L. Severance, was on the board. Mr. Severance had been a very generous donor and had established a purchase fund for the museum some years before. John L. Severance made his money at Standard Oil and was very much interested in the orchestra. His nephew succeeded him on the board representing the family. He insisted that they not cash in their bequest of Severance holdings in Standard Oil and some other things, because he thought they were way underpriced. They had a big argument and some hard feelings, but he was right. And the Severance Fund didn't really come into operation until about the mid 1940s, but at a much higher figure. There was a lot of family representation on the board. A. Dean Perry was married to Geenie Wade [Perry], who was the daughter of J. H. Wade, who had been one of the founders of the museum and a major donor. There was a large Wade Fund. The president of the board when I came was Harold T. Clark, who was an eminent lawyer on his own. He had left firms. He didn't like firms. He had been the secretary to Newton D. Baker, the secretary of war in World War I, and was, like most Clevelanders, a Yale [University] man. He was Leonard Hanna's lawyer. That was a combination that was unimaginable to anyone, because Leonard was, as I said, interested in theater, he was a homosexual, he was very much interested in art, he had a good eye. He was so affable and

easygoing, just marvelous. Harold was a Christian Scientist, not much sense of humor, very, very puritanical, very much opposed to smoking and drinking, but a very, very keen mind and a very strong set of principles and a lot of courage. A lot of things he did were very important, as I'll try to say later on. And then there was Ralph-- Memory, where are you?

GARDNER

Schmitt?

LEE

Yes.

GARDNER

I did write down some of them.

LEE

Good. Ralph [S.] Schmitt is related in some way to the Weyerhaeuser [Company] interest. At the time I arrived, there was a trustee who was vice president or maybe treasurer, Lewis B. Williams, who had been president of the Federal Reserve in Cleveland and also president and chief executive officer of National City Bank. There was Emery May Norweb, who was to succeed Harold Clark as president later on, who was a Holden. The Holdens had been traditionally very big benefactors of the museum. And she was married to a foreign service diplomat, R. Henry Norweb Jr., who had served in various places, including Lisbon during World War II as ambassador. Emery May was a very, very powerful person, very direct, and sometimes with a very-- What's the word I want? Not perverse but a sense of humor that could result in practical jokes that were sometimes embarrassing. Jim Sherwin, James [N.] Sherwin, who was from an old Cleveland family--Sherwin-Williams Paint Company--

GARDNER

I think that's a good enough representation. I was interested in the ones you were most involved with.

LEE

Well, I arrived in '52, and that period between '52 and '58, when I became director, was really sort of a transitional period. The transitional nature of it was that it was really a shifting from the total dominance of the old guard to beginnings of some opening to other members of the Cleveland structure and also to a more businesslike, in the best sense of the word, and rational approach to relationships between board, director, and staff. William [M.] Milliken had always been very personal. He was a good friend, as I said, of Mrs. Mather and Mrs. Ingalls and John Severance and so forth and so on. So it had been a very personal relationship. When I arrived I was curator of oriental art. I was very anxious to develop the collections, because they now had some, with the Severance Fund-- The Hanna money was not yet part of the museum, but Leonard was there and his foundation was there, and they occasionally would give money for purchases and projects. Howard [C.] Hollis was the dealer who had been the curator. Howard and William had not got along terribly well when Howard was there, but after Howard resigned and became a dealer, then William really sort of felt an obligation somehow to have a close relationship in purchasing from Howard as he had with other dealers in his own field. While I owed a great deal to Howard and we were very good friends at that time, I felt it was my responsibility to develop the collections in a more open and broader way than from just one person. Also, Howard dealt primarily in Japanese art and we needed Chinese art especially and we needed Indian art and Southeast Asian art, and this meant you had to reach out to all kinds of people.

GARDNER

Did you have contacts with all those places? Did you have contact with Southeast Asia as well?

LEE

Well, the market for Southeast Asian material actually was stronger in France than it was-- Because of their colonial relationship.

GARDNER

Especially in 1952.

LEE

Yes. I knew almost all the dealers in Japan. China was in the midst of the throes of the communist takeover, then the PRC [People's Republic of China], so there was no dealing with them. Hong Kong was not all that active--some. But the centers for Chinese art were New York, Paris, London basically. So the first thing William agreed and Harold Clark very much agreed, since I had never been to Europe-- So I was told to go. I think I spent six weeks or two months in 1953, which was my first trip. Ruth [Ward Lee] couldn't go because of the kids and everything. So I took off and went across on the Queen Mary in cabin class. I went to Paris. I basically made a grand tour, starting from Paris and going to Dijon and then going from Dijon to Milan--this is all by train of course--to Venice, Bologna to Florence to Siena to Perugia, Assisi, Orvieto, Rome. I decided not to go below Rome because I could do that some other time, and I wanted to go to Vienna, Munich, then to Amsterdam--there was some oriental dealing there--and then to London and then home. The trip had two purposes. I think the major purpose was to give me more of a foundation and more direct experience in European art with the originals, of course, secondarily to meet the other dealers in the field of oriental art. But that trip was a fantastic experience because, well, it was the first time, but also-- I had really studied an awful lot about European art. I knew a lot about it in terms of book reading and illustration, so I was reasonably well prepared to use the time efficiently. Then secondly, since I was alone--I didn't want to be, but I was alone--I could concentrate very much on day-to-day preparation. So every day before I went anyplace, I would carefully study the pertinent best guidebook, the text on the subject and the map, so that I knew the city pretty well in terms of how to walk from here and whatever was the next thing to do. I really was--I made a distinct effort to be--well prepared. My training as a navigator meant that I could read maps easily and I could use them efficiently, and it was a big help. I could go on for hours about that experience, but I will simply mention a couple of things that might give some indication. First, in terms of scholarly personalities, William Milliken had insisted that I must meet Mr. [Bernard] Berenson because he was William Milliken's hero. By that time I had not such a high opinion of Berenson, due to my reading of some Italian scholars like Evelyn Sandberg Vavalà and reading some of the French--I mentioned [Henri] Focillon and so on. But anyhow, William scheduled a meeting with Berenson. Berenson was going to be in Milan when I was going to be there, and he scheduled for us to meet. We both stayed at the same

hotel, which was a very modern sort of a Western-style, British-style hotel just outside the city walls. I can't remember the name of it. I met the great man in the hotel. The reason he stayed there of course was because he very much wanted creature comforts he'd had all his life. The plumbing in this hotel was excellent and so forth and so on, and that's why he stayed there. Of course I was a callow youth with no experience. But he was very kind and very nice and suggested a few things that I should do in Milan, in addition to what I planned to do. He wanted to know when I would be in Florence, and I told him. He said he would invite me to lunch there. And to follow that up, at [Villa] i Tatti outside Florence--Berenson's villa-- I did go there to lunch, where there were a lot of people. It didn't register much with me, except I thought the whole general performance was a little bit-- What is the word I want? It is the word that occurs in novels of Kingsley Amis. "Too shame-making." Berenson sat at the head of the table, or in the middle, when I was there the first time. It was like a salon with the master of the salon at the head of the table. There was an awful lot of subserviency. It was very civilized, very literate, and quite dazzling, but a little bit too much of this kind of thing. And then I went on to other places. I remember, for instance, in going to Assisi, I got off the train and I walked up the hill, which was about two and a half miles or so I think. I went around the cathedral, the basilica, very carefully, but I had also looked at the map and I just knew how to get from here to there. I just knew how to use the time very well. And Assisi was a great, great experience, one which-- I won't say it was predictable, but it lived up to expectations. And the expectations were high from my reading and from looking at reproductions. But the extraordinary kind of thing, one of the great aesthetic experiences of my life, was when I got to Florence. This was in October, I believe, and it was very cold and quite wet too, occasionally. While I was in Florence I went to see the Medici Chapel. I went at about eleven thirty [A.M.]. I didn't really think much about lunch in those days. I just said yes and no anytime or whenever. I got there and everybody was leaving, because it was time for lunch. I looked at the first of the church and around, and then I was going back to the chapel. I got there about twelve or twelve fifteen [P.M.] and everybody was leaving. Pretty soon there was no one there except there was a guard outside. He wasn't in the Michelangelo chapel, and I was there alone for about at least an hour--I think about an hour, lunchtime. That was extraordinary, because, as you know, it's a funerary chapel. It's dead serious. I strongly feel that it was

meant to be seen alone. It's the tomb with all the symbolic meaning for the people buried there. The definition of the space and the tomb and the concreteness of that space and then those figures-- It just was an absolutely tremendous experience which was very both humbling and tragic. That's what it's supposed to be, and you get that when you're there and there's nothing else. If you're there--and I've gone back to it--there are always people there talking, and there's somewhat of a hush, but it is a different experience. So that really hit me very, very hard. Everything was just terrific. I was especially hit by the frescos of Piero at the church of San Francesco, Arezzo, before recent restorations. They've been repaired; they've been doing some cleaning and so forth. But there were very few people at these places because it was off-season. They were a tremendous experience.

GARDNER

Did you visit the museums too? Not just to see the art, but to see the way European museums dealt with their--?

LEE

I didn't have a schedule or a conscious program of looking at museums. I noted with great interest some of the new small Italian provincial museums that were done by different modern architects, some of which were extremely successful. Others were perfectly appalling, particularly those that used steel tubes and so forth, almost like an automobile car rack, as pedestals for Renaissance sculptures. That kind of thing really got me upset. I remember the archaeological museum in Brescia was a very simple--all stone--use of stone, which was appropriate for the basically classical and Etruscan material that was in it. I found some of those very, very good. I paid attention to places like-- They had done a reinstatement in the old castle at Verona, where the couple of masterpieces of Pisanello and Stefano di Verona are. I paid attention and I thought that was done very well. The old galleries like the Accademia in Venice were a bit of a trial, because sometimes pictures were hung high and you really couldn't look at them carefully. Sometimes the light, particularly on a rainy day, was just not there. But I'd read about all this stuff. I'd studied it. I'd never seen it. It was just one grand experience after the other. I was walking four feet above the ground most of the time. I was also very much aware of my wife being out of this. She was at home taking care of the kiddies.

So I did one thing which I think she very much appreciated but shows what singleness of purpose can accomplish. She wanted a good sewing machine, and the best sewing machines that were made then were Italian--Necchi. In Rome I ran across a place where I could buy a Necchi at a fairly reasonable price. So I bought a heavy portable Necchi. I lugged that thing with my other luggage all the way back to London and to the boat and got it home as a present from the trip. This was 1953. Also, in the street just below the Spanish staircase, I went into a little leather shop that had just opened by the name of Gucci and bought my wife a purse for ten dollars, little knowing what Gucci was to become. The picture galleries-- The Louvre was just overwhelming. It's just a grand place for grand pictures. I can't imagine a better environment. The Uffizi [Gallery] was very good. The pictures, of course, were beyond compare. But at that time the environment was a little bit too conservative and too old-fashioned. It didn't really do justice to the spirit of a lot of the pictures. In the first galleries, with the great names of Duccio and Giotto, the curator obviously had worked hard. But the further on you got, you detected a decline of interest on the part of trying to make things look well. I thought most of it was rather disappointing. The National Gallery in London was just a sheer delight, as it always is. The British and the Scotch have a real gift for understanding European painting and showing it so that it comes out to its best advantage, I think. I didn't get to Germany at that time. At Berenson's place in Florence, the I Tatti, I made careful note of the oriental things. He had some very good things. He very kindly asked my opinion of several of them. [tape recorder off] Of course I went to the dealers in Paris. I went to C. T. Loo and Company and a dealer--Robert Rousset--over on the Avenue Friedland, Compagnie Général des Arts de la Chine et des Indes, or something like that, and I saw some interesting things. Jean-Pierre Dubosc, who was Loo's son-in-law, was then beginning to do some dealing. He was a kind of marchand amateur. In London, I met a lot of the dealers. I became rather friendly with Peter Vaughn at John Sparks, Ltd., a wonderful place for porcelain and ceramics. And of course I went to Spinks, where Adrian Maynard was at that time there in charge of the oriental department. They had all kinds of things--a very good place. Then the famous ceramic dealers, [Edgar and Roger] Bluett. And so I did all these things. I bought for nothing, and still have, two of the leaves from an album by the Japanese painter Chinzan that I found on a produce cart in the Piazza Borghese in Rome. At that time I don't think I saw

anything that I went after for the museum, because I was by then deeply involved with some of the objects on the market in New York, for very special 209 n a minute. circumstances which I will mention i But that European trip really gave me a foundation. I looked very hard and I spent all my time doing it and I felt I had learned a great deal. I had been fortunate that I hadn't gone to Europe before I had studied a lot. Having studied a lot and then going made it, to me, a much more meaningful and delightful and awe-inspiring experience. I got back and talk was beginning about doing a new wing, which Leonard was very much interested in. I forgot to mention that Harold Clark, the president of the board, had been very helpful to me in getting established in Cleveland, because we had sold our house in Seattle, very fortunately. In Cleveland I was able to find a place, and since I was a veteran I could get a G.I. mortgage at 4 1/2 percent. Harold, through his connections, had arranged for me to get the mechanics of it done and to get a loan to start the process and so on. So he had been very, very helpful. He, incidentally, was a former tennis player. He was interested in tennis, which was a coincidence, but gave us something else to talk about except business.

GARDNER

Was there a general understanding that you were going to be Milliken's successor?

LEE

No, I don't think so. I've thought about that. I don't think there was any kind of general understanding on the part of the board. I'm sure William had not thought that way, because he had assumed, as he said to me on a later occasion, that Henry [Sayles] Francis would be his successor--the curator of paintings. But very early on I had an experience on a purchase which was very interesting. There was a new dealer who I'd first met in 1941 in New York City named Walter Hochstadter, who had come from Peking. He was a bachelor. He took care of his father and mother, who he had extracted from Europe under the threat of the Nazis. They were Jewish. And he was a most difficult person--one of the most inhibited and psychologically unstable persons I've ever met--but a real genius at understanding Chinese painting and Chinese art. He had started with nothing I think, but had bought this, that, and the other thing. I had bought one piece from him for Detroit, which was a great early

Ming blue and white bowl, which the photographer-- Did we say anything about this?

GARDNER

No.

LEE

The photographer at Detroit [Institute of Arts] was an ex-marine. To put it very quickly, I bought from Walter Hochstadter immediately after the Eumorfopolous sale in London, right when the blitz was going, a very important early Ming blue and white bowl. Today it would be worth more than a half a million dollars. I paid, as I remember, \$400 for it, for Detroit. I was away for a day or two and I had left instructions for the piece to be photographed. I got back and the marine greeted me and told me, with a smile on his face, he was sorry but he dropped the bowl.

GARDNER

Oh, my God.

LEE

I could have killed him. It was the end of our relationship.

GARDNER

I bet it was.

LEE

Unbelievable, but rather typical of that particular photographer. But that I got from Hochstadter. Since Hochstadter principally dealt in Chinese paintings, and since Dick [Richard] Fuller was not terribly interested in paintings, I didn't do much with Hochstadter in Seattle. But the minute I hit Cleveland, I went after him in a big way. He had a very famous handscroll published everywhere. It's supposed to be by Yen Wen-Kuei. It was published all over the place and it was \$25,000, which was quite a substantial price in 1953. I said, "I think it's terrific. I want to take it, and I'll take it back to Cleveland on approval if you're willing." He said, "Fine." So I got it and I took it back to the hotel. I went to Leonard Hanna, who had an apartment in New York where he stayed all during the theatrical season. As usual, I said I'd come by. It was after the

theater, so I got there about midnight. I showed him the painting. I said, "This is something major and important for the museum." He liked it and he said, "How much?" I said, "It's \$25,000." And he said, "Well, I'll have the fund give it to the museum." So I thanked him very much. I went back to the museum with the painting, and began to study it more and began to study it more. And I began to have some qualms. I had the photographer make some photographic blowups so I could study the brushwork more carefully without having to breathe over the painting all the time. I could prove it was a copy. It just was not-- It was a copy. Well, you can imagine how I felt with Leonard, the big donor, because he said he'd give it-- So I went back to Leonard and I said, "I'm sorry, but you're not going to have to spend that \$25,000, because that painting's not right. It's a copy, and thank God we caught it before we bought it." He said, "That's all right, I understand." So I took the painting back to Hochstadter--this is so typical--and I said, "Walter, this picture is a later copy. I think it's probably a Ming copy." I showed him why and he took it pretty well. Then he said, "Would you be interested in another painting like this but of early date?" And he pulled out a handscroll called Chi Shan Wu Chin, which is "Streams and Mountains without End" and which is now one of the classic paintings of the eleventh century, and showed it to me. It came from the ex-imperial collection and it was not signed, no attribution, but an absolutely superb painting, clearly right. So I went back to Leonard with not much hope. I thought, "Now, this is really ludicrous." Leonard was absolutely marvelous. He looked at it. He said, "I like it. It's very good." Now he said, "You're sure about this one?" I said, "Leonard, I really have done a lot of work on this now and I'm sure there is no problem about this. I think it is a very important painting and a very beautiful painting." He said, "Okay. I'll give it." And that's how we just happened to get that painting. But it also was typical of Leonard. I mean, he was a real gentleman, and he didn't hold things against you or anything like that. Now, at that time, as I mentioned to you before, Tommy [Thomas] Munro didn't have much use for William Milliken. Harold Clark thought William was a bit much. Leonard got along quite well, until later on when the incident of the moving of the building stakes, which we mentioned before, made Leonard very mad. But basically that was the relationship of the upper echelons of the board with William. Leonard invited Ruth and me and Harold and Marie--Mr. and Mrs. Clark--to come and have lunch out at his farm during the summertime. I think this was probably about maybe '54. Leonard always

had cocktails, always, and Harold never-- Very rarely. He might have a small sherry or something like that. Marie Clark never had anything. So there we were at Leonard's, and Leonard's butler was his companion, and Leonard greeted us. This was the first time Ruth had met Leonard, and Leonard asked if we would like something to drink. Well, there's Harold there and there's Marie, and here's Leonard and here's us. I said, "Yes, sure, I'd love to have a drink. Thank you very much." And Ruth said she'd have a sherry. But I could see Harold sort of just a little bit-- He didn't show anybody, but he was just a little bit quiet. But Leonard was happy as a clam. I suspect--I'm not sure--that this was sort of a trial run to see how these new fledglings were. And I'm glad I did [have a drink], because I think you can't just do things because somebody might disapprove. You've got to do what you normally do. Things began to develop when the new wing started to take shape. Then we had the contretemps about the stakes and there were a lot of other things. They made me assistant director when the project began so I could help William with the administrative thing. That's when William told me not to misunderstand this, that Henry Francis was the heir apparent. It never occurred to me that I was going to be director at that time. But then when we had the contretemps, they made me the associate director and put me in charge of the liaison between the builders and the architect and the board, completely bypassing the director. Then I realized that there was something afoot. And also, I saw a quite a bit of Tommy, because I was his student. We talked a lot, and we would exchange glances in the director's luncheon room when one of these farces was going on. Harold had a lot of respect for Tommy, because of his work with children's education, especially. So that had a certain social value, rather than just art. That was appealing particularly to Mrs. Clark, who was the social worker type. Anyhow, Tommy and Harold got along together. Tommy never said anything to me, but I'm reasonably certain that Tommy occasionally bent Harold's ear about this business. As the building came to completion, I told you I had a real collapse. I was frazzled out and got flu and so forth. But before that, while I was working on the last stages of the building and we were beginning to install galleries and so forth, Harold had told me that he thought, in his opinion, that it was likely that I would become the next director. I said that I was very honored and pleased and scared about it too. But Leonard had not been well. He was failing rapidly. He had moved from his apartment, in the fifties, down to the [Hotel] Pierre. They had installed his painting collection

and furniture and some paneling and so forth in a suite at the Pierre. That's where he was, and I can't remember exactly when it was but I think it was-- See, Leonard did not live to see the opening; he died before the opening. It must have been '57, I would think, fall of '57 or spring. Anyhow, '57. Harold asked me to go to New York, and Leonard was in bed. It was his sickbed and his deathbed--he died about three or four weeks later--and Harold and I went in to say hello to Leonard, and David, his butler, was there. He was able to talk well, but he was clearly very, very ill. It sounds corny, but it was a very moving experience. He took my hand in both his hands and said that he and Harold had talked about all this and it was agreed that I would be the best person to be the next director of the museum. He had great confidence in me and he was sure that I would do everything that was right for the museum. He wanted to let me know that I had his full support. So naturally I was very moved by it. That was the last I saw of Leonard, because he died shortly-- And then they had the funeral service out at Leonard's farm, and all the family and the friends of the museum--

**1.12. TAPE NUMBER: VI, SIDE TWO
APRIL 9, 1992**

GARDNER

You were describing the funeral.

LEE

I had gotten lost out in Mentor [Ohio]. I got there just after the service had begun and there was no sitting room left. I was out in the hall looking in on the room and I was with George Humphrey, who had been [United States] secretary of the treasury. People may think that he was too conservative. He was [Dwight D.] Eisenhower's secretary of the treasury. But he was a man of tremendous intellect--brilliant. He had steely blue eyes that could just transfix you. He was a real personality. We were out there and he said, "How do you do," because he had met me once or twice. Leonard had a sister, Fannie [Hanna] Moore, and her son [Paul Moore] was the famous anti- Vietnam War rector. He was delivering the funeral in memoriam. And I couldn't believe my ears, because he was actually apologizing for Leonard's life-style in the memoriam and sort of criticized him. George Humphrey was there, and I

looked over at him and I said, "I can't stand this." He thought it was a disgrace. I shuddered when I thought-- And we sort of nipped out. We didn't nip out, we just moved to the side so we didn't have to watch this terrible thing going on. Then the thing was over, and Leonard's ashes were scattered over the farm from an airplane. And that was it. We opened the new wing in March of 1958. I was made director on April Fool's Day, April 1, 1958. Before that, there had been nothing in the bylaws or the articles of incorporation of the museum about retirement age for the director. After things got a little bit difficult between William and Leonard and Harold because of the situation with the building of the new wing, the trustees had started to amend the bylaws to make the retirement age sixty-five. They decided they would make it sixty-five, but that they would make a special dispensation for the present director, William, to make retirement sixty-seven and a half, halfway between seventy and sixty-five. Which coincided with April 1, 1958. So William fell short, by a small amount--I don't know about how many months it was--of having been director for thirty years. He had been director for twenty-nine or something like that. Anyhow, William was very upset at this. He was very upset and several things developed. All these things were happening one right after another, March and then April 1 and the first week in April. William wanted an office in the museum after retirement. I said nothing on that, but Harold Clark said no. "This is always bad," he said. "I've seen it at the bank. I've seen it in law firms. It's no go, no office in the museum." Well, that really hurt William a lot. He was very upset at that. But then Leonard had died not long before the museum opened. There was a lot of speculation in the paper about what the Hanna bequest was going to be. Leonard had been a very generous donor to Yale, to the University Hospital in Cleveland. He built the big psychiatric pavilion at University Hospital--Hanna Pavilion--and had given money for other things. And the museum. Those were his three principal charities. Harold Clark was his lawyer. And Harold got on the phone not long after I came in as director and said, "You'll be very pleased to hear--because since I'm his lawyer, I've got all the figures--that the museum is going to receive the collection, of course, and \$15 million." That's a lot of money in 1958. Just a few days later, Harold called me up and said, "I'm sorry, I don't quite understand this, but the figures now are quite different. The museum is going to get \$26 or \$27 million. And then there was another phone call just a few days later. He said, "It's amazing, but the figure for the museum is going to be

\$35 million." Leonard had been buying, ever since he was a young man at Yale, stock in a new company called IBM [International Business Machines Corporation]. With all the stock splits and so forth, this had just piled and piled and piled, and his financial people and his own lawyer didn't fully have a grasp on what it was they were dealing with. Aside from the fact that that's a marvelous bequest, the important thing was that--and this was due to Harold Terry Clark-- A lot of people didn't like Harold because of his puritanical character and so forth, and he often was the butt of jokes, etc. But it was Harold Terry Clark who convinced Leonard C. Hanna Jr. that it was not fair to the institution or the people of the city to give that much money, all that money, just for acquisitions--income for acquisitions--but that the acquisitions had to be cared for, the building had to be cared for, there had to be staff, a library, and he should give it fifty-fifty. Fifty percent income for acquisitions and 50 percent income for operations. And that was the making of the museum for the next twenty-five years.

GARDNER

Because it's so rare that you get money like that for operations.

LEE

It's so rare. But it shows one how intelligent Harold Clark was, and also how forceful. It also tells how intelligent and flexible Leonard was, that he would listen and change something that he really wanted to do. He liked acquisitions but he saw the logic of it, and he did it. That is the single most important thing that happened to the museum between the time it was founded and the present day. And by this wonderful coincidence, sheer luck, it happened at exactly the time I became director. That meant that there were all kinds of possibilities that had not existed before. And, as I said then and say now, I say, "So help me Hanna." And he did. There's one little story, at this juncture, which I think is of some interest. I don't know how it happened--I was in pretty run-down condition after the building was finished. But I was at a party with various friends of ours out toward Gates Mills [Ohio], at the house of Jim [James A.] Hughes, who was the president of Diamond Shamrock company and a tennis partner in this group that I played tennis with. I felt kind of poorly. Jim's son was going around with a shoeshine kit doing shoeshines for fifty cents or a dollar, or whatever it was. Ruth said she had never seen me do

anything like this before, but I kicked at him, saying, "Go away." Then I said, "I've got to go and lie down." I went to lie down and I was hurting like hell. So they decided to call a doctor. A good friend of ours, another one in our tennis group, David Weir, was just three hundred yards, four hundred yards away. So Hughes called up Weir and said, "Something's wrong with Sherman and could you come over?" He said, "No, I can't come over. He's not my patient. You get his own doctor, Jerry Kent." Everybody thought this was a strange and callous way to do it, but that's the way David Weir was. So they called my doctor and he came out, and of course it was a red-hot appendix. They took me down to the University-- Ruth went with me down to the University Hospital. They had another tennis friend of mine, also a hunter--he's a very good trapshooter and upland quail and duck shooter and so on--Dr. Frank Barry, who is a very funny man and a great surgeon. The paper had just come out that morning with the announcement that the art museum had received \$35 million from Leonard C. Hanna, and University Hospital got, I think, \$1 million or \$1.5 million. And Yale, I think, got \$1 million. Frank Barry, of course, was one of the big surgeons at University Hospital. They had me on the operating table and they were just going to do the anesthesia, and Frank Barry leaned over me and he said, "I ought to cut your throat, you son of a bitch." [laughter]

GARDNER

[laughter] And then put you out.

LEE

And then put me out. So that was my welcome.

GARDNER

Let me back you up and ask you a couple of questions.

LEE

Sure.

GARDNER

When the extension of the new wing was first discussed, were you involved in that at all, or was that strictly the board and Milliken?

LEE

That was the board and Milliken. The actual first planning of the museum, the architect was the local architect, J. Byers Hayes, who was a very earnest and competent architect, but not terribly imaginative. He was not a great architect, but I got to know him quite well and we got along quite well. He was scrupulously honest, and that's why he and William sort of began to fall out. The thing was pretty well set as far as design and drawings go before I got into it on the overall thing. I got into it because some of the new galleries in the new building were going to be oriental galleries, and I had to be involved with that. Basically, I think I got into it, as I remember, about as the building began to get framed in at above ground level. I would say soon after the steelwork was beginning to go up.

GARDNER

And I guess we're talking close to two years, the period that you were involved.

LEE

Yes.

GARDNER

Were you able to do the rest of your job during that time?

LEE

Sure. Oh, sure.

GARDNER

Guiding a construction like that is really in many ways almost a full-time job when you're the liaison.

LEE

Remember, there's the architect, then there's the clerk of the works, who represents the museum, and then I was the liaison person. So I didn't have full responsibility in terms of all the work to be done. But I had full responsibility for everything that had to do with the building and people concerned with the building and their reports and trustee evaluations and decisions on the building as it progressed. It was a harrowing experience in a way, because William was always on the edges and always wanting to get his word in on the

thing. Which I think actually he had every right to do. I did think that things were not going too well, largely because--and this I think was probably Harold Clark's responsibility-- The contractor for the building was an old Cleveland friend, Sam W. Emerson Company. And because of Leonard's health they wanted to get this building along as rapidly as possible. They negotiated-- Instead of having a fixed-price contract, it was a cost-plus contract. And of course, I don't care who the contractor is, if he's as pure as the driven snow, a cost-plus contract is an invitation to disaster. You get things done fast, but it also is very, very expensive. The proof of the pudding is that the 1958 wing was 110,000 square feet in 1958, and it cost, before it was over, over \$9 million in 1958. Cost-plus contract. The [Marcel] Breuer wing, which was finished in 1972-- I don't know, I forget these dates. But the Breuer wing--

GARDNER

'Seventy-one is the date I have.

LEE

Yes, '71, which was thirteen years later. It was 110,000 square feet and came in at \$6.4 million, and that was a fixed-price contract. At the end of it we had a horrendous two-month negotiation session with the contractors, Turner [Construction] Company, who claimed that they needed another couple of million dollars because the drawings had not indicated everything right. But we just toughed that one out. Bob [Robert] Gale, who was a trustee and good friend, who had a very sudden and terrible death-- Bob Gale and I negotiated that one out with the Turner Company, and they didn't get anything. And one of the worst, steeliest looks I ever got in my life, directly, directly at me, was from the head of their Middle West operation--because they were a national company--who later I think became the head of the company, Herb [Herbert D.] Conant. After the negotiation was all finished and everything and we shook hands and everybody was leaving, I said, "Well, Herb, maybe you could give this \$1.5 or \$2 million as a contribution to the museum and get a tax deduction." And he gave me a terrible look.

GARDNER

But clever idea, though.

LEE

But that's a big difference over \$9 million in 1958. We learned a lot. Everyone learned a lot on that first operation. It was a really meaningful learning experience. One you'd never forget.

GARDNER

During the time leading up to your becoming the director, during the time you were there and curator of the oriental collection, were you thinking about what was good and what was bad about the museum? What kinds of things were weak and what kinds of things strong?

LEE

Oh, yes. Oh, yes. I was very much aware, because of my background as a generalist, my background under [William R.] Valentiner, who was something of a generalist-- I was deeply interested in relatively modern painting, European art. I was interested in everything. I was very deeply aware of what the major shortcomings at the Cleveland Museum of Art were. At one time, I remember very, very well when I was at Detroit [Institute of Arts] and I was talking to E. P. [Edgar Preston] Richardson about different museums and collections and so on-- I had no connection with Cleveland, except that I had studied there as a graduate student. But Ted Richardson said something that I would never forget. He said, "Well, Cleveland is a fine museum, but it represents every tradition except our own." And you stop to think about it and-- Ted, I think, was specifically referring to the American collection, which is what he developed very strongly in Detroit. That's what I think he meant by that remark. At the same time, I could take that remark and look at that collection, and in terms of the European collection, you could say it represented every tradition except sort of the main one. The weakest part of the collection was old master painting. The American collection was very weak. They had tremendous strengths in medieval art, a good solid collection of classical and Egyptian art. The oriental collection, before we really began to work on it in 1952, was small. There were some very good things in it--Howard bought some very, very good things--but there was really no depth and no breadth. The modern collection was really very spotty and uneven. There was no abstract painting in the museum, not one. Leonard didn't like abstract painting. He liked the impressionist, postimpressionist--Matisse and so on, you know, that tradition.

GARDNER

So it stopped there? It stopped at Matisse?

LEE

Well, it stopped at-- Well, you know, Leonard had the Matisse, the museum did not.

GARDNER

Oh, the museum didn't?

LEE

No. The collection basically stopped, as far as the mainstream of modern art, with Picasso's *La vie*, a great picture that William bought back in 1946 with the money provided by Leonard Hanna and the Hanna Fund, which had been deaccessioned by the Rhode Island School of Design Museum [of Art] when Gordon Washburn was director there. One of the great examples of why deaccessioning, improperly conducted, can be a total disaster. But that's where the modern European collection stopped. There were no German expressionist paintings. There were no paintings from cubism on through. There was no Matisse.

GARDNER

Was this the combination of the lack of interest of, say, Leonard Hanna and William Milliken?

LEE

No, it was more complex than that. It was a combination of (1) William's own personal taste, (2) Leonard's personal taste, (3) Cleveland was a very conservative community and no real effort had been made except by Tommy Munro. But he didn't have a lot to say about any of this. William ignored him as far as the development of the collection went. They were very conservative. They really didn't have any liking for or knowledge of more contemporary expression. The major contemporary event at Cleveland, which William developed from 1919 to 1920 on, was the May Show, which was the local regional show and confined to artists from Cuyahoga County, nowhere else. That's the show where William really dominated, even rigged his juries to

carry on the Cleveland tradition, which was basically a figural tradition. Even when he got a recalcitrant jury, which sometimes put out some of his favorites, he'd get them back in. He'd put them back in after they left. And the trustees were very, very recalcitrant. So it's understandable, but it was there. Once I knew that I was probably going to be a director, I began thinking seriously about this. I didn't know about the Hanna bequest at that time. But with the Hanna bequest in, I made a serious effort to get all this thinking about the collection's needs down on paper, with some kind of overview so a long-term program could be used to develop the collections. What other people had noticed about Cleveland, as Ted Richardson had, was that it was a museum with very high quality objects, but with very serious gaps and real weaknesses in collections that should have been strong, such as the old master collection. This, I think-- all apologies--it's only fair to say was largely due to William Milliken and because of his dominance over Henry Francis, who was a terribly nice and knowledgeable man but I think very weak. William's confidence permitted him to dominate and determine the old master paintings selections, and he got some very good pictures, but he also got some very poor pictures. There were a lot of pictures he did not get at all when places like Detroit, [Art Institute of] Chicago, and Boston [Museum of Fine Arts] were active in getting them. So there was a lot to be done.

GARDNER

What were some of the things you set out to do? I have some notes based on the essay you wrote. I can see if you remember the essay or I can prompt you, depending on how you feel.

LEE

First of all, I made this chart, sort of rating different departments in the museum. I also made a chart which showed the dedicated accessions money, annual income for the , but we did not have a wonderful collection of medieval sculpture. year--anything that was dedicated to prints or drawings, oriental, or so on. Then the free funds, but all dedicated to purchases. So we had a very clear idea of the amount of income available. And then I drew up a third chart, which showed how the income available in the past had been spent for each department--the percentage of total income. It was very interesting, because the decorative arts got a substantial part of the money,

and the old master paintings got next, and at the bottom was oriental. I then made a chart showing suggested adjustments in percentages, so as to develop those parts that needed development the most in terms of quantity of money. I changed the 50 percent, more than 50 percent, which decorative arts received. I recommended assigning that to paintings, basically old master paintings, up to the twentieth century. I recommended that oriental, because of the wide advantage in price structure--because oriental things were much less expensive--be increased. It wasn't a wild amount, but it was a substantial amount. As I remember, I think it went from something like 7 or 8 percent up to 20 percent, something like that. I recommended reducing the amount for decorative arts and concentrating it more in certain areas that had not been developed, such as sculpture. We had a wonderful collection of medieval *kleine Kunst* We had ignored sculpture largely, and sculpture was very reasonable on the market then, and we made a definite plan to do something about that. So I tried to analyze the needs of the museum and get it down in readily understandable form so I could convince the trustees that this was a program worth doing and continuing, so we could reexamine it each year to see what we'd done. I also suggested that they mustn't make any hard-and-fast rules, because there always was the opportunity that suddenly arises where you feel you must do something different than your plan, and you've got to allow for that, as when Rembrandt's *Aristotle Contemplating the Bust of Homer* came up. I tried to bring a degree of, first, analysis of the collection into focus and then tried to bring a degree of rationality into the purchase system and into the relative weight assigned to these things. The assistant curator of education, Edward B. Henning, I made curator of modern art. He was a painter, and he had exhibited in the May Show. He was knowledgeable about impressionism, postimpressionism, modern painting, and I began to have a sense too--which was not terribly well formed at that time in '58--that there should be a basic reorganization of the museum's collections in terms of display and in terms of the departmental organization, because the than in sculpture. That means that sculpture is automatically shortchanged. If you have a department of paintings and oil paintings, including modern paintings and duecento paintings, the odds are either end of the scale is going to be shortchanged, because the guy who knows early painting isn't going to know modern painting or be sympathetic to it or vice versa. old system had been taken over lock, stock, and barrel from the

Museum of Fine Arts in Boston: the department of paintings, department of decorative arts, department of ancient arts, department of prints and drawings, department of textiles. This meant that sculpture was under decorative arts. If you have a good curator of decorative arts, the odds are that he is going to be more interested in *kleine Kunst* I was very much aware of my experiences under Valentiner. I was also very much aware of my rather brief, but still influential, training in anthropology and intellectual history, that art is very important in context. And context is basically an ignorer of media. Secondly, in the history of art in the Orient there is no such thing as a distinction between so-called fine arts and decorative arts, or painting and pottery. In Europe, all through the Middle Ages and up until the baroque period or even until the nineteenth century, it was customary for a great artist to also do work in other media: decorative arts or sculpture and so on. So this distinction was totally artificial. Rather we should go to a cultural, contextual division. So that you would have the department of Far Eastern or Eastern art, oriental art, as it's called; department of ancient art; department of medieval or Renaissance art, because we couldn't really afford to have two separate departments of that; department of baroque and later art; and a department of modern art. Then, because of the medium and the particular conservation requirements, keep department of prints and drawings and keep department of textiles. So this meant that the curator of, for example, medieval and Renaissance art was responsible for all the art within that period.

GARDNER

A lot of art.

LEE

A lot of art, but the--

GARDNER

But it's better than just paintings.

LEE

To me the right kind of person to handle that question is someone who has to deal with all of that art and who isn't just a manuscript man or just a painting man. And fortunately we had in Henry Hawley a superb curator for baroque

and later art. Ed Henning was a very effective curator of modern art. We had Bill [William D.] Wixom for medieval and Renaissance art, and he was marvelous, so marvelous that the Metropolitan [Museum of Art] took him away. He's director of the Cloisters now. We had a very good curator for ancient art, Arielle [P.] Kozloff, and before her, Jack [John D.] Cooney, who-- we can get to this--was a little bit disappointing. With a great deal of chutzpah, I insisted on being chief curator for oriental art. Dotty [Dorothy G.] Shepherd was a terrific and highly respected curator for Near Eastern art and for textiles. The prints and drawings department was first under Leona [E.] Prasse; then her assistant, Louise [S.] Richards, succeeded her. They were like most prints and drawings curators, very competent. Not inspired, but very competent.

GARDNER

How did you find most of these people? Did you advertise or were they people you knew?

LEE

Well, prints and drawings were in place. Ancient art-- Sylvia Wunderlich had been the curator and editor of The Bulletin [of the Cleveland Museum of Art], and she retired. I knew Jack Cooney. I knew who he was. He had a very good record developed at the Brooklyn Museum. What I didn't know was that his wife was an alcoholic. There was a big problem involving her, and it affected his work. But he stayed on. After she died he stayed on for a while. His assistant who he found, Arielle Kozloff, and I'm trying to remember-- She really developed from being just an assistant to him. She had some training, but not too much. She really developed on the job. Dotty Shepherd was in place. She had succeeded Gertrude Underhill. She was in place. Henry Francis retired before we made the change in departments, and that's where Latz. But he was brilliant and got Henry Hawley, who had been in the Winterthur [Museum] program. He started out basically in terms of furniture. He wrote a very good monograph on the eighteenth-century ébéniste a hard worker.

GARDNER

Did you call some I've got this opening"?

LEE

Well, in terms of Bill Wixom, we interviewed. He had been to the Institute of Fine Arts [New York University]. He was recommended. He did not have his doctorate. Henry was interviewed. In the old days, way, way back in the bad old days before World War II, it was basically the good old boy network. In the good old days, which was between World War II and about 1980 or a little earlier, it was not a good old boy network but it was a restricted network, really based upon evaluation by various people, regardless of their sociaorigins, of people coming up in the field who were very interesting, very good. It was a little bit like a peer review, but not this obsession with openness and democratic selection and equal opportunity, etc. It was within-the-profession evaluation. That was how it worked basically. And I think it worked very well. I think some of the best curators that have come up-- In the old days, oftentimes they were German imports like George Swarzenski at Boston, Valentiner when 236 ative good librarian that came in after I retired [Ann B. Abid]. he came over. Well, "Chick" [A. Everett] Austin was a ndevelopment. But that system worked awfully well. Where it didn't work well-- Oddly enough, we had an absolutenightmare in trying to find a librarian. I told you they were in place when I came there. Charlotte Vanderveer was the associate librarian; Ella Tallman was the librarian. They were at each other's throats all the time. Ella was a sort of gentle but firm and evenhanded type. Charlotte was a big Dutch dike, that's what she was. Not to make a pun, but she was a Dutch dike and very domineering, but with an absolute genius and energy at finding books. She was a great acquisitions librarian and she succeeded Ella. But then when Charlotte retired, we tried to get someone and we hit one lemon after another, all recommended highly. This, that, and the other thing, until we finally got Daphne [Cross] Roloff, who was very good. But then she went to Chicago and then we got Jack [John] Brown, and he was terrific, a little bit abrasive to a lot of people, but a terrific librarian. He was picked off by Art Institute of Chicago library. Now they have a very

**1.13. TAPE NUMBER: VII, SIDE ONE
JULY 13, 1992**

GARDNER

This is in many ways part two of this interview, since it's being resumed after something like two and a half months and testing our memories. As I

indicated, in my reading-over of the final tape that we did last time, we left off just before I was going to ask you about-- We left off in the middle of your becoming the director [of the Cleveland Museum of Art] and the changes you implemented. And the next one I wanted to ask you about was the conservation department. In your essay, that's something you talked about. So if you could tell me about your thoughts on that and the importance of conservation.

LEE

Well, let's begin with the institution of a conservation department, because of course the bequest of Leonard [C.] Hanna [Jr.], with the endowment for both operations and for purchases, made things really quite, quite different. And consequently, there were many things that were now possible that would not have been possible before. But the fact remains that there had been previously no effort to have any kind of in-house conservation capability. The way in which, for instance, paintings were cleaned--if they required it, and many of them did--or repaired is that they were sent out to New York to the studio of a former German restorer in Berlin who had worked for Detroit [Institute of Arts] and was a private restorer in New York, William Suhr. It was sent there. Consequently, the curators or the director or whoever was interested in that particular work had no way of observing the continuity of cleaning and restoration. There was no real supervision. And when Suhr did come to Cleveland occasionally to do a painting, he did his work in the trustees' room, next to the director's office. I remember particularly the peculiar nature of the arrangement, because Mr. Suhr, when he came in in the morning to the trustees' room to do his work, always wanted to have a fresh rose in a glass container, and a plate of chocolates should be on hand while he was doing his restoration work. It was touching, [laughter] but it wasn't precisely-- It was the further extreme from science, let us say. [laughter] So in the extension exhibitions department we had two preparators, who were Joseph [G.] Alvarez, who was a painting restorer in a way, and Fred [Frederick L.] Hollendonner, who was a very good local artist, and he did repairs and restorations on objects for the extension exhibitions department. It was one of the quite unusual things in the museum that had been going on for a long time, since the twenties, in connection with the school program. They had developed a collection called the extension exhibition collection, starting out

with things that would be particularly interesting to young children, such as American Indian art, primitive art, textiles, etc. Gradually it had developed by gift and by-- They had some money of their own, which incidentally had been given to them by the president under whom I became director, Harold T. Clark. We've discussed him before. He was very much interested in this kind of what we now call outreach program. They had developed quite a collection and it was used a great deal going out to different schools. They had cases and different schools and so on, and this entailed inevitable damage and wear and tear. So they had to have two preparators, and that was Joe and Fred. But they were very good, and they were chafing at the bit because the curator for the extension exhibitions department, Doris Dunleavy, was a hard taskmaster and a rather inflexible type, sort of a librarian type in the classic sense. They were very unhappy. So I said, "Well, let's move the preparators there and I'll establish a general conservation department, and let's see if we can do something about getting people in for it." So we established a new department. We got in a couple of younger people in the extension exhibitions department and we set Alvarez and Hollendonner up in quarters of their own as our first conservation department. And it worked out quite well for a while until it obviously needed expansion--that came later. But it did have the great advantage that every day if there was a painting being cleaned or an object being repaired or studied, that the curator concerned could pop in very easily and see what was going on. That was, as far as I think any museum goes, an absolute necessity in order to have the kind of continuity and supervision and give-and-take between the conservators and curators and in order to get the best possible results. Now, we've already discussed the library, right?

GARDNER

Yes.

LEE

About developing that. The education department? Have we--?

GARDNER

Yes, we've talked about the education department. The next one I have is musical arts.

LEE

Oh, well, musical arts had been an ongoing thing and very successful. I think I mentioned earlier that Béla Bartók was in Cleveland at the Cleveland Institute of Music and he did programs at the museum. When I was a graduate student, I met him several times at lunch there. Arthur Quimby, who was the curator of music, was a good solid New England type, and he was very, very good and got a lot of people in. He was succeeded by Walter Blodgett, who was a very active and volatile person, who developed it even further. There was a couple that had been with the Sherwin-Williams Paint Company. Gartner. Mr. [Ernest L.] and Mrs. [Louise M.] Gartner. That company had been absorbed by [E. I.] Du Pont [de Nemours and Company], and they had moved to Delaware, to Winterthur. They had a considerable fortune, and they wrote me one day and said that they were interested in making a substantial gift to the music department. So I went to see them, and they were indeed anxious. They at first wanted to tie it down rather completely to just operating money for concerts and so forth. And I talked to them at some length about the fact that the music department was getting larger and their programs were more ambitious and they still had an inadequate auditorium in the 1916 building, which was the center of their operation, and that we really ought to plan ahead and think about the possibility that there would be a major addition again to the museum after the 1958 one, at which time there would have to be some kind of new auditorium. They were interested in that idea, and so they made the bequest flexible enough so that some of the principal could be used for the cost of an auditorium and music department in any possible future development. So that augured very well for the future. And the bequest, I've forgotten the exact amount, but was, I would think, somewhere in the neighborhood of \$2 or \$3 million. I can't remember exactly. And also, in the planning for that, for which Walter Blodgett was very anxious-- He had had plans well worked out so that he could have a far more ambitious and flexible music program, with some dance possibilities and so on. Choral too. For a while after the 1958 wing was finished, we got by with having some programs of a larger scale than could be held in the old auditorium, which only seated something like 350 or so, and in what we called the garden court, which was the court made by the addition of the '58 building onto the '16 building, which had a very nice big garden area open to the sky and rather good acoustics, it turned out. There was a stone screen put up specifically to act as a reflector

for possible outdoor concerts. And the music department got by with that in terms of major programs in the period of clement weather, which in Cleveland is not all that long. [laughter] Now, where do we go from here?

GARDNER

The next thing I have on my list is the museum designer, William [E.] Ward.

LEE

Yes. Well, in this general restructuring of the museum-- It seemed to me it was beginning to be apparent in many museums, and we felt that more attention had to be paid in a more specialized way to the problems of installation of special exhibitions, but also the permanent collection. It just wasn't enough to have it sort of informally handled by this, that, or the other person. And I was very much opposed to the idea which some museums had of bringing in outside designers for each exhibition. I thought this had to be, first of all, an in-house thing, because that's the way the style of the museum is set is by the work of the people within the museum. And secondly, it's much cheaper. One of the reasons I got along quite well with the trustees was that-- Some of them claimed I was too parsimonious, that I didn't, you know, go out and spend, think big, or something like that. But I felt very strongly that the income from the museum should especially go for those things that are most particularly the responsibility of the museum: the development of the collections, meaning purchase and conservation; the display of the material, which meant attention to the methods of display; and the elucidation of the collection through the educational department and through the writings of the curators, etc., etc. All the income really should concentrate on those areas. To use income sort of offhand for this or that, for entertainment or what I call glitzy operations, big PR [public relations] and so forth, I thought was a waste of money that could have been much better and responsibly spent on the main purposes of the museum. Anyhow, that prompted us to decide that we would have a design department, a museum designer, and Bill Ward-- He taught also at the Cleveland Institute of Art, William Ward. He was a very good watercolorist, an excellent calligrapher. He taught calligraphy at the art institute, and he had much to do with design. In the museum, he was an assistant in the oriental department when I first came in '52, and in '58 that was his title. He was interested in Indian miniatures and Indian art in a kind of

nonscholarly way. He was an enthusiast for Indian art, and his wife [Evelyn Svec] was a very, very good textile artist. She was a wonderful weaver and he was a dedicated and sensitive artist. So I said, "Bill, you're unhappy here with the growing size of the oriental department and its program and its new curators coming in. But you're a wonderful designer. How would you like to be museum designer?" He said, oh, he'd love it. So we said, "Okay, you're the museum designer." And we gave him an office and an area where he could work. We developed a museum design department, so that for the first time instead of the director and the curator either agreeing or squabbling about what was to be done, you had the director and the designer and the curator squabbling. But the point was that the designer had a very strong and professional hand to play. And it worked very, very well, because the attention of the director then shifted from squabbling with whoever. He then became interested in establishing peace and a creative relationship between the curator and the designer. So he became a kind of peacemaker, arbiter, etc., in this relationship. And it worked. Bill is still the designer. I think he's due to retire this year. He's been the designer there for more than thirty years, well over thirty years. He developed models of his special exhibition galleries. We didn't go in for these fancy full-scale models that some museums delight in, with everything done up in a very professional way and costing mints and mints of money. We emphasized the use of color to suggest environments of, say, China or Italy or German baroque. Scale was one of the things, and the use of partitions to suggest environments, but not trying to literally duplicate, reproduce, what I call a habitat group kind of thing: one, because I really think it's stupid, and, two, it's very expensive. Again, I think it's very, very wasteful. I think I mentioned--stop me if I have--that we had in the new 1958 building a special exhibition gallery, which was designed specifically for special exhibitions. [J.] Byers Hayes was the architect for that building. He worked on it. It was our first effort to have a flexible, all-purpose gallery that could be changed easily by built-in things for change. We had overhead connections for stainless steel rods to support and to stay and hold partitions. We had sockets in the floor to take the posts for the partitions. Also, every other socket had electricity, so that we had cases designed that fit in there that could be moved anywhere and could have their own illumination. And the partitions were designed to be painted and so forth. It worked fairly well, but it was really our first essay in this thing. As a matter of fact, it wasn't done very much

elsewhere. There were various efforts at it, but it hadn't really been worked out, I think. It became much better in the [Marcel] Breuer wing, and Bill worked that out. So we were able to have major exhibitions like the Japanese Decorative Style, the Treasures from Medieval France, and so forth and so on. Each exhibition looked the same, in a sense, because the galleries were fixed, though flexible. But also they looked different because of the scale of the partitions and the different color choices and spaces involved. And Bill was a genius at this. He was very good. He was a little-- People sometimes complained about his color being a little too drab. On the other hand, you go to some exhibitions where they pour on the scarlet and chrome yellow and Swedish blue, and you wonder where you are. And then Bill was also responsible for working with the curator for installation of the permanent collection. So there was a constant relationship going on between the designer and the curator, and with the director involved where necessary. It improved the appearance of the collections and also the flexibility, but it did not drastically increase costs. So that was another first, having the design department, and it worked very well.

GARDNER

Did you ever have any real knock-down-drag-outs between the curator and Bill Ward?

LEE

Not really. I can't remember anything that was actionable. There would be occasional harsh words and some pouting problems occasionally. But basically it worked out. And if there was a problem, the director was ready and willing to try to arbitrate or simply, if there couldn't be an arbitration, to decide which way we're going to go. It was the same thing with purchases. Our policy was very, very simple with the curators. If the curator wanted something for the department and the director did not want it, we didn't get it. If the director saw something that he wanted that he thought would be important for the department, other than the oriental department, and the curator did not want it, we did not get it. But if both the curator and the director were in agreement that that was a piece that really ought to come, we almost always got it, because we would unite and go to the trustees, the accessions committee of the board, and the department and the director would be in full

agreement, and we would move through with it. That kind of mutual veto system worked very well in various areas where you could have problems develop.

GARDNER

The next one I have on my list is the relationship with Case Western Reserve [University], the art history program. And I guess that ties back into some of the things that we've talked about in education.

LEE

Well, there had always been a kind of relationship, because when Dr. [Thomas] Munro came as curator of education in 1928 or 1929, about the same time William [M.] Milliken became director, Tommy was a joint appointment of the museum and Case Western Reserve University. The courses I took and his supervision for my doctorate were part of that program between CMA [Cleveland Museum of Art] and Western Reserve University. So there had been a connection. And I had been adjunct professor at the University of Washington when I was out in Seattle. I taught there, and I felt very strongly that curators should be involved somewhat in the educational process, that it wasn't just the responsibility of the education department, because the education department had perhaps sometimes different orientations. There were educators, there were artists, and there were art historians. But the curator was primarily an art historian and was trained primarily in objects. I encouraged people to teach courses with the university if they wished to. When I came there as curator in '52, I began teaching occasional courses at the university in connection with oriental art. And when Bill Wixom came as curator for medieval art, he loved to teach and he would give courses with the university. Henry Hawley, when he came, began, and Ed [Edward B.] Henning, who was-- Have I said anything about Ed? I have.

GARDNER

Yes. We'll talk about him more--

LEE

When he moved from the education department to be curator of modern art, he continued to teach courses in modern art in connection with the university.

Well, it seemed to me that now that we had these larger capabilities because of our endowment, this relationship could be expanded and perhaps made a little more formal. I tried to encourage this to be done. The university was interested in it. But it worked only to a degree. There was always something about this joint program that was not totally successful. In part, of course, the university has its way of working, has its red tape and its traditions, has its faculty committees, and has a very strongly developed sort of university code of morals, ethics, and procedures. The museum is a somewhat different kind of institution, and these things sometimes didn't mesh in a way that made everything completely satisfactory. Of course a great deal depended upon the goodwill and the interest of the professors over there. And the university was not too wealthy. They were not that much interested in the history of art. They added one or two members of the faculty, and it gradually began to develop to a certain extent. I haven't followed what's happened since '83 too carefully, but I think it's still functioning and functioning reasonably well. I think the university has developed their side a little bit further and I think there is now-- We've had some good people come through there who have come out with Ph.D.'s and have gone on into the museum field or into university work. There are quite a few people who come to Case Western Reserve in the joint program with the museum because it was always predicated on one particular element being a major part. That was the use of the permanent collection, that the orientation of teaching of the history of art was to include, as a substantial part of the program, the use of the collections. Now, this had been true with the educational department in the museum when Tommy first came, all through the thirties and forties, that the education department used the collections. When I went there for my Ph.D., Dr. Munro used the collections, but Professor Donaldson, who was a Princeton [University] Ph.D. in Italian Renaissance sculpture--and I took some courses from him--basically did not use the collections at all. But the program, as it has developed, has contained a very strong component of use of collections and teaching, not only for just study, but also as the subject of papers. We developed the concept that a Ph.D. dissertation could be a substantial scholarly catalog of a coherent collection within the museum. And so, for example, Kleinhenz got his Ph.D. and wrote a doctoral dissertation which was a catalog of the early Chinese ceramics in the museum collection. Linda York Leach, who's done very well, is in England now and recently did the catalog of

the Chester Beatty collection in Dublin. Her Ph.D. dissertation was on the Indian miniatures in the Cleveland Museum of Art collection, which is published in a substantial book form. And so on. There have been others. In the field of Gandharan-Iranian art Martha Carter wrote a dissertation on Soma. Then there was [Thomas E.] Donaldson. He didn't do much on the Indian sculpture collection, but he wrote his dissertation on medieval Orissan sculpture in India. And there have been others: Hou-Mei Ishida on Wang Fu, Sheila Bills on Sino-Tibetan sculpture. These theses are not ordinary doctoral dissertations, but it is, I think, a very useful approach and one that is particularly appropriate for people that are going on in museum work, art museum work. When I came into art museum work at all, even as a volunteer back in 1939 at the Cleveland Museum of Art, it was almost unheard of for a museum curator to have a Ph.D. Even a master's degree was very rare. Most of the curators in American museums in the twenties and thirties were A.B.'s from Harvard [University], Yale [University], Princeton, maybe occasionally from somewhere else. But that basically was what it was. The university people universally looked upon the curators as dilettantes and amateurs, and the curators looked upon the university professors as pedants and picky librarians. That attitude, while it has been tempered somewhat, is still around. You find it quite often, and I suppose it's natural. But I've always felt that we ought to learn from the animal world, since humans don't seem to be able to control their passions very well, that you have to have a symbiotic relationship. As William Blake said--I think he said it--"One law for the lion and lamb is tyranny." You've got to have university people working with museum people, and they've got to be different because of their responsibilities, but they also have to learn to work together. So that was one of the things we tried to do, as well, in the joint program with the university. Now what do we want?

GARDNER

The next on my list-- You mentioned briefly the extension division. As you said, it dated back a long way.

LEE

Yes. I said something about that in relation to our filching the two preparators from the extension department. Now, they were anxious to get out. And I've

said something about the background and the use of that extension exhibition. Well, again, we tried to enlarge it and develop it a little bit further for its own purposes. The previous system had been that they worked with the public school system. Each school had an exhibition case that was assigned to that school, and the extension exhibitions would change the case every six to eight weeks or so, depending-- And they worked with the teachers and programmed the material in the case to go with something that the students were studying at the time. It was successful, but limited. As the school system developed and as problems began to develop in the school system because of large numbers of students--the population explosion in the younger students--and as the demands in the school curricula for primary and secondary school became more and more oriented to social subjects and practical subjects, the proportion of energy and funds expended for the arts in the public schools became smaller and smaller. Leonard Hanna had always been interested in Karamu House, which is a black settlement school. It's a settlement house that was over near the [Cleveland] Play House, between the museum and the Cleveland Play House, and they did work with talented black children. They also had programs for the black community in dance and music and the arts. Leonard had always been interested in that and had substantially contributed to the development of Karamu House. I think it was in '58 or '59 we set up in Karamu House a small gallery for extension exhibitions to use for changing displays. You know, Cleveland is an extraordinary city in many ways. One of the extraordinary things about it is the division between the east side and the west side. The Cuyahoga River cuts north into Lake Erie. West of the Cuyahoga is the west side and east is the east side. The east side includes the downtown, the major downtown area. But it was almost as if you had a Chinese wall running along the Cuyahoga River along into Lake Erie, because people on the west side really didn't have much to do with people on the east side. The west side was where a very large part of the ethnic population was. Very large Hungarian, Polish populations. We had several problems at the museum in our guards, for example, with the Hungarians, because the Hungarian population became very large after the putting down of the revolution in Hungary.

GARDNER

In 1956?

LEE

In the late forties. One of our guards was a former colonel in the Hungarian army, the precommunist Hungarian army. His name was Colonel Pohly, and he just did not like black people. I began to hear these stories, and finally we confronted him. He said, "They have no right coming to the museum." I said, "Well, I'm sorry. You just can't have that kind of attitude and be a guard here. That's all wrong, and you are herewith requested to resign. If you don't resign, I'm going to fire you." So we got rid of him. This is a footnote to this problem. He was Hungarian and there were problems. The east side was where the heavier black population was, and when I became director, we had finally, at long last-- Now, the building superintendent was the brother of the building superintendent at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts and the brother also of the building superintendent at the Art Institute of Chicago. It was sort of a-- Not a mafia, but an Irish family, clan kind of thing. Things were not going terribly well. We had a new building superintendent from within the museum, because Mr. McCabe retired. And next, we got a new building superintendent in from outside, which caused a little bit of problem. The assistant building superintendent had been the foreman before, and he became assistant building superintendent. His name was Joe Kraynak, a Polish fellow and reasonably good, but very, very flighty. I mean very flighty. The next person in line for foreman after a bit was a black man, Ezekiel Williams, who was very good, a very, very nice man and a very good worker. So when the previous foreman left, I made Zeke the foreman. This was about, I'd say, '61, '62, '63, and I had a deputation from the union representatives saying that they would not work under Mr. Williams. I said, "Well, that's just most unfortunate. That means we're going to have to get a whole bunch of new people to work under Mr. Williams." They couldn't believe it. They simply couldn't believe it. But they knuckled under, and we finally, I think, made the thing work. But it was a touchy business. Cleveland was very, very conservative. Of course, everywhere else was too.

GARDNER

It's very interesting, because the museum was in an odd middle place. Its primary support came not from ethnics and not from the blacks--

LEE

No.

GARDNER

It came from a group of Clevelanders--

LEE

Nor from the city. It came from Clevelanders who were of the old New England tradition of noblesse oblige. But Cleveland was, I think I said earlier on, a little bit different and a little special, because the Cleveland people who supported the museum--and they supported it handsomely--didn't put strings on things. They really supported, and they gave and gave the money for the purpose of the museum. They were not interested in personal aggrandizement or fame. They believed in hiring professionals to run the place and letting them run it. And that's unusual. That combination is unusual. It really was the reason why it was such a wonderful place to be and why it was so different. To a certain extent this was true at Toledo [Museum of Art] and it was true to a certain extent at Kansas City [Art Institute]. It was not true at Detroit [Institute of Arts]. It was not true at Saint Louis [Art Museum]. It was different. But that was the tradition. Now, beginning in the sixties, the late sixties and then on, you had the beginnings of change and so on. The museum had fortunately always been multicultural, if that's the term people want to use. It had always been multicultural. As a matter of fact, I think I said earlier, one of the things I remember so well was that the director of the Detroit Museum, E. P. [Edgar Preston] Richardson, told me, "But Cleveland's not a very interesting museum. It represents every tradition except our own." [laughter] Well, that was a strength too, because we had strong collections of art all over the world. It was, I think, a little easier for the museum, and also because of the education department with its Carnegie grants and interest in the school system, and Leonard's interest in the black community and Karamu-- The traditional sort of closed circle was tempered to a degree, and I think it was effective and it helped the museum to make a transition from the ancien régime to the new order, as it were.

**1.14. TAPE NUMBER: VII, SIDE TWO
JULY 13, 1992**

GARDNER

The next thing I had on the list was operations. And I mentioned the name Albert Grossman before we turned on the tape, and that lit a spark.

LEE

Let's first do publications, because that's carrying on from the same general type of thing.

GARDNER

Fine.

LEE

The Hanna bequest made it possible to look at the publications department. We had previously done occasional publications catalogs, but Leonard had, through his Hanna Fund, underwritten shows that basically had been organized by the Museum of Modern Art. We had the big Picasso show. We had a big Bonnard show. This was all in the forties and early fifties. The principal publication of the museum had always been The Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art, which was a monthly publication, and it had glossy outer covers and then mat paper inside. Usually it ran from eight pages to--if it were a thicker bulletin--sixteen and with a rather small format. It was used for articles on new acquisitions. It was used for description of special exhibitions. It was a kind of an all-purpose thing. There was some good scholarship, but on a very sort of restricted scale, and some good popular things, but also there was an awful lot of puffery and also routine things that ought to be in some different kind of publication, a news and calendar. So we decided that we needed to improve the publications program and develop it further and change some of its ways. So we made the bulletin slightly larger in size and we established a newsletter which took away from the bulletin all sorts of ephemera. The bulletin became a reasonably good scholarly but popular report about the development of the collections, acquisitions, or groups of things that made sense. The thickness, the length of the bulletin, was increased considerably too. It varied from twenty-eight, thirty-two, thirty-six pages. The editor of the bulletin previously had been also the curator of ancient art. (When I came as curator of oriental art in '52, I was also put in charge of but not curator of ancient art.) And we needed an editor. We needed somebody who would supervise a good publications program full-

time, including some good museum catalogs of the collections and of special exhibitions. We felt very strongly that, with this new affluence, we should take it as a responsibility and as a charge that we were going to do more in organizing on our own special exhibitions that were required to be done that would make a contribution to art history and to the understanding of art in Cleveland and around the United States. So we got Dr. Merald [E.] Wrolsted, who was a very well trained and creative editor, very much interested in typography. He was the publisher of and editor of-- I've forgotten the name of the magazine, but a magazine that specializes in the problems associated with book making and typography. He's a nationally recognized person. He came to be our editor, and he had an assistant. We went to work, and when, for instance, I did the Chinese Landscape Painting exhibition in 1953, one of the first things I did-- I'd been thinking about it for a long time, and I just couldn't wait to do it, because I thought there had never been an exhibition on Chinese landscape painting. We did it and we were able to get out a catalog, which was later redesigned and reprinted, because there was a demand for it in paperback--Dover Press. The first catalog was a real penny-pinching operation. This was '53, and we had to do it on a very, very tight budget. It was printed up at the Ann Arbor [University of] Michigan Press and it was done in a fairly inexpensive kind of litho. But it sold out and it was redone. The first exhibition we did under the new dispensation was, I think, Japanese Decorative Style. Merald and I talked together about what kind of catalogs we wanted to do. I remember when I was a student I was impressed with the sort of sensibility and common sense in the Museum of Modern Art catalogs that]; Surrealism that James Thrall Soby did. They were good catalogs, they were accurate, but they weren't pretentiously scholarly. They were easy to handle; they were a size that you could hold in your hand without breaking your wrist. They simply were so damn sensible. And Merald agreed with me. So the first one we did, I think, was were done in the thirties under Alfred Barr: Cubism and Abstract Art; the African exhibition Jim [James Johnson] Sweeney did [African Negro Art] Japanese Decorative Style, and it was very successful. And we went on from that. We began doing our own shows and we had very good success. Merald--he died not long ago, very tragic--was there all the way through. I think he produced a very distinguished lot of things. I hate to say this in this kind of way, but I think the proof of the success of our publications program, especially in our bulletin and our catalog, was that we never ever won a prize

from the American museum association [American Association of Museums] for our publications because they weren't the kind of trendy, glitzy things that always got the prizes every year. Merald and I used to sit and commiserate with each other about how the world was going to hell in a basket as far as publications went. But I think the publications department did a very, very good job in the catalogs that they did.

GARDNER

In shaping the bulletin, were there any models that you had in mind?

LEE

Well, the museum bulletin is interesting. Somebody could actually write a very good long article or small book on art museum bulletins, the history of art museum bulletins. The models for bulletin publications before World War II were, let us say-- The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, published a very sensible sort of old-fashioned, two-column-type, tall, narrow format bulletin with very substantial articles by their very good curators. They had George Swarzenski there for medieval art and the classical and Egyptian departments were famous. Painting was not all that great, but the oriental department was. And they produced a very substantial scholarly bulletin regularly month after month after month. The Metropolitan [Museum of Art] did one that was rather more like the Cleveland bulletin, sort of trying to do two things at once: scholarly articles on collections and news and information as well. Most museums had bulletins, but they were sporadic. The only bulletins that came out month after month before World War II were the Boston museum bulletin, the Metropolitan Museum of Art bulletin, the Cleveland Museum of Art bulletin, and that actually was about it. Every museum had what they called a bulletin, and they came out and they were bound up in volumes in the library each year. But these volumes-- You would just take a look, walk down the stacks, and you'd see, some would be thick, some would be thin. It was sporadic.

GARDNER

Monthly is a terrific burden for an institution to--

LEE

Right, but I think it's one way-- The members of the museum liked to get, you know, a monthly thing. What happened, of course, is that after World War II, with the spread of interest, with the cultural explosion, so-called-- The idea of popularization, which I'm for-- As a matter of fact, this recent book cites me as being the chief popularizer of oriental art in the United States for twenty or thirty years. I believe in the essay. I believe in writing books for educated laymen. I believe in writing books for children's education. What I find difficult to accept is the idea that you should write things that are designed primarily to entertain and be popular. That is, I think in order to learn about art, you have to do a little work. I think in order to learn about anything, you have to do a little work. You have to do some reading; you have to do some looking; you have to do some comparison. You can't just sort of sit back and have a tape flow over you and learn anything. After the war, we began to get this development of popular, entertaining publications. So the Boston bulletin has gone with the wind. They may have an occasional bulletin, but I don't think they have much more than that. The Metropolitan bulletin became, as Cleveland's, larger and they went in for color in a big way. We went in for color on the cover only. But to show you just one little point to indicate how these things really percolate through the whole fabric of the museum if you're concerned about these things: Merald and I had a strict rule that you did not reproduce a work of art in color as a decoration on the cover of the bulletin. If you did, you showed the thing either as an integral work or you used a detail. But you did not imprint on the reproduction of the work of art, because that represented a transgression, an invasion of the integrity of the object. I'm sorry to say that now the Cleveland bulletin does this regularly. And as a matter of fact, recently they have begun using silver tone and copper tone and so forth things on works that have nothing to do with that at all. It's just a means of making the thing look more like something that belongs on a coffee table. The Metropolitan bulletin has become much glossier and really is very informative. It's very well done. They have a lot of good factual information. A lot of the essays, I think, are usually quite well written. But something's been , which are scholarly, primarily for a scholarly audience. The National Gallery [of Art] has an occasional publication of that type; they don't have a regular bulletin. Philadelphia [Museum of Art] does not. They used to. The Art Institute of Chicago does not have a regular bulletin, but they have a regular kind of museum studies thing which is very scholarly. But the thing that has

disappeared in my experience is the thing that corresponds in literature to essays by, you know, people like V. S. Pritchett or E. B. White or the sort of literate, pointed, serious, well-written introduction to a given subject or object or whatever. That's more or less disappeared. What you have is either computer-written scholarly publications that look exactly like a compilation from the computer and are dreadful to read-- You can look up all kinds of nifty information and so forth, but the general public, certainly not. That kind of directed essay is gone. I think the bulletin was a part of that thing, and it's gone. I think it's a real loss. I think in the gradual disappearance of the museum bulletin. I mean, there are the Metropolitan Museum Studies Catalogs, since we're on publications now-- I was in charge of the Far Eastern section of the Circa 1492 exhibition held on the five hundredth anniversary of Columbus.

GARDNER

How time flies when you're having a good time.

LEE

Yes, how time flies. That catalog is monstrous. It really is a physical problem for anybody over fifty to hold. You can't clutch it between your two fingers. It will fall right out, and if it falls on your foot, it will break your toe. They're monstrous, those telephone books. [J.] Carter Brown was very unhappy when I made, I thought, a lighthearted allusion to the weight of the 1492 catalog at the press preview conference. But it's true. Those books that you can carry with you, collections of essays, to the doctor's office or the hospital where you're going to wait forever for them to tell whether you're well or not, or the things that you can take where you're going to have some leisure time or when you're in an airplane-- You can't take the catalog for 1492! And there was an even bigger one. The Nelson Gallery [of Art], Kansas City, had this big exhibition of Tung Ch'i-ch'ang and his circle, a late sixteenth-, early seventeenth-century Chinese painter of some importance. It's a two-volume catalog that is three times the weight and size of the 1492 thing. I think there is something, in terms of reason and balance, that is gone in this respect. And I think this bulletin has simply become almost extinct.

GARDNER

Well, the catalog, in a sense, as you describe it, has changed its mission as well.

LEE

Sure.

GARDNER

It is no longer something that the exhibit goer picks up to carry around and see the exhibit. It's rather something, first of all, to take home, but second of all, something to memorialize the exhibition and the people who put it together.

LEE

Yes. I think the audio thing has in a sense simply--

GARDNER

Oh! The audio tour.

LEE

The audio tour, which incidentally-- Let me begin by saying that we knew about the audio tour thing. Acoustiguide came to us and told us all about the wonderful things they could do for us. And I was somewhat suspicious, but we said-- We had staff meetings. We really had regular staff meetings every week and a major staff meeting once a month--that is, it was the smaller group once a week--and we discussed all these things. This wasn't all just ukase from on high in the director's office. When Acoustiguide came, we had a long discussion about it. Finally we said, "Okay, we'll give it a try." So we let them come in, and we said, "This is going to be a trial run. We're going to have it for six months and we're not going to charge for this thing, so how much is the bill going to be?" And so on. Then our education department, along with Ed Henning, the curator of modern art, produced, worked out, an Acoustiguide of the modern collection of highlights from the twentieth-century paintings. We had a questionnaire drawn up which we gave to people and asked them to please leave it at the desk after they turned in their Acoustiguide, or if they forgot it, please mail it to us, post-free. The tape tried to explain very clearly what impressionism was attempting to do and how they differed, different artists, in their usage of it and about postimpressionism and the early period

of the early twentieth century. Ed's a very good educator in this area. His catalog Fifty Years of Modern Art, 1916-1966, that he did along with the Treasures from Medieval France on the occasion of our fiftieth anniversary, is a very, very useful book for a student and for a layman in understanding what was going on in that fifty-year period. Well, he did a good job on the tape. We analyzed all the replies. And it was cataclysmic. Nobody could tell you anything. I mean, I forget the statistics, but it was something like less than 10 percent of the people who responded had gotten anything out of that damn thing. Just salient features. Questions asked--nothing. So we said, "Thank you very much, but no thank you. You may take it away." Well, we got a terrible reputation around the circuit, because everywhere Acoustiguide went they'd say what a stodgy institution Cleveland was. We tried to improve labels. We worked a lot on that. That's another subject for a book: labeling of pictures. How much can you put on a label? What should go on a label? What should be its size in relation to the painting? I love those institutions-- Toledo [Museum of Art] always used to give me a bang when you'd go in the big room and there'd be a sign above the painting in letters two feet high, a foot and a half high, which say "Rembrandt," "Velázquez," you know, and so forth. And then there'd be that picture below it. Then you go up and see the label and-- It still hasn't been thought out. People do like to read labels. I would say the proportions of people who go to art exhibitions are approximately as follows: curious people who just come in because they want to know what's going on, maybe 10 or 15 percent; serious people who are laymen, not scholars but laymen who are interested in art, the visual arts, maybe let's say another 10 percent. But the vast majority of people that come in are basically word or sound oriented, not visually oriented. Pictures don't move. They see a lot of television, but pictures don't move. They're inanimate. And these people are word oriented or sound oriented. Now, it's fashionable at exhibitions, you have these very large labels before a section which tell you all the background of the thing. I spent a lot of time-- My prejudices -- They set up outside in the medieval area a special display for that exhibition. They had a big octagonal surround, with color transparencies lit from behind, of all the illuminated pages of the manuscript on the outside of the kiosk. And in the inside the manuscript itself, the original manuscript, was in a case in the middle of the octagon. I stood there for an hour, just around there, observing what people were doing. Almost no one looked at the original manuscript in the middle,

almost no one. They spent all their time going around, looking at the transparencies or reading the type. The idea that you might have a small book, you know, that would explain all these things and you would carry that around and read it, that's gone. They ain't word oriented that way. They're word oriented in terms of a display. A screen is the best of all. But a label displays something. are prejudices, but by God, they're well founded. [laughter] I watched, for example, when the Metropolitan Museum got that medieval manuscript from the Rothschild collection of the famous Book of Hours We haven't worked it out. Because if there's one thing that is true of the visual arts it's that, like anything else, it's a language. You have to learn what the words are, what the letters are, what the grammar is, and so forth, if you're going to understand what you're looking at, and we aren't doing that. They tried to do it. Tommy Munro was one of the people that was interested in developing this kind of thing intelligently. In its funny, quirky way, the Barnes Foundation--that old crazy Dr. Albert [C.] Barnes--was trying to do it too, according to their lights, to get people to understand how things visually were put together. There were all kinds of things that could be done, but it hasn't been done, and I think that we know really very few-- A very few people know more and more and more about art and around art, but I think the number or percentage of people who understand the visual arts qua visual arts has declined. How did we get off on this? We were talking about labeling?

GARDNER

And catalogs.

LEE

Catalogs and so forth. All right. Now we come to operations.

GARDNER

Before you do operations, I have one other publication that I'd like to ask you about, and that's the handbook.

LEE

Ah, the handbook. The handbook. We had many staff meetings about the handbook, and what I've been saying about the Museum of Modern Art publication thing had something to do with our thinking. The idea, we all

agreed, for the handbook was that the handbook was to be something that was not necessarily useful in terms of text. It could be useful in going around the exhibition, in order for you to make your notes near an image of the thing, so that you could remember and deal with what you had seen after you had gone. Secondly, what they call sometimes a picture book, a brief guide to the collection-- But that did not do the job. If you have what you think is a great collection that has been worked on by a dozen or more people carefully and conscientiously over a period of fifty years or more and you have what is considered to be, by many scholars in various fields, one of the choice assemblages of important works of art of many different cultures, by God, there should be some way that you can get this into people's hands. Maybe they might come to the museum because they could see all this stuff. It's no good just to make a selection. You've got to have as much as possible and it also has to be arranged some way. So we battled it out and worked it out. We decided it should be a size that would fit into an overcoat pocket (Cleveland is a bad climate area); that it should have as many sharp, small illustrations of the key works in the museum as possible within this size requirement, which meant somewhere give or take a thousand was the sort of number we had up here; and that it should be arranged in a way that reflected the organization of the collection. This brings us back to the rearrangement of the departments and brings us to, as we finish talking about the handbook, the reorganization of the collections, but organized that way so that it could be followed as one went through the museum. Also it should be tough physically, because there's nothing worse than having a handbook that falls apart. So the first one we did was the one you probably know, which has the green linen cover, utilitarian, not sexy at all, but it's tough. Mine's held together very well. And that we came out with. In Europe, there are a couple of museums that have done that. In Japan, they've done it more recently. They've picked it up, I think, from some places. But then we enlarged it as the collections grew enormously and rapidly because of the Hanna bequest. Now they've got a new handbook, which has just come out. Have you seen that?

GARDNER

No.

LEE

Well, it's the horizontal format. You know, the kind that you can't hold straight. It flops, you know, it's oriented this way. The reason it's oriented that way is that they adopted a system which is called--it's very old-fashioned, as a matter of fact, and it goes back to Élie Faure in his five-volume History of Art published in the twenties--"time line." That's the buzz word now: "time line." So that you have-- Well, it's like 1492 written large.

GARDNER

Culturally neutral?

LEE

You go across the years. For the twelfth century, you start on the left-hand side of this horizontal thing, and you have Europe, different countries, and then on the right side, you have the Oriental, ancient, or African or pre-Columbian or whatever it is. First of all, it does not relate to the way the collection is arranged. Secondly, it's an arbitrary selection of a chronology, across the board, in cultures that may have developed and matured at totally different speeds and from totally different date origins. So there is no real significance, in that a Chinese painting of the thirteenth century of the Sung dynasty is on the same spread as a Duccio or a Giotto. It's a gimmick, pure and simple. And furthermore, that horizontal format means it's very hard to use. And of course it's not physically very strong. Problems. Is that enough on handbooks?

GARDNER

Did you find that the handbook was very popular? Was it something that people really liked to have?

LEE

Well, they sold steadily. I mean, you didn't have people coming up and salivating, saying, "I must have my latest handbook." But they sold steadily. They ran out, and we then did a new one. I think, as I remember--I have to check--there probably were two-- Yes, there were two editions of the handbook. I think we printed, as I remember, something in the neighborhood of five thousand. Cleveland, you know, is the failure story : [of publications in terms of sales and catalogs and things like that. It's fairly consistent. Cleveland

is not in that kind of crossroad situation that people in Chicago, New York, Washington, London are. There's a certain critical mass I think you have to have before you get into these big numbers, unless you do something specifically to attract big numbers. So that if we did an exhibition catalog for a major show, for Chinese Art under the Mongols [The Art of the Yüan Dynasty, 1279-1368], for Treasures from Medieval France, for the Bernardo Cavallino [of Naples] show, the Caravaggio and His Followers exhibition-- Those were all major shows. They were things that had not been done and that should have been done. That is, they had a real scholarly raison d'être. They were attractively done and they were not enormous telephone-book-type things. But we learned the hard way that it was very hard to sell more than three thousand copies. As a matter of fact, in some cases, it was better to sell two thousand at even cost price, that you'd come out of it better than if you got the cheaper unit price of three thousand or five thousand and you were left at the end with, you know, two thousand unsold copies. So that's difficult for museums like Cleveland, Saint Louis, Kansas City, Toledo. They have a different problem than these other museums that can think in terms of volume. I think that hurts.

GARDNER

Okay. Should we move on to operations?

LEE

Yes. Operations. The financial department at the Cleveland Museum of Art, before the Hanna bequest, was a little bit like something out of Dickens. Mr. [Walter A.] Croley's title was comptroller, and that's what he did. He was the comptroller, and his assistant, who was sort of the bookkeeper, was Albert Grossman. Mr. Croley was a very nice man, but he was a chief bookkeeper type. There was no general manager for all the operations, such as the guards. The guards were under the captain of the guards. The utility men, carpenters, and those people were under the building superintendent. The restaurant, the bookstore, the sales desk, the personnel-- Everyone reported to the director. I mean, William was like a patriarch. He also liked to play one thing against another. We had a conservation department, and you had an enlarged library operation, you had the publications department, you had more guards, you had more-- And we had a pension plan that was something unbelievable. I get

two pension checks. One is from the old plan that was in effect when I came to Cleveland and was in effect until I became director. That check I get monthly from John Hancock [Mutual Life Insurance Company], and that represents a total of six or seven years of service and is \$85 per month, which I take to be around \$960 to \$1,000 a year. That was the kind of scale on which the pension plan existed for all these people. Then they would make adjustments for people who were sort of a little higher up in the hierarchy or who-- It was not done according to any kind of equitable system. There was some favoritism involved too. And Harold Clark, God bless him, we discussed this and he agreed that there had got to be a reorganization of the pension plan and the union too. He was very much interested in this subject. So we got John Hancock in and we went through this thing. I remember we went through several months. Finally we got a pension plan that was equitable and reasonably generous that really helped people out. But the point was that there was no one who was sitting on top of all this and really paying attention to it who was interested in that kind of thing. I mean, I'm not interested in pension plans, except in a very general way. Albert Grossman was put in charge of operations, which included all finance and so forth. We used to have financial reports coming from the comptroller to the director quarterly. The curators really didn't know anything [that was] was going on. Well, you know, strange things can happen over a period of three months in terms of where you are in your budget. One thing that Harold Clark and Albert Grossman and I agreed upon one hundred percent was that the most important single document to understand how the museum worked and what it was doing was the budget. That should be a very thoroughly researched document every year, and it should be organized in a way that reflects the actual activities in the museum by departments and what their specialties are. Further, there should be a monthly report which shows exactly, in the same format as the budget, what the situation was at that red-hot second. That actually was a lifesaver, because it meant that we really were on top of budgeting. Albert was even more parsimonious than I was. I would try to be generous, and he would try to hold me up and-- But we worked it out. The result was that we really knew where we were and we were able to have a balanced budget year after year after year. We also knew when we were getting into trouble or when we were getting into surpluses before it actually happened and it just was a tick, a blip on the screen. Albert also brought some order and system

into the cleaning personnel, the work personnel, dealing with the union and the union representative. Every year the president of the board, Harold Clark, the director, and Albert, would sit down with the union representative and the steward plus three members of the staff, who were designated by the union, and we would work out grievances all at the same time as the budget was being done. It was all part of what was put into the budget. So that the operations side of the museum, the actual physical and the maintenance of the building and the inspection-- I think we discovered that the roof of the 1916 building, all the display lights and the skylights--the skylights especially-- had not been checked and looked at carefully for a long time and that rust had penetrated through the steelwork into the masonry.

**1.15. TAPE NUMBER: VIII, SIDE ONE
JULY 13, 1992**

GARDNER

I'll let you finish your thought.

LEE

Yes. We were talking about the skylights [at the Cleveland Museum of Art]. That cost almost \$1 million to refurbish and replace and so forth, and this is back in the days when that would be the same thing as \$2 or \$3 million today. That kind of thing Albert [Grossman] got on top of. There were procedures developed to do it, and a lot of museums, you know, have done the same thing. I think museums are in some ways, for the operation side, better run now than they were long ago. But, you know, you really can tell by walking into a museum. Just walk in the main entrance and take a quick stroll for five minutes around, and you can tell pretty well whether the museum is--in terms of its operations, its physical maintenance, cleaning and so forth--being done right or whether something's funny or wrong. But all of these things worked together. They all interleaved and were all made possible because of the new responsibilities of the museum, with its new endowments and its new wing and its capacity to develop collections and programs, acquire objects, take care of them, educate people about them, have exhibitions--all these things. And it took a lot of pushing and pulling and hard work to get it going fairly smoothly.

GARDNER

You wanted to talk next about restructuring the collection. I think that fits in neatly here.

LEE

Yes, well, the reorganization of the collections and of the departments was something that we thought about but couldn't do anything much about under the dispensation as it was from '58 with the completion of that new wing until we began seriously planning for the next new wing, the one that was to be done by Marcel Breuer and Hamilton Smith. But we were thinking about it all the time. There was no logical continuity in the path a person would take through the museum without getting into very curious and sometimes surreal changes of material. Some things had been done, for example, that were caused by the war. In World War II, museums were constantly afraid there were going to be German bombers or whatever you want. For example, in Cleveland, William [M. Milliken]'s greatest treasure, for him, and rightly so, was the Guelph treasure, the great medieval purchase he'd made. It was put down in the basement in a special room, open to the public but reached through a narrow staircase. It was a little bit like going down into a crypt, and there they were down there. But that's where they were presumably safe. Just as a footnote to that, they weren't so safe, because, as the museum discovered in the 'fifties, you know, when we began to get on top of the operations, we had termites through the whole basement of the museum.

GARDNER

Oh, no!

LEE

And they had come with their little tunnels up the walls into the Guelph treasure room and they were eating away at the cases, the wooden parts of the cases, where there were wooden objects too. Anyhow, that cost us. We had the termite people, and they drilled holes through the basement floor into the lower earth and put in chemicals and etc. We finally got rid of them and got that straightened out. But that's where the Guelph treasure was, down there, and other medieval things were up someplace else. You walked from medieval art, for example, one way, and you would suddenly find

yourself in the midst of colonial portraits. Or you would walk in the other direction, and you might-- You would be in medieval art and suddenly find yourself confronting an El Greco. The department of prints and drawings had all their things downstairs in the prints and drawings galleries. All prints and drawings were down there. Not a single drawing was upstairs. Where you might have a painting by a German artist close to Dürer--and we have a Dürer drawing--there was just nothing. There was no really organized plan, in part because of the way the 1916 building had been designed, with its central core court and then galleries around, but ways back and forth--which made it difficult to have a path--and then the 1958 wing, which went around-- That made things difficult. Then with the [Leonard C.] Hanna [Jr.] money, we were buying wonderful things in modern art, in old master paintings-- Which we must get into, the organization of the collection as part of this. So we were planning and scheming, and the key to everything to us, in working it over-- and Bill [William E.] Ward, the designer, was very, very significant and had significant input into this--was really the location of the educational department and the location of the conservation department and the location of the publications department. All these departments had grown intentionally, but in their original spaces, which were close to or cutting into the space available for galleries. So when it became clear that it was desirable to begin planning for a new wing, the key thing was to provide a totally new environment for the education department and for conservation and for special exhibitions, because the special exhibition gallery was now sort of stuck between permanent collections and other permanent collections in the two different buildings. So the addition was to be thought of as an educational wing. It was for the education department and for the music department--a new auditorium--and for the special exhibitions, which are, again, very much educational. We talked about it and we sold it to the trustees and we raised some money within the museum family, really, on the term "educational wing." Emery May Norweb was now president of the board. She was a wonderful, dynamic person. Naughty. She had a wonderful sense of humor but she also had a deadpan face, and she could pull your leg until you didn't know, as Harold [T.] Clark used to say, "whether you were on foot or on horseback." She was all for this thing. We went into the financing and we finally-- The 1958 building--I don't know whether I said this--had been started

by William Milliken with [J.] Byers Hayes as architect and Harold Clark as president. It had been done on a cost-plus contract. Did I say that?

GARDNER

Yes.

LEE

Okay. Well, for the Breuer wing, we decided on a fixed price and that's it. I was very keen on Breuer's Whitney [Museum of American Art] building. I thought it was wonderful, and Emery May liked it very much. We decided, you know, what's the point of going around and having a competition and all this business? We know what we want and we like that building. He's an architect of considerable renown. Why don't we just decide we're going to have Breuer do it and then have him come in and work with us? Which is what we did. Anyhow, the plans for that made it possible, therefore, to move these ancillary--essential, but ancillary--operations within one building, planned especially for them. It freed up enormous areas of space in the old buildings where we could put galleries in that would enlarge the areas where they needed to have sequences and galleries of relationship, so we could envisage a path. A spectator could come in the main entrance, which would now be in the north, and walk through the history of the art of the world, from earliest times to contemporary, one long, continuous flow with occasional escape hatches. (People get a bit tired; they're bored.) But this also meant we had to have a decision and think about the organization of the collections, because we had the old, traditional imitation of the Boston Museum [of Fine Arts] system: ancient art, medieval art, painting, decorative arts, textiles, prints and drawings, and then oriental art, coming later, because they really didn't have much. And the problem with that is that, for instance, in oriental art you have Sung ceramics, Sung lacquer, Sung painting, Sung sculpture, art seen together in cultural context. In the European area, Spanish painting was in the armor court, but Spanish textiles were down in the corridor on the ground level, Spanish sculpture and metalwork and decorative arts were someplace else. Medieval art you had somewhat together, but once you began to get into paintings--medieval paintings--they were in the painting department. They were several galleries away. It seemed to us that the one sort of constant thing was when you're installing a permanent collection, you don't want to

keep moving it around. It's dangerous, costs a lot of money, time, effort, work, and so on. The permanent collection should somehow be organized in a way that is reasonably permanent. It's wonderful, and we did that in special galleries in the '58 building. We could pull things from the permanent collection to have a theme show--that's fine--but if you set up a theme show as a permanent collection, as some museums do, where they have, let's say, all their portraits together-- That's wonderful for three months or six months, but when you do it for year after year after year-- It's not how things happened. In Florence in the quattrocento, Pollaiuolo, Verrocchio all had shops that worked in metal, produced sculpture, designed textiles, etc. This was certainly true in medieval art and in oriental art. But it was also true in the West. It was true in the Renaissance. So we changed the departmental organization so as to remove the artificial distinctions between decorative arts and paintings and [give] a general cultural context. We had ancient art, a department of medieval and Renaissance art with a curator in charge of that, a department of baroque and rococo art, all the art. We had a department of modern art, we had a department of Near Eastern art, and a department of Far Eastern art. We kept the prints and drawings as a separate department with a curator because of the special requirements for storage and for short display because of their evanescent character. We kept the textile department for the same reason, because of their special requirements. But we reserved the right to have curators request material from other departments, where appropriate and safe, to include in the permanent display in the cultural context in which they were produced. So it was a kind of a combination of chronological and cultural continuity, recognizing that the understanding of a work of art really begins from the specific context of that work of art. This is now a very fashionable concept, but actually it's a very old concept. My first paid professional museum job was in Detroit. [William R.] Valentiner, as I think I said, was a pupil of [Wilhelm von] Bode's. And Bode in the old Kaiser-Friedrich-[Museum], around 1900, installed the Kaiser-Friedrich in this way. Now, he went, I think, a little too far in trying to establish kind of period rooms, but this was an old, in a sense, scientific way of arranging collections, and that's what we decided to do. We worked like pigs trying to get that worked out in the new spaces we had available, made possible by the Breuer wing. It all worked together, in the sense that you had to reorganize the departments, the curatorial departments; then you had to organize the

collections and the display of the things; then you had your handbook to follow that thing. So there was a real-- What's the word I want? There was an intellectual concept which could be explained, justified, argued for. You can't prove it's the right way to do, but you could make a good case for it. That permeated the whole permanent collection of the museum.

GARDNER

So in that thirteen-year period, then, between your taking on the directorship-- Wasn't it 1971 that the Breuer wing was completed?

LEE

Yes. See, it was '58 to '71. That's thirteen years.

GARDNER

You were all that time laying the groundwork for what would then take place?

LEE

Yes. I would say we weren't thinking about it, let's say, the day after we finished the arrangements, but it became increasingly evident and clear, the more we worked with it and the more I thought about it, the more I went around studying other museums and so forth, that this was something that had to be studied and done.

GARDNER

Maybe the logical thing to do now is talk about the [Robert] Motherwell purchase and moving into the collection of contemporary art.

LEE

Well, as I think I have said before, when I became director, the museum had no abstract or even semi-abstract paintings in the collection. Well, there was a Preston Dickinson watercolor pastel that had a little touch of abstraction to it, but there was no-- The latest Picasso was 1906. It was a great Picasso, La vie. Blue period. Superb. There were no Braques. There was no Paul Klee. There were things in the print collection, but I'm talking about paintings and watercolors and drawings. I take it back. We had one abstract sculpture, which was a Brancusi--I think I mentioned that--which William Milliken had bought from Joseph Brummer, the dealer in ancient and medieval art. He had a

Brancusi show and William bought it. Youth--brass torso. The trustees were very conservative. I remember when the Picasso exhibition-- Leonard was interested in impressionism, postimpressionism, Picasso's blue period, rose period. But he was not interested in abstract art or cubism or anything like that. Some of the trustees were actively against it. They hated the Picasso and Braque exhibitions the Museum of Modern Art organized and that came to Cleveland. It was just nothing. So Ed [Edward B.] Henning and I tried to make headway, and it was just very, very difficult. Now, I'm not famous as an avant-garde type, but according to the trustees I was a red-hot radical. Well, the first couple of years, as I may have mentioned, life was rather difficult for my wife [Ruth Ward Lee] and myself because the older ladies and the trustees' wives or the trustees-- I mean Mrs. Ingalls and Mrs. Wade and others. They remembered William, and here was this young, basically uneducated whippersnapper who came in and-- It was hard. I was fortunate in having the full backing of Harold Clark. Harold was superb and made it possible. But he was not interested in modern art. Anecdote: Later on, I went to Harold's and he said, "I want you to look at a couple of things." One of them he was using as a doorstop. It was something given him--

RUTH LEE

When he advised the Kelleys Island group.

LEE

Oh, that's right. Yes. Harold had advised-- Who was it?

RUTH LEE

It was a lawyer of that island.

LEE

Oh, that's right. The island out in Lake Erie. He was a lawyer and he had advised the Kelleys Island citizens. It was mixed up with steel companies and the ore companies. He had done some work for them in connection with that island, and they thought that since he was the president of the board of the museum that they'd give him something appropriate. So they gave him this thing. I saw it and I said, "Well, Harold, that's something I think we'd like to have for the museum very, very much." He said, "Well, fine. Take it. It's

yours." Well, it was a famous Matisse bronze, which was about two feet high, of two lesbians.

RUTH LEE

Which he didn't realize. [laughter]

LEE

He didn't realize. He didn't like them because they were nude. Mrs. [Mary Sanders] Clark was very, very prudish. He thought they were a man and woman nude, but they weren't. The sculpture's called, I think, The Two Lesbians. But that's the kind of climate we were talking about. So finally I said to Harold and I said to Emery May Norweb and-- I think they were the two principal ones.

RUTH LEE

Severance.

LEE

And Severance Millikin, who hated this stuff too but was a good friend of ours, and he would indulge me if I got very stubborn. I said, "Look, you all hate this stuff, but believe me, we've got to do something about it. If we don't do something about it, we're going to be the laughingstock of the museum world, which may not be a good reason to you, but it's a pretty good reason, because they will have very good reason to laugh. Why don't you just give Ed and me some money for a year and forget about it? Think of it as gambling money or blackmail money or any way you want to, but just give us something and let us do something with it. And we won't report to you until the end of the year and show you what we've done with it." So they did. The first sum of money I think was \$15,000. This was in 1959 or 1960, I think. Anyway, about there. We started looking and we saw this Motherwell collage called Mallarmé's Swan. Ed and I thought it was marvelous. I remember it was \$4,500, and a small dealer, Robert Elkon, had it in his apartment. So we bought that. That was \$4,500. Then we bought two or three other things. And that was the first year. The trustees weren't enraged by what we had done. They I think gave us \$25,000 the next year. We got another Motherwell, one of the Elegy for the Spanish Republic series, and the things that I've mentioned in that article in

the seventy-fifth anniversary thing. Each year we'd report what we'd done. And then the upshot, the sort of cream of the jest and thing that indicates the attitude of the trustees--at least the conservative, the dominant majority of the trustees-- Oh, maybe it was some five, six, seven, eight years later, we gave a report of the cumulative effect. By then we were spending-- The last year we did this I think the maximum was \$50,000. We showed all the stuff, and then I also, since everybody respects money and they are all interested in money, said, "Now, these are the total funds we've expended, and this is the total conservative market value of this material today." And it was amazing. I mean, you know, 1000 percent higher or something like that. And one of the nicest trustees as a person, Charlie [Charles B.] Bolton, who was in a wheelchair--he had polio--

RUTH LEE

No. He jumped off a diving board.

LEE

Oh, that's right. He paralyzed his back. And Charlie Bolton, in a deep, sepulchral voice from the back of the room, said, "Sell." [laughter] But the significant thing about that was that it sort of broke the back of resistance. Instead of coming up each year with each individual item and rubbing their face in it and having a great battle, which would exacerbate all-- This sort of entering-wedge way of doing it meant that from that time on, we could then seriously present things for fairly large sums, and that's how we were able to get material like the Picasso Salt Box, Melon, and Fan, which is a great early cubist picture. The other later cubist one-- We got the Braques. The wonderful Picasso '24 still life from Paul Rosenberg. And for those, you know, we paid what seems like small money now. We began to pay prices like \$180,000, \$220,000, \$250,000, and so forth. But we were able to do it. We encouraged the formation of a Society for Contemporary Art, friends of the museum. They put some little bit of money together, and we had an accessions party so they could vote on three different things. The first party I remember we had, I think we had a [Richard] Stankiewicz and we had, I think, a [William] Baziotes and a [Robert] Rauschenberg. Rauschenberg was Gloria 1954, a very, very tough picture. I think it was something in the neighborhood of \$6,000, something like that, or \$7,000. And they could only buy one. Well, Ed and I sort of fixed it

so the Stankiewicz wasn't well lit and the Baziotes was sort of flattened out by florescent light, [laughter] but the Rauschenberg, we jazzed it up a bit. And by golly, they bought it. And that's how we got-- That's a major, major painting of a type that I think we would never have gotten through the accessions committee. Same thing with the [Theodore] Roszak. The Roszak sculpture we got, we sort of rigged that a bit. But it worked, and it was better, in my judgment. It's better to do that and succeed and develop than it is to have an ugly confrontation and simply slam it down people's throats. The development of the modern collection at the Cleveland Museum of Art-- If people will take the trouble to go and look at the accession numbers, at the number of works and types of works acquired between 1958 and 1983, they'll see that an awful lot was done. [Mark] Rothko, Morris Louis, you name it. We got a lot of the major painters of the day. But we all agreed that one of the great achievements and wonderful things about the Cleveland Museum of Art and its tradition was balance, that we were representing the art of the world and it was a balanced view. We wanted to develop all of the collections in terms of quality and importance, but to try to achieve some kind of balance. And I think we did in the contemporary field. The thing kept moving ahead of us. In some cases, we didn't get what we wanted. We were able to get a Jackson Pollock, a very good one, #5, because I had told the Museum of Modern Art-- I knew they were occasionally deaccessioning duplicate material in order to get very expensive new material. Bill [William] Rubin called me up and said they had to deaccession #5 and was I interested, because they were going to buy a Kandinsky, I think, which was some millions. I said, "Sure." We were able to get it at a reasonably good figure. It certainly is not as great a picture as Blue Poles or Lavender Mist or you name it, but it's a very fine one, and it would never have been there and we would never have had one if we hadn't had to go through that long period of both guerrilla war and subversion.

GARDNER

Reeducation. [laughter] Who comprised the acquisitions committee?

LEE

Well, it varied, but there were usually, I think, eleven members. They were all trustees and they were responsible for the official decision to purchase things. It was not done by the trustees as a whole; it was done by the acquisitions

committee. The director was a member ex officio, but he had the right to vote. That was the only case where I-- They several times tried to make me a trustee, said I should become a trustee. I said, "No. I'm on this side and you're on that side, and let's keep it that way." But I did have a right to vote on the accessions committee. They ranged from people like Severance Millikin, who was a collector himself-- He collected Chinese and Japanese porcelain. He had some nice pictures and bronzes, and his wife [Greta Millikin] was very knowledgeable in art. She was Viennese. They had some very good French furniture, most of which is in the museum now. There were-- Well, Inge Kilroy, who collects American furniture later on. She became a trustee and went on the accessions committee. In the old days, Lew [Lewis B.] Williams, who was the father of Lewis C. Williams, who became president of the board later on-- Lewis B. Williams was president of the Federal Reserve bank for a while in the Depression and he was president of the National City Bank. He collected prints and drawings and a few paintings. Emery May Norweb was on the committee regularly and was president later on. She collected coins. She had a great collection of American coins, a great collection of English gold coins from the earliest through Elizabethan and on, which she gave to the museum. Let's see, who else?

RUTH LEE

Vignos.

LEE

Oh, Paul Vignos, who collects various things. He collected some not very important modern paintings and some Indian sculptures and some Chinese ceramic sculptures. There was George Bickford, who collected Indian art, who was accessions committee.

RUTH LEE

Perry.

LEE

Oh! Well, [A.] Dean Perry-- His wife, Geenie [Wade] Perry, made a superb collection of Chinese paintings which is coming to the museum as a promised gift. But then there were other people, like John Wilbur, who was an all-

American tackle at Yale [University] in 1934, who was not interested in art.
Nice man, but not interested in art.

GARDNER

Why was he there?

LEE

Well, he was a trustee, and the idea was that each trustee should be on one of the committees. When I became director they had only three committees: an executive committee to act when the board was in between board meetings, if necessary; a finance committee--

RUTH LEE

Accessions committee.

LEE

An accessions committee, right. Executive, finance, accessions committees. We added an education committee later on and John [Wilbur] was made chairman of that because he was interested in the educational work. They tried to put people on committees. And the finance committee was very tightly held by all the financial people, the bankers and lawyers or the very wealthier people. They did a very good job managing the finances. Jim [James N.] Sherwin was on the accessions committee and a very, very reasonable, nice man, interested very much in the museum, but not a collector really. Jim [James D.] Ireland, who was on the committee--

GARDNER

This sounds like a very big committee.

LEE

Eleven.

GARDNER

In the experience you've had around museums, and particularly later with all the associations and so on you were involved with, isn't this large for an acquisitions committee compared to others?

LEE

No.

GARDNER

Is this standard?

LEE

Many museums have bigger acquisitions committees. The Metropolitan [Museum of Art] has a bigger one. [The Art Institute of] Chicago has a bigger one. And I must say that they also meddle more. They're big, powerful collectors. When you get, you know, people like Avery Brundage or Bobby [Robert] Lehman in New York, you've got power to burn there. And it can be very, very-- One of the nice things about Cleveland is that while there were no powerhouse collectors, the traditional idea from the very beginning, in 1916, was that the museum is the one that does the collecting. I mean, John L. Severance left some wonderful paintings to the museum: The Burning of the Houses of Parliament-- But in terms of collectors-- I mean, when you think of [J. P.] Morgan or you think of [Benjamin] Altman or you think of Douglas Dillon now in Chinese painting or Arthur [M.] Sackler or, oh, you know, Potter Palmer, Russell Tyson-- That didn't happen in Cleveland. That was not the way Cleveland worked. Every now and then some disgruntled trustee would say they were just rubber stamps for the director. But they listened. The curators made presentations of each of their objects and there was a vote. Occasionally you'd get a little vibration of resistance. For example, one of the classic occasions was-- One of the first paintings the museum ever bought from Wildenstein [and Company]-- William would never go to Wildenstein's. He didn't like Wildenstein's and he wouldn't go there. But they had a wonderful painting, a crucifixion by Jean de Beaumetz from the charterhouse of Champmol, Dijon, and, I mean, for a French medieval collection, a work of the highest importance. Well, we put it up for the committee, and George Bickford, who was a collector of Indian art and a pillar of the-- Which church was he a pillar of?

RUTH LEE

Our church.

LEE

Your church? You mean the Anglican Church?

RUTH LEE

You pay the bills.

LEE

Yes, I pay the bills. We started to present the painting, and George said, "Oh, not another bleeding Christ!" [laughter] That was one famous remark. The trustees once voted down an object, and they lived to regret it. It was a put-up job. Emery May Norweb thought Sherman was getting a little bit too sure of himself and so he needed to learn a lesson. So they decided they would do that at the accessions committee meeting. Louise [S.] Richards was curator of prints and drawings, and the work fell into her department. I think they picked this object because Louise was perhaps the one least equipped to fight back. It was a Samuel Palmer watercolor. A beautiful one. Shoreham period. It's now in the [Pierpont] Morgan Library. It was \$32,000, and they voted against it. Louise was almost in tears. I said, "Okay. That's your decision. It's gone." Each year, at an appropriate time, I would remind them about that particular incident and that particular work of art and I would give them the market value of that piece as of that particular time, until they finally said, "No more. No more. Let's drop the subject." [laughter] That's the only time they ever said no.

GARDNER

Oh, that's quite a good record.

LEE

Yes. [laughter]

GARDNER

Let's see how much time we have left on the tape side. We're running out. Well, let me ask you a question you can answer briefly. Why didn't you want to be a board member? Very often the structure of the board is such that the director becomes a board president or something like that, as opposed to a CEO [chief executive officer] chairman.

LEE

I think, one, there's a real conflict of interest. I think it's the responsibility of the director to represent the professional side of the museum, the staff and the discipline and the theory. He's supposed to be the top professional in the museum. If he is a trustee, he enters into another relationship, which is one where he has a fiduciary responsibility. He can't feel as free, I think. Some people think it makes him free. I don't think so at all. I think there's a real conflict there. And I think I tried to get across to the last president of the board, who was a good friend of mine, Jim [James H.] Dempsey [Jr.], who was president when I retired, the concept of this.

**1.16. TAPE NUMBER: VIII, SIDE TWO
JULY 13, 1992**

GARDNER

Begin with the symbiotic relationships.

LEE

Yes, I think it's a symbiotic relationship between art and the representatives of art, the professionals in the museum, and, let's say, businessmen, including lawyers or bankers. I think it's very difficult for a businessman to understand that the business of an art museum is not to make money but spend it and lose it, but do it as intelligently, as rationally and as carefully, as possible. I think it's very difficult for them to understand that they can't cut corners when it comes to matters of quality or authenticity or condition: "What will work and work well enough is good enough." That's not the way it works in the realm of art. I think the best relationships are where each side understands what their responsibilities are and what their relationship is and they don't try to think of it as one kind of homogeneous soup that's all based upon the most powerful element, which is the business element. This concept of a symbiotic relationship is not looked upon with very great favor on the business side, and I think one of the things that has happened in the art museum world, especially today, is that this relationship has become rather confused at best and has disappeared at worst. We see it in the activities of the present director of the [Solomon R.] Guggenheim Museum. We see it in the increasing number of people running museums who are basically--or in considerable

part--business school or business training graduates. We see it in the priorities that are set up in many museums today. With my friends who are sporting types, my tennis partners or the trustees or people who are interested in sports, I tried to always explain this in terms of sports, because that's something Americans can understand. I mean, first of all, in the realm of sport, the idea of quality is simply taken for granted, and not only is it taken for granted, it's objectively discernible. I mean, Michael Jordon is one considerably better basketball player than somebody else. The man who hit sixty home runs-- I mean, Babe Ruth is clearly a giant. You get into the tennis world: Andre Agassi gives me a royal pain in the butt, [laughter] but he's a hell of a tennis player, just as some works of art give people a pain or a curator may give people a pain. That's not the question. The question is, what does he do or what does the work of art do for the museum? And you can explain this in the realm of sport, where they don't have a clue about it in the realm of art. And now that you've got all of these professorial types interested in deconstruction and in the sociological and anthropological approach to art, where the destruction of the concept of quality is commonplace, they're helping this destruction of the symbiotic--essential symbiotic--relationship themselves. They're digging their own graves, which is a very sad thing to watch. That's one reason why I don't think a director should be a trustee.

1.17. SECOND PART

JULY 14, 1992

GARDNER

To start with, I'd like to ask you to talk a little bit about the exhibit Japanese Decorative Style, which was really the first major show of your new regime. You had said you wanted to tie it into the 1953 show Chinese Landscape Painting.

LEE

Well, the special exhibition program at the museum had basically been, before World War II, either exhibitions organized jointly with the Museum of Modern Art-- The Museum of Modern Art actually did the catalog. They were basically funded by the Hanna Fund because of Leonard's interest in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century European painting. They were splendid

exhibitions that were shown first in New York, then they came to Cleveland. They were pioneering exhibitions in educating people about late nineteenth-, early twentieth-century painting, principally French. When I'd been a graduate student here in '39 or '41, Howard [C.] Hollis had arranged--and I assisted him--an exhibition of Chinese ceramics, basically ceramics of the T'ang and Sung dynasties with a few later and a few earlier things involved. It was a large and major exhibition. It was educational, certainly for me, and I think it was educational for a lot of people. There hadn't been that many Chinese ceramics exhibitions. Still, by and large, the American museum world, except for the Museum of Modern Art and the occasional exhibition at Boston or the Metropolitan, had worked on exhibitions that were basically masterpiece exhibitions. They were aimed at the general public, and there is nothing wrong with that. But there had not been so many exhibitions of the kind that had selected a period of time or a country or an idea and had developed an exhibition that made what could be called a contribution to knowledge. People began to get serious about exhibitions, I think, after World War II in the United States. There were beginning to be some very good exhibitions, and we all agreed--that means staff--that if we were going to make the effort to spend money and the time and the energy and professional staff and all that entailed, there should be an exhibition that tried to make a contribution: something new and something different. That was one of the reasons that I'd done the exhibition Chinese Landscape Painting back in 1953. Because, oddly enough, there were a couple of smallish books on Chinese landscape painting written back in the twenties by a German art historian, [Otto] Fischer, but there hadn't been any exhibition of Chinese landscape painting, which, after all, was one of the great contributions of China to the history of world art. So we had that exhibition in '54 and it was done on a shoestring and it made a mark. Not only that, but the catalog became a paperback book--Dover [Press] publications--and it was used by a lot of students and interested people. So with the new resources available in the beginning of '58-- I had always been interested in what I call the two faces of the Japanese coin: the reverse and the obverse. On the one side you have this absolutely fantastic Japanese ability to produce works of decorative quality in a very positive sense, not merely decorative, but in a very creative way, very daring compositions--asymmetrical and cut-off figures, the kind of things that influenced Degas and the impressionists in the late nineteenth century. That I called "Japanese

decorative style." The other side of the coin, of course, was this Japanese realism, for want of a better word. That was so extraordinary in the narrative handscrolls, for example, and Japanese portraiture and in the world of the Japanese print, the floating world, ukiyoe, with its interest in everyday life, genre, the prostitutes, and the pleasure quarters and all that. So I wanted to do Japanese Decorative Style, and I had in the back of my head that that would be followed, at some distant time, by an exhibition of the other side of the coin. We were able to get very good loans from Japan, from private collectors, though not too much from museums. In 1961, major museums that had clout like the National Gallery [of Art] or the Louvre or some of the Italian museums within the field of Italian art were getting loans from churches and from big museums, etc. Japanese Decorative Style basically borrowed from collectors and from collections in the United States. So there were not so many of the high-powered temple possessions or museum possessions, a few, but not the kind of things that came later. But it was a very impressive exhibition visually, and the catalog, again, I think made a contribution. It too was taken over by Dover and was made into a paperback and was used a great deal in schools and for general reading. We tried in our exhibition program to do exhibitions that had not been done before and do ones that would make a genuine contribution. I have just a list of some of them here. For instance, Remy Saisselin was a very bright, brilliant French scholar, but an American citizen, who was very much interested in the eighteenth century and the age of rationalism, which was one of the first exhibitions that picked up the interest in neoclassic art which was just developing at that time. Of course, later on, at the Burlington house in London, they had a huge neoclassic exhibition with some six or seven hundred pieces. But the Hawley exhibition was one of the first, and it made a real contribution. and so forth. He developed a theme called Style, Truth, and the Portrait, which was an exhibition of principally French portraiture which he organized. Again, nobody had seen anything like that one. Then Henry Hawley did Neoclassicism: Style and Motif

GARDNER

How many pieces would be in an exhibit of yours?

LEE

Normally not less than 80 or 85. In a few circumstances more, but basically not more than about 120, 130. When we had our fiftieth anniversary, we had a celebratory exhibition because of our strong medieval collection, which was Bill [William D.] Wixom's idea: Treasures from Medieval France, which was a spectacular show. We got great cooperation from the French. Hubert Landais, who was to become director of all the museums in France, had worked in Cleveland on a fellowship for six or eight months. He helped us and the director of the Bibliothèque Nationale, Marcel Thomas, and others. Bill Wixom and I went all over France looking for material, unusual and important Romanesque material, Gothic material. It was a marvelous show. Ed Henning did his Fifty Years of Modern Art, and then the following year Wai-Kam Ho and I organized the exhibition Chinese Art under the Mongols: The Art of the Yüan Dynasty, 1279-1368. That was a period that had been basically overlooked. It was between two famous periods, Sung and Ming. It had been a dumping ground for things that they didn't want to put in Sung or Ming. We worked very hard on it and were able to borrow significant material from Japan. It wasn't possible at that time to borrow anything from the PRC [People's Republic of China], and Taiwan at that time had a policy of not lending to individual exhibitions. But we got all the material from Japanese collections and from European and American collections. It really was the first exhibition, the first time and in print really, that there was an effort to define what the positive contributions of the Yüan dynasty had been. We had a symposium and a lot of scholars came from all over. It was a very, very big. Where we didn't have expertise on the staff and we felt that an exhibition should be done, we got it from outside. In '71, we asked Richard [E.] Spear, professor at Oberlin [College], who was the leading expert in the world on Domenichino. He had developed a tremendous interest in Caravaggio. We had gotten to know, a little bit, Denis Mahon, the English scholar who almost owned the subject in Europe. We had the], the first exhibition ever held of his work, and done jointly with Augsburg, his hometown. Then we came to the 1976 celebration of the bicentennial. Wai-kam Ho had suggested that while everybody was doing something about Americans and thinking about Americans, and Americans taking things from Europe and so forth and so on, why didn't we have an exhibition that looked at America through European eyes? That was the germ of the idea that led to exhibition Caravaggio and His Followers in '71. That, again, was a contribution. Gabe [Gabriel P.] Weisberg, who became

curator of education in the early seventies, did an exhibition, one of the first exhibitions that went into that subject, Japonisme: Japanese Influence on French Art. We acquired a Johann Liss painting--a rare German master and a very beautiful painter--one of the few paintings by him in America. Annie [Ann T.] Lurie, our curator of paintings, wanted to do an exhibition on Johann Liss. We did that in '75, '76 [Johann Liss] The European Vision of America, which we did. We organized the exhibition. We got Hugh Honour from Italy to be the guest curator, and it was the major art exhibition for the bicentennial. It was the one that was reviewed everywhere. It was shown in Washington. They insisted on having it first, which was okay with us. They had it open there first, then we had it in Cleveland, and then it went to the Louvre and was shown 311 ribution. at the Grand Palais and was very successful everywhere. It was, again, a major cont We were able to get the venue in America for the Chardin exhibition because of our friendship with Hubert Landais. It was very interesting. The Metropolitan had been trying to get it and one of the French curators had been tinkering with not sending it to Cleveland. We were very unhappy. Landais was appointed to be director of all the museums of France--he'd been deputy director--and one of the first things he did was to send a telegram to me saying, "Chardin à Cleveland," which was very, very good news indeed. That was very successful. Then we were approached by the Links chapter in Cleveland, which is an organization of college-educated black women. They have very, very strong chapters in various cities and a very strong one in Cleveland. They had come to us with a desire to have an exhibition that would be something of importance for the black community. They had thought of a showing of black artists. Those shows had been done again, again, and again in various places in the country, and we thought--we convinced them--that it would be important to have an exhibition that showed what the black contribution was to American art in terms of historical American art. We hired a guest curator, Dr. [John Michael] Vlach from the University of Indiana, and the exhibition The Afro-American Tradition in the Decorative Arts was the result. That, too, made an original contribution and one which Vlach is still writing about. One of the most successful exhibitions we ever had, in terms of attendance, was the Eight Dynasties of Chinese Painting exhibition, which developed in a perhaps petty but rather interesting way. Larry [Laurence] Sickman was the director at Kansas City [Nelson Gallery of Art--Atkins Museum of Fine Art] and the great expert on Chinese painting in

America. He had built the Chinese painting collection in Kansas City in the thirties and forties early on. We were talking, and Larry said, "You know, Wen Fong is trying to get together an exhibition in a big hurry at the Metropolitan. We don't want to let him get away with that, do we?" And I said, "Certainly not." He said, "Why don't we have an exhibition of our stuff? We'll show it together." I said, "That's a terrific idea. Not only is it a terrific idea, but we can do a catalog which will act as a catalog for each institution, so that we'll have a catalog of Chinese paintings as the by-product of the display." And we developed the Eight Dynasties of Chinese Painting show. It was a tremendous success. I have to say, I think maybe there was a degree of misunderstanding that caused the success, because all the paintings were from the collections of Cleveland Museum of Art or the Nelson-Atkins Museum in Kansas City. We had a lot of paintings. We didn't show every single one, but I think there were over 320 paintings in the exhibition. People came in droves and I could hear them talking. I'm not one hundred percent sure that they understood that all the paintings belonged to Kansas City and Cleveland. I think some of them thought that these had come from China and from Taiwan and so on, because it had the largest attendance of any exhibition at the Cleveland Museum of Art--I think also at Kansas City--up until that time. It was extraordinary. Then Gabe Weisberg did an exhibition The Realist Tradition in French Painting, the first time that an exhibition had been devoted to the tradition of the conservative academic and realist painters in the nineteenth century: artists like Ribot and Bonvin and Lhermitte and Millet and so forth and so on. Gabe was a great believer in proletarian art. He had done the Japonisme show and did a very fine catalog. This also was a very fine catalog and made a contribution. And then in '84--we'd been planning it for some years--we did an exhibition of Bernardo Cavallino, a one-man show like the Liss exhibition, with a guest curator. Ann Lurie did most of the work on that. Then, finally, my last exhibition before I retired was the one that I had been thinking about even before Japanese Decorative Style, which was the other side of the Japanese coin. And that exhibition we called Reflections of Reality in Japanese Art. That was a really major show with very important loans which the Japanese really bent over backwards to do the very best they could, because they knew it was my swan song, as it were. We got some fantastic material from Japan, just unbelievable, plus material from the States. Now, I recite this thing to emphasize the point that our program was developed-- There were other

exhibitions, but meant to be educational for a limited, local audience. But the major shows that we put the money into and that we spent the time to produce a major catalog for, etc., were all designed to make a contribution to knowledge. Our feeling--which the staff all agreed on, and we believed it thoroughly--was that it wasn't fair to risk works of art to travel and exposure and etc. unless you were doing something that was not just, you know, a masterpiece exhibition or-- It should be something that was new, different, and made a contribution.

GARDNER

Well, yesterday we talked about the acquisitions committee and their role in selecting works and approving purchases. Was there any similar role for the board on exhibitions, or did you and your staff have carte blanche?

LEE

There was no exhibitions committee. There were informal conversations, but basically the exhibition program would begin to be seen by the board in its appearance in the preliminary studies and in the annual budget. That would occur anywhere from three to four years before the exhibition actually occurred, and that would be the first occasion at which the board would know about the plans for such an exhibition. In approving the budget, they approved the exhibition plan. The trustees and the administration looked upon the budget as the key annual review of the state of the museum and of its future planning. Fortunately we simply did not have this plethora of committees where the trustees were playing at being museum professionals, as happens in only too many museums. I think they have more committees now than they used to because of financial demands and particularly development programs. Of course, when we were in the construction phase, as we were in '56 to '58 and '69 to '71 and when the library gallery wing was being done in '82 to '83, there was a building committee that was specifically charged--trustees--with riding herd and keeping track of what was going on in the building for very obvious important reasons of financial control. The museum world has changed so radically. One can mark the beginning of that change--in a symbolic and, to a certain extent, in an actual way---with the appearance of Thomas P. F. Hoving on the scene when he became the director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. He opened it in a big way with an

exhibition Harlem on My Mind. A great many of us in the museum world--I would say a majority of the major museum directors--were very, very critical of Hoving's methods and of his program.

GARDNER

Could you be more specific about what his program was and why you were critical?

LEE

Well, the idea basically I think, as he himself said, was to broaden the goals of the museum to include within its purview social responsibility, social activism in terms of minority groups and in terms of even political questions. It was picked up of course in modern museums by museums like the Whitney. Their activities with the contemporary artist, in many cases, involved real estate development in New York City or activist programs in connection with the political left wing. This was in addition to continuing work in the realm of art and what, back in the dim, distant past, used to be called "art education" or "art appreciation." There were areas where the museum became a part of the political, social, and economic environment in a given locale where attendance figures were terribly important, where money was spent on a considerable scale in order to increase attendance figures and to attract the public into the museum. Certainly there was nothing wrong with attracting the public into the museum, but the question is, when is it that they are coming to the museum for purposes that involve the understanding of art and when are they coming to the museum in order to be entertained or to be given programs that have only an ancillary or secondary relationship to the principal goals of the art museum? There are all kinds of museums. There are anthropological museums or historical museums, science museums, there are industrial museums, specialized museums involved with let's say the steamboat or railroad. There are snake farms and everything under the sun. But the art museum is a unique institution. In America, in my opinion, and I think it's not merely opinion-- I think any objective historian or social historian of the United States would say that the twentieth century has not seen the kind of comparable increase in interest in the arts that one finds in other things-- sports, entertainment, and so on. Actually, E. P. [Edgar Preston] Richardson, director at Detroit [Institute of Arts] and a great authority on American art,

took great delight in showing that there was, in terms of a proportion of the population, greater interest in the 1840s and 1850s in art in America than there was in the 1940s and 1950s, a hundred years later. The idea, then, of the so-called blockbuster exhibition, which was not always--in some cases was--an exhibition that needed to be done in terms of making a contribution-- There would be collections of masterpieces or something that were one of the topics of the moment in terms of news or entertainment. Well, you remember how many van Gogh exhibitions there were. There must have been one every year for a while. They didn't add anything, but everybody wanted to see van Gogh. This in turn led--because of the increase in the entertainment aspect of the museum--to balls, receptions, special events, and so forth. People don't understand that that means the staff of the museum has to work that much harder to do things that are not part of the major responsibility of the museum. That means that they have less time to spend on research and on exhibitions that make a contribution or on care of the permanent collection. It means that the utility staff is overworked because they're constantly having to set up galleries to have parties or some big dinner or cocktail reception. That meant that you had more people to work and that meant that it cost that much more. The whole thing became just like the increase of the national debt in the eighties. It all starts with a sort of plausible or attractive idea and then begins to snowball and it feeds on itself. Before you know it, you are in the red in a very, very big way. And that affects your mission and affects what you can do in terms of the integrity of the programs of the museum and the development of collections and the educational activities of the museum. The whole thing simply, in my judgment, led in the late eighties and nineties to this terrible financial pressure museums had developed. In this case, almost every major museum had seen the development office increase, in terms of the number of personnel involved and the budget that was devoted to the development office and the public relations office, to an amazing degree. You've had the increase of the size of the "bookstores" and the selling of unbelievable rubbish in order simply to try to raise money and make a profit. I gave the annual convocation speech at the College Art Association [of America] in New York City that was in the mid to late seventies and it was in the [Grace Rainey] Rogers Auditorium at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. I gave a very frank and critical review of this kind of activity. The Metropolitan, of course, had been the leader in it. It didn't make some people very happy,

but it did make a lot of people in the College Art Association-- They were stamping and shouting and cheering at what was said. But the essence of what I said, it seems to me, was that we are so unbelievably condescending and trivializing our public when we tell them up in the galleries that these are original works of art and they are unique and you have to study and learn something in order to fully understand them, that it's part of a cultural and educational process-- That's what we tell them up in the galleries, but then in the sales desk areas and the shops, we tell them something quite, quite different: that this stuff, this rubbish, is good enough for you bums. This basically is what we're saying, and I think that's hypocrisy in a big, big way. The best museum sales departments that I know--and there are a few of them-- One of the best museum bookshops in the United States was at the Norton Simon Museum out in Pasadena [California]. The store should be a part of the educational process of the museum. There should be the books--the popular books that will help people understand-- on display and sale there. Good quality reproductions should be there. But to have a detail from a Chinese painting used as a decoration on a throwaway place mat-- That, I think, is just not permissible. But every museum is now doing it: neckties with motifs, terrible imitation pre-Columbian jewelry, which ultimately one day is going to start turning up. People are going to be bringing it into curators in museums saying that they have this marvelous Mixtec gold thing, and of course it's going to be one of these damned Alva reproductions, etc. How did we get off on this one?

GARDNER

Hoving?

LEE

Oh, yes, Hoving! That--

GARDNER

The progenitor of it all.

LEE

Yes. That became a very strong tendency in the eighties, and it's part of a general tendency in American culture. Anyone knows that the highest-paid

nonindustrial people in the country are all entertainers, either in sports or in the entertainment industry, in music and etc. Poor primary school and high school teachers, who are certainly far more essential to the well-being of the country, are just the peons working in the school system. The whole country, the whole American culture, has become so permeated with the concept of entertainment-- What can you do to keep me from thinking or doing anything creative now? Then please do it again and again so I won't have to ever think or ever do anything. And I don't think it's good. I think it permeates the political scene. It permeates the media in terms of what the newspapers cover and what they emphasize. They're all self-fulfilling prophesies. And I'm sorry if I sound like a Jeremiah or--

GARDNER

That's exactly the word I was going to fill in. [laughter]

LEE

But it's true! As far as I'm concerned, it's not good. And everybody's talking about malaise. Poor Jimmy [James E.] Carter got crucified because of that speech. Now you've got all the current political situations and the conventions and everything. Everybody's talking about problems and self-examination and etc. Clearly there's something wrong, and a major part of it, in my judgment, is this entertainment syndrome, and it's been killing museums. That's why when the economy goes sour, the museums, especially those museums that-- Well, all museums, because they depend upon grants from the endowments and they depend upon foundations, etc. Many museums receive operating funds from cities or state or from the National Museum Act organization [Office of Museum Programs] under the government in Washington. As soon as the income starts being reduced and the people have to start cutting things, what gets cut first? Schools or endowments or music, art, literature, all the things that ain't entertainment, because entertainment makes its own money. They have to, to pay the salaries they do. And so the museums gradually get pushed more and more into raising money in order to keep up the entertainment program that they've developed. The swollen staff that they've developed, just as the schools have a swollen bureaucracy--the administrators and things--are not terribly encouraging. Well, that's enough of that. 323

1.18. TAPE NUMBER: IX, SIDE ONE
JULY 14, 1992

GARDNER

To return to your own exhibitions at the Cleveland Museum [of Art], one of the threads that we've kept up throughout the discussion has been the importance of education. How did you tie exhibitions into the educational mission of the museum? There are seventeen different answers to that, probably.

LEE

Yes. Well, the generation of an exhibition--a major exhibition which is going to be a major expenditure and one which you wish to make a contribution--depends upon many, many things. It depends upon individual scholars, your own curators or others, who think that something is absolutely important and that it must be done, and they convince you that that should be done. It comes from the creative minds of experts in the field. It can come from aspects of the permanent collection which are particularly strong. That, supplemented by other material, can produce an impact--an educational and enjoyment impact--within a given category of things. For instance, Treasures from Medieval France was a natural for us for our fiftieth anniversary because we had this very strong medieval collection that William [M.] Milliken had done so much to develop. It was a natural focus for a subject exhibition: Treasures from Medieval France. So there are many ways in which the germ of a major exhibition can develop. But we also have smaller exhibitions that can be-- Well, there are two ways in which the educational mission of the museum gets involved in exhibitions: One is when you have a major exhibition. Naturally, the department gears up ahead of time so that they're able to handle gallery talks and lecture programs and seminars or colloquia or whatever you want in connection with that exhibition. But also at Cleveland we had planned and developed, as part of the educational complex in the [Marcel] Breuer wing, a set of galleries--not large but adequate--where educational exhibitions could be installed either specifically organized by the department for its own purposes in terms of education or small "idea" exhibitions that curators might develop but which were not going to be a big thing, not make any great, original contribution but which would be useful in

the community. Also, you had the kind of exhibitions that the educational department itself-- People always forget the educational department people are interested in the works of art too, not just the curators. The education department would generate ideas for exhibitions that they thought would be important to do, which could be drawn from the permanent collection and pulled down out of the permanent collection into the educational galleries, where they would be used for a focused exhibition involving a point. So there was-- and there still is--a constant interweaving of educational functions, educational personnel, and curatorial functions and curatorial personnel, with the collection as the focus in the developing of these theme exhibitions that are usually there. They're up for six weeks to three months in the educational galleries. Always, from the very beginning, Dr. [Thomas] Munro had stressed the importance of the educational department not just teaching from books and not just teaching from slides famous material from Egypt or Greece or the great European museums. Of course, you did some of that, but the focus was always on the permanent collection and original works of art as the principal means of educating people about art. Part of this, I think, came out of the Barnes Foundation, where Dr. Munro was a teacher and worked. He had, of course, taken his doctorate in educational philosophy from John Dewey. So it was a tradition that involved the permanent collection as the principal source for the educational program in the museum.

GARDNER

You were teaching at Case Western Reserve [University] during this time, weren't you?

LEE

I was an adjunct professor at Case Western Reserve, and I taught-- I mean, there was not an awful lot of time available, but I used to teach about maybe every other year or once maybe skipped two years. I would give courses, and I had about eight or ten graduate students who took Ph.D.'s. And most of them are in the museum field, and some of them have done very well. So I believe very strongly that curators should be involved in the education process, just as the educational department should be involved with the collections. I believe especially that the director of an art museum should be a professional with some training in the disciplines of art, whether he has been trained in the

practice of art--I mean, there are some very good museum directors who have been artists, who have been trained as artists--or is a professional art historian or is a professional art educator, but who is not primarily a businessman, a fund-raiser, or something that has nothing to do with art. If they don't want an art museum to have anything to do with art, then they ought to change the name of it. But if it's going to be an art museum, it means that it's got certain responsibilities as a museum: to collect, preserve, use for a display and use for delectation and education. The collection should be art if it's going to be called an art museum. That means that you have, willy-nilly, got to deal with the subject of art quality, because, well, it's not considered by some people today as a valid reason for studying art. Quality is a very important concept and one which, as far as I'm concerned, is demonstrable. Not perhaps as fully as would be true in an objective science-- the law of gravity or quantum theory--but you can reasonably, objectively demonstrate why Rembrandt is a better painter than Govert Flinck. And you can reasonably demonstrate that a Sung dynasty landscape, like the great Hsu Tao-ning in Kansas City for example, is better than another painting which may be even of that period but is not by that great an artist. As we mentioned earlier in this discussion, the idea of quality-- good, better, and best--is absolutely inherent in the world of sports and is demonstrable. Those two words "museum" and "art" are, as far as I'm concerned, the essence of what the art museum is all about, and if it doesn't do that job, what in the hell is it supposed to be doing? Is it a social center? Is it a propaganda organ for contemporary art? I think contemporary art should find its way in the marketplace. I think museums have a responsibility, but if that's all they do, why don't they declare themselves a commercial gallery and try to make some money at it? That's what some of them are trying do now anyhow, I suppose. So some people share my ideas. I think one finds in England and in Germany and in Italy, and to a degree in France and in Austria, a more serious and a more aware organization of museums and practice of museums than in contemporary America. I think the old civilized tradition in Europe that goes back for centuries has had a tempering effect on what has happened to museums. Some things have happened in Europe, but many of the older museums, the National Gallery [London], the British Museum, the National Gallery of Scotland in Edinburgh and Manchester, the Fitzwilliam Museum at Cambridge [University], the Ashmolean [Museum of Art and Archaeology] at Oxford [University]-- They're real museums and they're quite

different from what many museums are trying to be. But, again, I think this sort of entertainment syndrome has been so strong in America now that it has had a deleterious effect on serious cultural institutions. In the newspaper this morning, it's a big problem in the Wake County library system. The library has three hundred and some odd copies of Jacqueline Susann or somebody, one of its pulp writers, available for people to read. This is the library system. But Dickens's *Oliver Twist* is not available in one of the libraries. And the Pulitzer-Prize-winning novelist of last year is available in, I think, thirty-two copies. I mean, this is just symptomatic. Then people wonder why students don't do well on the SATs [Scholastic Achievement Tests], and they wonder why the literacy level has been declining. All they have to do is look at themselves. They've done it. Are you going to be getting to acquisitions, or is this something--?

GARDNER

Well, I have a couple of other questions.

LEE

Okay, go ahead.

GARDNER

This sort of has to do with acquisitions, but then we can build from it. It sort of ties in with what you were talking about, your relationship with the Metropolitan Museum [of Art]. In 1963 you had the bidding war for Rembrandt's *Aristotle Contemplating the Bust of Homer*. Could you talk a little bit about that? That seems to have popped up in all of the discussi

LEE

Well, it was a great symbolic event, in a way, because this was the first sort of multimillion dollar old master occasion at auction, which has now become commonplace. But that was where it all began. It's interesting how the two institutions worked at it and how they went about it and what lay behind decisions. The word came out that the Erickson picture, acquired by Mr. [Alfred M.] Erickson in 1929, I think, from Duveen [Brothers] for something just close to \$180,000 or \$200,000, was going to come at auction. It was going to be sold, and we were told it was going to be Sotheby's. The president of our

board then was Harold T. Clark. He was slightly puritanical. When I first broached the subject to him, he thought that it was something that Cleveland shouldn't go after. It was too good for us, in a way, that we should let the Metropolitan or National Gallery [of Art]-- I said, "Well, I don't feel that way and I don't think the curators feel that way and I'll bet you that a lot of the other trustees don't feel that way. We don't have a great Rembrandt and this is a great Rembrandt, and I think we ought to do something about it." We finally decided let's explore it. So the curator and I went to the warehouse in New York where the picture was, and we looked at it very carefully. We listened to all the gossip and what prices might be, and so forth and so on. We talked to curators at staff meeting about it, that it meant we would have to spend a lot of money and would cut down on other acquisitions for a period. Everybody agreed that this was something that we really ought to go for, and I certainly did. I went to the bank of one of our trustees, Lew [Lewis B.] Williams, who told me who to see at the bank. I went to him and I said, "Look, can you pretty accurately give me what in current dollars \$180,000 to \$200,000 in 1929 dollars is?" He said, "Sure," and he did some fiddling and then consulting and this, that, and the other thing. He told me that it came out to about \$2.2 million plus some odd thousand dollars. I said, "That's very interesting." Because the figure we had been hearing was that it was going to go over \$1 million and might get to \$2 million and so forth. I suppose other people did the same thing. So we discussed it with the trustees. They were naturally conservative, and I think I've indicated that they felt very strongly their fiduciary responsibilities for the museum. The focus of the collecting in Cleveland had been the museum rather than the individuals who had the money. They felt we should make a very serious effort but that we shouldn't simply say the sky is the limit, that there should be a ceiling and we should observe it. And it was finally decided that the president and the director between them, and the chairman of the accessions committee, would settle on what the figure was. No one else was to know. We finally agreed on the figure of \$2.25 million plus one bid. One bid would not have been any enormous increase--a measured percentage bid. We also agreed that we ought to have somebody bid for us, someone we trusted, someone who knew all the ins and outs of the game, so we got Rosenberg and Stiebel, one of the most distinguished and oldest of the art firms. They were purveyors to the Rothschilds and they got Rothschild material to sell. They made the Pannwitz

collection, from which we bought a lot of stuff, piece by piece. It was the logical place to go. We told them we wanted them to try to get their bid at \$2.25 million, and then if they had to go a little bit beyond that-- But I think we said not more than 5 percent beyond that. So the great day came, and Harold Clark, I think it was, Marie Clark and Ruth [Ward Lee]-- Yes, we were in the audience. Sammy [Samuel] Rosenberg was over at the side against the wall and near the podium where he could see everything that was going on. My friend Jim [James J.] Rorimer, who was the director of the Metropolitan, and Charlie [Charles B.] Wrightsman and Mrs. Wrightsman were sitting in the first row, not far from where Sammy Rosenberg was, but they were sitting in the first row. And Baron Heini [Heinrich] Thyssen was there. I've known him quite well for a long time. He's been very helpful to the museum. He bid but dropped out. The bidding finally, after about \$1.8 million, was just them and us. Sammy Rosenberg was over there. Jimmy was doing the bidding for the Met. He had to do it himself. The bidding went agonizingly slow. I mean, Sammy Rosenberg would bid \$1.95 million. There'd be a long pause, and Jimmy would move his finger or do something and it was \$2 million--it went up to \$2 million. Sammy got a bid in at \$2.25 million. He got it in and then there was a long, long silence. I was told by Jim Rorimer later on, after everything had quieted down, that he had been playing it very, very cagily and Mrs. Wrightsman was very, very nervous. She thought he had gone to sleep. She told Charlie to "Push him! Push him! He is going to sleep on us." And Rorimer bid \$2.3 million, and that was it. And then the picture was knocked down to them. It was over. But first of all, it was a great masterpiece and it was worth every penny of it. Today, a lot of pictures which are not masterpieces sell for much, much more. But that was the beginning of the end of the traditional art market, because up until that time, most buying was done privately from dealers or collectors. Some buying was done at auction but not a great deal. Museums are traditionally slow to act. They don't like to get sort of stuck out in the open that way. And they won't have time to study the picture and have it on approval and so forth and so on. But Sotheby's and that, in my opinion, dreadful man, Peter Wilson, made the auction houses-- Christie's followed in very quickly--the place to sell. In part because, of course, it fit in with the new idea of entertainment and also with all the wealthy people with their egos and their desires for publicity and showtime.

Admiration for their wealth.

LEE

Yes. And the museums then were gradually being forced out of the active market. Because simply, one, most of them couldn't pay the prices or, two, they couldn't go through the speedy and rather risky routine that was involved in bidding at auction.

GARDNER

I have a couple of questions coming out of that. I'm going to ask you the first one. How did you feel when the bidding stopped? And what did the four of you do?

LEE

Well, I felt a sense of loss, depression, but also I've never let it last too long. I think there are other things to do. And you know the nature of a curatorial type or collector: if you lose something, you've lost it, but then you immediately think, "Well, we've saved all that money."

GARDNER

[laughter] You think about what we can do--

LEE

"What can we do now?" You see. [laughter] But no, there was a real sense of loss.

GARDNER

Did the four of you go to the Russian Tea Room and--?

LEE

No, no. Well, I think Harold Clark and Mrs. Clark were probably a little bit relieved. But we felt we made an honest, good effort. See, Charlie Wrightsman was wealthier than all the people in Cleveland put together, I'm sure. If he's going to be behind it, you really don't have much of a chance if he really wants to do it. And he did and Jim certainly did, Jim Rorimer. But we felt we made a good run at it, and that was it. We did bid at auction after that time, certainly more than we had before, because you really had to. When, for example, the

[Robert] von Hirsch collection of medieval and Renaissance art--principally medieval--was sold at two major successive auctions in London, we were there and we bid and we got some stuff from there. We didn't get to buy everything we wanted because the British railway pension fund had suddenly sprung into operation. That really put-- Plus, the Germans were determined to get the German medieval material, and that cut us out. We got some very good Italian and Spanish things from the Von Hirsch sale. I mentioned Heini Thyssen, and this gives you some idea of how things worked later on. Henry Hawley called my attention to a forthcoming sale to Sotheby's in Geneva, where of course they don't get involved with the French export problems. They were very probably the most famous and marvelous silver objects in the history of French decorative art. The so-called Kingston tureens by Juste-Aurèle Meissonnier had originally been a three-part centerpiece for a table: two tureens and one central sort of fountain type of thing. The fountain disappeared, but they [the tureens] were coming up at auction. Henry had started to do some homework, and he went over and studied them in London, where I guess they were. We felt that they were going to go for an awful lot of money, but we felt that since the set was not complete that there was no particular reason why they couldn't be split. So we tried to find some friends and museums who might want to go together with us. We first approached the Metropolitan Museum. Philippe de Montebello was by then the director. They said, no, their curators weren't sure. They had all kinds of excuses. They didn't want to. Then we talked to Boston [Museum of Fine Arts]. They didn't have any money. I was getting kind of discouraged. Two of our best friends on the board were Mr. and Mrs. Severance Millikin. He was the chairman of the accessions committee and a collector. I've already mentioned him several times. His wife [Greta Millikin] said, "Well, why don't you talk to Heini Thyssen?" I said, "That's a marvelous idea!" He had been with us at the Von Hirsch sale and he sat with us for the sale, and we had done some things together that worked out very well. He's always been rather friendly with Cleveland. He was in Buenos Aires, so I got hold of his office in Lugano [Switzerland] and they referred me to and gave the number to get him in Buenos Aires. I called Buenos Aires and got him, and I said, "Are you interested in the Kingston tureens?" He said, "Oh, yes indeed, I am. I am indeed." I said, "Well, we're interested in them too. I don't see why they shouldn't be split. Do you?" He said, "Not at all. I think it's a very good idea.

Why don't we bid together on them?" I said, "Fine. Let's do that." We right then and there arranged for a figure. He had made some inquiries. He thought that a bid of about \$1.6 million or something like that would be sufficient. But in any case, that we ought to get them. He said, "If you want, I'll do all the arrangements, and I'll have my--" He has a dealer in Paris, a specialist in this area. I said, "Fine." Henry had been checking, and the curators from the Louvre--two young curators--had been to look at the tureens. They reported back to the Louvre that they weren't right, that the originals may well be a pair in Stockholm. Well, the Met had said there were some problems. And Heini's curator said they were absolutely okay. Henry was convinced that they were okay. Well, you know, the art world is just as bad or worse than the world of opera or orchestra or theater in terms of gossip, in terms of backbiting and backstabbing and everything under the sun. We made a special effort and got good black and white photographs of the pair of tureens in Stockholm. We finally got them. Henry and I looked at them, and we just started laughing. It was so ludicrous. They were thin. They were just nineteenth-century copies and had nothing to do with Meissonnier. So anyhow, we stayed in it and Heini called me up and said, "We got them." I said, "Okay. How are we going to separate them?" He said, "You take your pick." He was just-- And the thing was, he did this bing, bing, bing, bing. No hemming and hawing, no gossip and no nonsense. Just we want to get them, let's get them. I asked Henry, "Which one do you want?" He said he wanted the one with the *écrevisse*, and I said, "Fine." So that's how it worked out. But that's what you have to do in these auctions today. You've got to make up your mind. You've got to make it up in a hurry and you've got to go ahead and do it. A place like the [J. Paul] Getty [Museum] is able to do that with that kind of money. They can make those decisions on important things and they've done some very good buying at auction. But for university museums and for most museums, even Cleveland now--which has an annual income for purchases of something in the neighborhood of \$7 or \$8 million--even they're inhibited by the current change in the art market.

GARDNER

Okay. You wanted to talk about acquisitions?

LEE

Well, we were talking about sort of individual acquisitions. But I wanted to say something that is part of the planning that began when I became a director in '58, as to the future development of the museum. We've talked about conservation of the library, etc., etc. Well, there was also a very careful purchase analysis made. I had my assistant in the office go through all the purchase records in the museum from the beginning. I had the chart made up year by year of the amounts of money spent on different departments, broken down basically the way the museum was before we reorganized it in the late sixties. It was very, very interesting. Up until 1958, well over 50 percent of the income had been used in the field of decorative arts, which was William-- William Milliken was director and curator of decorative arts, which included medieval art, Renaissance art, sculpture, bronzes, furniture, French furnitures, ceramics, etc. Over 50 percent of the money had gone into decorative arts. In terms of paintings, it was-- I may be getting these figures a little bit off because I haven't got that chart. It's in the museum files somewhere. I would say that the figure for paintings was somewhere in the neighborhood of 20 percent; ancient art, maybe 10 percent; prints and drawings was rather well supplied; modern art, almost nothing; oriental art was fairly paltry, 6 to 8 percent, something like that. I showed all of these figures to the trustees. We had a special meeting to consider the purchase policy of the museum and I presented these charts and I also presented a program. First, giving them what I hope was-- I certainly tried to make it so and I think it was--an objective analysis of the museum collections from the standpoint of balance, needs, opportunities, and so on. What should we do? The first thing that was clear was that, in relation to the decorative arts collection, the old master painting collection was woefully weak and it had not been wisely done. It was not one of William's strong points, the understanding of paintings. But something had to be done. I suggested now that we had this money--we had a very strong income--that we make a serious effort to develop the old master painting collections as rapidly as possible and should allot to that department something in the neighborhood of 60 percent of the funds. I suggested that for the decorative arts, particularly furniture and so on, because of the space it occupies and everything and [because it was] a fairly strong collection as it was, that we reduce the amount. Try to maintain and to keep developing the medieval and Renaissance collections, which were very strong--not let them wither, let them continue to be developed--but maybe reduce substantially

the amounts of money spent on French eighteenth-century furniture and the decorative arts. I suggested that the ancient art remain about the same percentage, because it was a market that was gradually drying up in terms of legal or quasi-legal material available. The competition was so fierce with old-time collections like the Met, Boston, the British Museum, and in Germany Munich [the Glyptothek], and so on, that it was very hard to compete. I suggested that we had to increase the amount of money for modern art, which of course the trustees were very unwilling to do--we've already mentioned that--and that we should increase the amount spent for oriental art, one, because the director was chief curator of oriental art, and he had to have something to make him happy in the course of being director; number two, the prices for oriental art were substantially lower for top-quality material than in other fields; thirdly, we had contacts that I had developed over the years in Japan and in Europe and in New York that made it possible for us to really dominate. We knew where all the stuff was. We knew the market very well. The collection was relatively weak, and we could make it very strong. So I recommended they raise the amount spent for oriental art to, I think, 18 or 20 percent. It was still not disproportionate, in my judgment. And they agreed. They said, "Fine." I said, "We should understand, though, that if some extraordinary event occurs, like the Aristotle or anything like that, that we should retain enough flexibility. So we cannot think of this thing as cast in concrete." They agreed, so that's what we did. That's how we began to develop the collections. The curators knew where they were; the director knew where he was; the accessions committee knew what to expect. And it just worked. It was essential that that be done. If we hadn't, in my opinion, made a serious study and plan for that for the accessions program, considering the amounts of money we had at our disposal-- And this was before the Getty existed and before the Kimbell [Art Museum] existed. We had more money than anyone else. The Met could always get it from Charlie Wrightsman or somebody, but we had more dedicated money than anyone else. I felt we should use it and use it fast and use it as efficiently as we could, because the art market had been declining ever since the J. P. Morgan time, and it couldn't help but continue to decline. You had to make your hay while you could. That was the underpinning that made it possible for us to really develop, in a relatively short time, a major collection of European old master paintings and one of the greatest Asiatic collections in terms of balance of

Indian, Southeast Asian, Chinese, Korean, and Japanese art. I think the Cleveland collection is the best in the United States, in terms of a balanced oriental collection. The Freer [Gallery of Art] is better in certain aspects of Japanese art and in Chinese bronzes. But in terms of Southeast Asian and Indian art, they almost don't exist. In terms of Chinese paintings, we got ahead of them very, very quickly. Boston was very strong, but they just let it lie for twenty years. The collection was dead. They didn't add to it, and that hurt it. The Indian collection became weak by comparison. So with an expenditure of 18 to 20 percent, we were able to develop, over a period of twenty-five years, a great oriental collection. We were able to develop and have a good--better than good; not great, but better than good--collection of modern art. We emphasized sculpture because I thought that, one, the museum was weak in sculpture, two, sculpture was a much better buy on the market than painting. It always has been. So we went particularly after sculpture in the European field, and we did very well. We developed a German baroque collection, German and Austrian baroque collection, which I think is the best in the United States. It was done with some degree of improvisation--there has to be--but the fundamental base for the development of that collection was that job that was done in 1958 to get the trustees to understand what was needed and how to go about doing it.

GARDNER

In 1962, Harold Clark stepped down as president, or was replaced as president by Mrs. [Emery May] Norweb. What were the circumstances of that?

LEE

Harold died.

GARDNER

Oh! Did he? I thought he stayed and remained as a trustee for a few years after that. I see.

LEE

No, no. Harold died. Ruth and I were driving in from Gates Mills [Ohio] early one morning. We'd been out. We were driving down Fairmount Boulevard. Harold's house was on Fairmount Boulevard, and as we came by, I saw a

police car and another limousine there which was not his. Harold didn't spend money for show. He was very-- She was a Christian Scientist. They were very proper, sort of Bostonian types--live off the interest of the interest. He wasn't a frightfully wealthy man. He was a lawyer. He had been an assistant to Newton [D.] Baker in World War I. He didn't like the law firm so he went out on his own. He had his own office and he was not a terribly wealthy man. But anyhow, we saw something had gone on there. We got home and I called over to Marie, and Harold had just died. So Emery May Norweb was then in line and the next president. She was quite, quite different. Harold had not a terribly great sense of humor. He had been a tennis player in his youth. That's one of the reasons he liked me and I could get along with him, because I played tennis. He was not a collector. As a lawyer, he did good. That's what he did. And Mrs. Clark was very much that way too. She did not have any sense of humor. Emery May had a great sense of humor. Puckish and sometimes, as I told you earlier, deadpan, pulling-legs jokes which could be very disconcerting. She had a very good mind. She was a good collector of her specialty, coins. She'd been a diplomatic spouse. Her husband, the Honorable R. Henry Norweb [Jr.], had been the ambassador to Portugal during World War II. He was in the foreign service. They had been in Peru in diplomatic service. She had collected quite a bit of pre-Columbian material then, including the greatest single painted Peruvian textile in the world.

**1.19. TAPE NUMBER: IX, SIDE TWO
JULY 14, 1992**

LEE

She was very short and, in later years, became rather plump. She was not an elegant-- She had a very, very good mind. She didn't like any surprises but she did like to run the board of trustees. Our system, which she initiated, was very, very simple. Before every board meeting, which was held at the Union Club for a long time until, as I will tell you or-- I hope you will let me tell you about how we changed that. We always met at the Union Club in downtown Cleveland. It was usually a luncheon meeting at one o'clock, and we would meet at twelve o'clock in the women's bar downstairs. I would have an agenda and she would have some ideas that she wanted there, and we'd go over it and figure out what it was that we wanted to do. She had very definite ideas about some

things, but she never trespassed on the professional artistic expertise and responsibilities of the staff, the director. Her interests were in some events coming up or the dinners that would be necessary in connection with the Treasures from Medieval France, what to do about the French ambassador and the director of the Bibliothèque Nationale. These things concerned her very much, and she had very good ideas. She put her shoulder to the wheel and did a lot of the entertaining. She took a lot of responsibility that way. We got along very well indeed. The board of trustees did not have any non-Wasp member when I became director. Harold Clark was a man who was not particularly, I would say, liked by some of the trustees--many of the trustees--one, because he didn't have a sense of humor, but two, he was too liberal for them. He was either a liberal republican or a conservative democrat, I don't know what. But he was interested, as Leonard [C.] Hanna [Jr.] was, and Harold was Leonard's lawyer. Harold had no sense of humor; Leonard had a great sense of humor. Harold didn't drink, chew, or go with girls who did. Leonard was a libertine in many ways. He was a homosexual. He loved the theater. He was a friend of Bea [Beatrice] Lillie, and so forth and so on. I said to Harold and Harold said to me-- We had lunch. I'd occasionally have lunches with him down at the Union Club. Never, never a drink. Whereas if I had lunch with Lew [Lewis B.] Williams, who was ex-Federal Reserve Bank president and so on, he always had drinks before dinner. We ate down at the men's bar, whereas Harold and I always had lunch up in the men's dining room. Lew would tell me that Harold didn't look very well. And Harold would tell me that Lew was killing himself by drinking too much. And, you know, they knew each other very well. But Harold had good ideas about more democratic and more socially aware representation on the board. I said, "You know, Harold, it's a disgrace that we have no Jewish members on the board. They're some of our most culturally intelligent and supportive people." And he said, "I agree. Absolutely. We've got to do something about that. I've been meaning to do it." So fortunately, everybody could agree. There was one man, Edgar [H.] Hahn, who was also a lawyer, a great friend of Harold's and a very civilized and cultured gentleman, a widower. I think that's right. Ruth can tell you. Maybe he was a bachelor. No, I'm sure it's widower. He was very much interested in books, rare books and that. He had a nice, old-fashioned house not far from Emery May Norweb's. And Emery May liked him very much. He was very, very friendly. So, by golly, we got Edgar Hahn as trustee, and he was a big help. He

went on the accessions committee and he was very, very good. But, you see, there was a problem too because the Union Club didn't have any Jewish members, and I said to Harold, "You know, we really ought not to meet at the Union Club. This is first of all a business thing, and it's socially elite. The museum may pretend not to be that, but it really is, and you don't want it to be that. Why don't we meet where we do business? I mean, to get these people into the museum. Some of the trustees haven't been to the museum for several months on end." So we shifted the venue of the trustees' meetings to the museum. Then finally, a little later, the Union Club began to loosen up a bit, and Edgar became a member. Later on when Emery May was president, we got another friend of hers, Rabbi Daniel [J.] Silver, who was the son of Rabbi Hillel Silver, the famous Jewish leader. Dan, who was a great friend of ours--and his wife [Adele Silver] still is a great friend of ours--became a trustee, and he went on the accessions committee too. He also went on the education committee when they formed that. He would speak up at meetings and tried to get some of these more conservative trustees to understand that the world was changing and that they had to reach out some and that they had various problems they ought to be paying attention to and they just couldn't ignore them. He was a very, very helpful trustee. Since that time, Dan died. He had a terrible brain problem and died untimely. Dan Silver was elected in 1970. Edgar Hahn died in 1970. It was just a brief overlap. Then in 1975, when Dan Silver was a trustee, there was a local collector whom I got to know named Noah [L.] Butkin who collected nineteenth-century realist and academic French painting. He was one of the reasons we had the exhibition on French realism [The Realist Tradition in French Painting]. He gave all the collection to us. He was very important and he became a trustee. So we had then two Jewish members. In 1978, Norman [W.] Zaworski-- He's Catholic, but Polish. He was from the Polish group in Cleveland.

GARDNER

Was he the first Catholic?

LEE

No, no. There were other Catholics. Jack [W.] Lampl [Jr.], who was Jewish, was elected in 1984, Morton [L.] Mandel in 1989, and Mary Manning Wassmer in

1991. So, I mean, we broke that. And Harold did it. Harold is a very important figure in the history of the museum. [tape recorder off]

GARDNER

Okay, the next area that I'd like to move into, now that we're both refreshed, is the relationship between the museum and the city of Cleveland. It was interesting hearing you mention the makeup of the board and so on. Was there ever a black member on the board, for example?

LEE

Not to my knowledge. I don't think there's been a black member. I can't say in the last few months because of everything, but I don't think so.

GARDNER

Well, your relationship--you, Sherman Lee, and you, director of the museum--was very close to the city of Cleveland. The 1960s was a period of turmoil everywhere, in every major city. Did that affect the museum at all?

LEE

The clear symbolic event which very much affected the museum was the bombing of the Rodin sculpture of The Thinker in front of the museum, one of the artist's lifetime casts.

GARDNER

How did that happen? Who had done it?

LEE

We don't know who did it. We know that the police or the FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation], whoever it was, told us that the timer on the fuse on the bomb had been stolen from the Boston navy yard. They could trace that. But they never did pin it down to anyone. As to why Cleveland was selected for this event on March 24, 1970, I don't know. I think all kinds of suggestions had been made: that it was the work of out-of-town radicals, that the museum was selected because it was a conspicuously conservative institution or a conspicuously wealthy institution or just a conspicuous target that would be easy of access. I don't think anyone knows why. I think that it's perfectly feasible that they may have thrown a coin to decide what museum to do.

There are all kinds of reasons as to why Cleveland. But it represented an art museum, and, as I said here, what is reasonably certain is that the bombing signaled an attack on art and education institutions in their traditional positions above the fray of social and political contention. "Relevance" was the cant word of the day and for some time to come, but its application to museums threatened greater harm than good. It was towards the end of that period of dismay and turbulence. It certainly wasn't an aftermath, but it was certainly one of the last serious things that happened, and I, for one, simply don't know why the museum was selected. We know why we put it back up in its damaged state and we know why we commemorated the event on the back of the pedestal, the new pedestal for the sculpture, but--

GARDNER

Why?

LEE

Well, we had a big debate. The trustees wanted to have it repaired, and I said I didn't think we should. First of all, the actual aesthetic effect of the sculpture was not seriously in danger. The signs of the damage were clear, but Rodin himself approved clay models that he dropped on the floor and that had been damaged. He was interested in the effects of accident, and I thought that it would be in his spirit to leave it as it was and also I thought we should face the fact that this event had happened and it should be recognized. We were as much involved in it as anyone, and so let's just put it up with the notation "Damaged on March 24, 1970." That was the rationale, and the trustees bought it. I, for one, am glad that we did not repair it. As to other things, I would say that frankly I knew pretty much what was going on in the educational department and in the children's programs. I keep track of all those things. I would say that I know of no other major or significant problems that arose out of the turbulent sixties in terms of the museum's program or-- Remember that we were building the Breuer wing. It was finished in 1971. That was just one year before. The museum was under construction from late '68 until '71. In the process of that construction we had to close some areas, because we tore out the old auditorium in order to make new oriental galleries, so that whole part of the museum was closed. So the museum was on a restricted program for the period of 1968 through 1971. That may have

had something to do with the fact that the museum was not affected very much by the troubles. It wasn't open that much because of the construction.

GARDNER

What was your relationship like with [Cleveland mayor] Carl [B.] Stokes?

LEE

We know each other to say hello, and he came to the opening of the new wing. He recognized the museum's educational program as being something that was an effective and useful facility. But basically we did not get terribly mixed up in political things. The principal connection with the city was that Bill [William E.] Ward, the museum designer, and the director, myself, were members of the fine arts committee of the city planning commission. We did have regular meetings. We received no remuneration or any expenses, but we had regular meetings and sometimes almost on a weekly basis. We had a lot to do with the aesthetic and architectural aspects of things going on in Cleveland: the design of the new Justice Center, the design of the then Standard Oil Building, the public library, the new-- I mean, all kinds of things and things out in development areas that were under Title IV, whatever it was. Things were always under supervision of the city planning commission, and Joe [Joseph] McCullough, the director of the art institute [Cleveland Institute of Art] across the street, and Viktor Schreckengost, on their design faculty and a famous designer, were on that commission and also several architects in town. We had a lot to do and we got in the papers and so on. On the plus side, I will say that I was chairman of the subcommittee of the Justice Center project that was involved with the artistic embellishment of the project. In my capacity there, I was able to convince people that we should get Isamu Noguchi to do the big sculpture Portal out in front and get Richard Hunt, the black sculptor from Chicago, to do the work he did in one of the other entrances and George Segal to do the sculpture for still another entrance. And we had a big mural by Richard Pierson from Oberlin [College] in the interior. We had an impact on the city's appearance, on the revised plans for the Justice Center, which would have been a disaster if they put it up the way in which they had originally proposed to do it. So there was interaction in terms of public service by museum staff members, two of us, on the city planning commission. And that was all to the good. It kept us somewhat knowledgeable

about what was going on in the city, and the city learned to deal with the aesthetic area. There was a man from the city that we met at city hall, and there was a staff in city hall that performed the operations, all of the mechanics of the committee and all the legal aspects and so on. That was, I think, a real contribution on the part of the museum to the life of the city. Certainly, it was an educational opportunity for the people from the art museum and the art institute.

GARDNER

Did you ever have any exciting controversies? I think of the [Richard] Serra sculpture in New York or the Rocky statue in Philadelphia that were entertaining for their fine arts commissioners.

LEE

Well, the Noguchi sculpture was attacked very heavily in the newspapers from write-ins and even the newspaper. I mean, the usual sort of what I call the yahoo reaction.

GARDNER

What was the attack on?

LEE

Oh, first of all, it was abstract. It wasn't representational. I mean, people in the art world seem to think they're the only ones who have an opinion on the works * Lee added the following bracketed section during his review of the transcript. of art. There's a whole lot of people out there who have very, very strong opinions. They're not necessarily knowledgeable on the subject, but they have a right to their opinions. And they expressed it in no uncertain terms. They didn't like that Noguchi sculpture. They didn't like the Hunt sculpture. We were involved in getting a big Tony Smith sculpture outside a new building, right next to the Flats. By that time, things had quieted down. The Noguchi came to be accepted. This was ten years later, the year the Tony Smith sculpture was accepted, so it was no great problem. There were another couple of structures over near the city hall--a park just aside the city hall. There was a big sculpture that was supposed to go up outside the Standard Oil Building, *[for which I was an adviser to Standard Oil. I

recommended Claes Oldenburg to them. Oldenburg did a design I thought was very good and the money was in hand and everything. Then British Petroleum bought out Standard Oil.] They had a president who felt he had some knowledge and had very strong opinions on the subject of art. They didn't like the Oldenburg and they canned it. For a while, it was put in a storehouse. * Lee added the following bracketed section during his review of the transcript. Oldenburg threatened to sue. The last word-- I have not seen it, but I think a few months ago it was installed at the side of city hall, with the artist's cooperation, in a different stance. I think it was a big, vertical rubber stamp. It was to go with the Standard Oil Building, as you look at the main facade, just here to one side. At the city hall, it's been put in, but it's been put in I think semi-lying down, something rather like that. But it's now out and it's in public view. I would say that some of these major public sculptures downtown, also outside the National City Bank-- Joe McCullough and I were on a committee that aided and advised the bank. We got them to get a George Rickey mobile sculpture out at a corner at Ninth and Euclid. So we had an impact on the downtown in terms of sculptural embellishment and in terms of architectural design, and that was good. Of course, back in the earlier days, when Tommy Munro and the school systems worked together, we had a very close relationship with the Cleveland public school system and the educational department, the extension exhibitions department. But with the drying up of the public funds in the schools for art and reduction * Lee added the following bracketed section during his review of the transcript. and concentration of the curriculum, that became increasingly difficult. I forgot to mention--and I think it's still in operation--the extension exhibitions department opened a gallery on the west side at the-- I've forgotten the name of the high school there, but a substantial room.

GARDNER

Lakewood High School.

LEE

Lakewood High School. It was a gallery four times the size of this room here, I would think. And it was an important gesture to the west side, which had been ignored by a great many people for a long time. But I don't think that

there's much profit to be gained from close connections between politics of city government and the running of private art museums.

GARDNER

Did you get any money from the city?

LEE

No.

GARDNER

None at all?

LEE

None.

GARDNER

Is that maintained today? There are no city grants at all?

LEE

No.

GARDNER

That's good. That's a sort of separation of church from state that I think is a very positive--

LEE

When I was on the Ohio arts commission, from the beginning, when they first formed it-- And as you know, the federal government, the National Endowment for the Arts, gave money to all the states who had arts commissions, specifically designated for them to disburse-- this arts council, too--as they saw fit for art within the state. There was a lot of politicking and a lot of arguing and so forth about how that was to be done. But the major institutions were able to cooperate together to see that the major part of the funds went to the major institutions. That didn't mean all of it by any means. But I think it made for a wiser use of the money than in the case of those states that tend to disburse in small dribblets around all over the place. But that was public money, of course, through the arts council, Ohio Arts Council. We

[the Cleveland Museum of Art], like others, made applications to the National Endowment for the Arts, National Endowment for the Humanities, to the Museum Services Institute for grants for specific projects and so forth, which was just as everyone else did. But the museum is a private corporation, not for profit. It has its own endowment, and it does not receive any operating income from city, state, or federal resources.

GARDNER

That's an interesting point, tying into the notion of private and also the notion of arts council and its support for major arts institutions. In my limited experience with the arts councils, they love to give money for general operating support. In Ohio, is the situation different, so that you can apply specifically for projects to the arts council?

LEE

Each institution had its own method of getting and using these funds. We've felt unanimously--trustees and the director, administrative staff--that it was unwise to get to rely upon possibly short-term, short-lived state, federal, or city funds for operating expenses, because it comes and goes according to the whim of the legislature. Therefore, we should make a point of having this money be assigned to projects that had a definable end and which were secondary to the principal operating funds and the projects of the museum and operations of the museum. I think that was a smart way to handle it.

GARDNER

I bet the local orchestras didn't do it the same way.

LEE

The orchestra? No, they run their shop and we run ours.

GARDNER

You were on the arts council when it started up? You were a--

LEE

I was one of the initial members of the arts council.

GARDNER

You weren't on the panels, though, you were one of the--

LEE

No, I was one of the councillors.

GARDNER

Councillor.

LEE

Yes. The orchestra-- We were friendly with George Szell. We knew him and his wife very well. When we had the Breuer wing under control-- The general manager of the Cleveland Orchestra was then A. Beverly Barksdale, a South Carolinian and a very efficient general manager of the orchestra, and with wide experience because of the greatness of the Cleveland Orchestra and its travels all over the place and so on. We hired him to be our general manager. I wanted somebody to take the load of general administration off the director's office. Beverly Barksdale was perfect for it, and he did a wonderful job for me on it. But we never talked much about the orchestra because-- Well, he was a singer and so forth. He and George got along very well. As a matter of fact, George was the one who recommended that he do this. Because I think Beverly was not getting along too well with the trustees of the Cleveland Orchestra, so he was very happy to come to the museum as a general manager. One thing we had in the museum and we kept revising it and keeping it up to date: we had a very carefully worked out but very simple chart of organization--who reported to who and so on--and this was all worked out very carefully. Barksdale reported to the director. There was no direct reporting from the general manager's office to the trustees. I believe that in an artistic institution, just like an orchestra or theater, the general director is the one who is responsible for the style of the institution. And if it's a bad style, you get rid of him. If it's a good style, you consider yourself fortunate. And we kept that pyramidal structure. If something was wrong, the trustees knew right where to go--they would see me or the operations administrator, Albert Grossman, except in terms of pure finance matters. The finance committee had direct access, of course, to Albert. He was their secretary. But in terms of anything involving the general policies of the

museum and so forth, the director was the one where the ultimate responsibilities went.

GARDNER

A big year for the museum was 1971, in a couple of ways. The first one is that the [Marcel] Breuer wing opened. You talked about that as developing over the years, because you really had it in mind from the time you took over. But you've never really talked about Breuer.

LEE

Well, I told you Emery May Norweb and I agreed that-- We went to New York and we looked around at some of the stuff that [John G.] Dinkeloo's firm had been doing up at the Met, we looked at the [Solomon R.] Guggenheim [Museum], and we looked at the Whitney [Museum of American Art]. And we liked the Whitney very much. We both agreed that it was fruitless to try to shop around and hold competitions and to get all the newspapers and everybody into the act. Who's winning? Who's on first base? Etc., etc. We said, "Let's get Breuer." We worked with Hamilton Smith as a team together, and Breuer came out. He had a weak heart, but he was very much in charge of the operation. Hamilton Smith was his deputy. And he listened to us. We had developed with the staff a very carefully worked out and quite detailed program for spaces that we needed and where we needed them and how to make this continuity of gallery structure so we could organize the collections properly. All this was worked out. The auditorium, the new music department knew what they wanted in terms of capacity and acoustics, etc. The education department-- We really had a plan. Everybody believed in it. Once that plan was worked out, we then had-- See, I was the museum liaison person for the 1958 wing. I was appointed to do that specifically and I learned a lot. I learned why one doesn't have a cost-plus contract, among other things. Once we had this program all worked out in detail and so forth--it had been reviewed and checked--we then removed that from discussion by anyone except department heads. Anybody under the department head--no further report. They could have some wonderful ideas that they forgot about and so forth, but they were dead. Period. That's what cost a 50 percent overrun on the first building. But the department heads came together, and once Breuer came out and spent weeks working with us on it. And he then prepared a design phase

which we were free to accept or reject. We paid him for that, but we could say, "Sorry, it doesn't work. We don't want to do it." We liked it. And he made some good suggestions. We went back, in some cases, to people that were involved to see if-- But once we had the design phase accepted, then even department heads were cut out of the picture. The director and the operations administrator and the general manager, we three were the ones. If there's anything that had to happen, it had to happen through us in connection with the liaison with the architect. So there was no business of a curator running off to the architect and saying, "Oh, I forgot. We've got to have this wall changed and put it over here." You know, that kind of thing. Breuer came up with some fine ideas for the special exhibition area which-- We had a flexible one in the 1958 building, but it was the first one. We learned a lot and he helped us a lot on it, and the new one, I think, was just marvelous. He gave us a ten-thousand-square-foot area with no columns. In order to do that and have the educational department above the galleries, he put in--with one of these huge military helicopters--this amazing big stressed-steel beam that spanned the whole area. On the first floor we told him we wanted a lobby that was big enough to have receptions and we wanted it to be indestructible, because whenever alcohol is served, there is bound to be some destruction. We wanted it to be indestructible. No works of art in it--beautiful but indestructible. Boy, he did it. Granite. A very simple, massive granite floor. I mean, it's perfect. The auditorium is beautiful. We had to tinker with it. It was designed with curtains behind the slatted walls--all wood. Have you seen it in person?

GARDNER

In person? No. I will in October.

LEE

We had to tinker with that in order to get the requisite acoustical things to satisfy Karel Paukert. He's Czechoslovakian. He became the next curator of music. Very, very good. Excellent. He was from Prague. He had to work with Breuer on fiddling with the acoustics until they got it to where they wanted it. It meant, among other things, taking carpet off the floor. Same thing George Szell had to do over in Severance Hall, because most of the really good, I think, musical directors these days want sound that is not mushy or they don't want

it to sound like the old New York Philharmonic soupy kind of a sound. They want some brightness and clarity. But it worked very well, and I think it's very handsome. The education department got a proper suite of offices. There were, I think, twenty-six offices. Well, we have a big education department. We've always had about the biggest in the country of any major museum. The special exhibition gallery was a triumph and the staircase. I think the striped exterior was very distinguished, and people have lately been telling me this. They hated it at first, just like the Noguchi sculpture downtown. They didn't like it. But we were able, thanks to Mrs. [Mildred] Putnam and the Putnam Foundation-- She paid for the Noguchi set of three granite sculptures that marked the north entrance. And I think the whole approach was so terrific. Breuer had been to Japan many times. He knew what the feeling was. He was interested particularly in the Japanese use of stone, and it shows in the interior of the museum and the exterior too. The stonework is very, very good. Just to give you an idea, the 1916 building was 110,000 square feet. I don't know what it cost, but that was 1916. The 1958 building was 110,000 square feet, double the size of the museum. That building in 1958, before it was all through on the cost-plus contract, cost over \$9 million. In 1958, that's a lot of money. The Breuer wing is 110,000 square feet--it triples now. That was finished in 1971. And it came in at a fixed price at just \$6 million. So, you see, great architecture by a great architect is not necessarily all that expensive if you work with him and if you also don't let the contractor take charge. After we finished, we had the Turner [Construction] Company come in and do the Breuer building. They had worked with him before. When we were finished, the Turner Company claimed that they had lost over \$1 million on this fixed-priced contract and blamed it on the architects because they hadn't given them complete specifications. Bob [Robert] Gale--who was one of the trustees and a friend of mine--and I were assigned the job of negotiating with the Turner Company so we wouldn't get into any lawsuits and so forth. And we literally spent time on this almost daily for six weeks, over a period of maybe six months and six weeks of working time. We really had the battle out, and when it was all finished, Turner had to swallow it, because they really didn't have any legal ground to stand on. Because they knew what they were getting into. They said--we had it in writing--that they knew exactly what they were getting into when they accepted the fixed-price contract. So the fixed price is what they got.

GARDNER

A contract is a contract.

LEE

And I told Herb [Herbert D.] Conant, who was the Turner Company manager on the job, later the president of Turner, I think-- I said, "You could look upon that as a wonderful contribution to a wonderful institution." I thought he was going to kill me. [laughter]

**1.20. TAPE NUMBER: X, SIDE ONE
JULY 14, 1992**

LEE

Let me say one more word about the [Marcel] Breuer wing. One of the things that we specified and they put into this thing, to show that we're not by any means unaware of or opposed to more up-to-date educational devices-- We have three audiovisual rooms built in the core part, next to the educational gallery on the ground floor on the basement level: one to hold a family group of three to six people, one to hold a sort of small class group of a dozen or fifteen, and one to hold a larger class group or a group of some, I think, twenty-five to thirty people, with a built-in projection core with a reverse projection. So an individual or a small family or a class could come to the educational department and ask for specific subjects: an educational tape, audiovisual tape, on subjects like German baroque art or modern art or introduction to abstract painting. We had literally hundreds of different tapes that were developed by the educational department over a period of years. These were used a great deal and we felt much more comfortable with that arrangement. Because it meant that people got a touch of let's say technology and education in the visual arts, but it was put in a situation where that's where it was and it didn't interfere with the galleries themselves and the works of art. You didn't have people running around like a herd of lemmings with their earpieces, where they're told, "Now, go over to the other picture over here and we'll talk about this one," and everybody goes over there. And if you happen to be looking at that picture and they're coming, you're going to get trampled to death. We solved that by these audiovisual rooms, and I think they were a very good solution.

GARDNER

What was Breuer like?

LEE

Breuer was stolid and he was-- No, he was solid. He was fairly short, stocky. He had a very, very nice sort of very gentle smile and a gentle voice and he had rather sparkly, I thought, very alert, small blue eyes. He just was a total pro and also clearly a man of great sensitivity who had looked at things and had been around the modern movement from the earliest times on, but was flexible enough and interested enough so that when he finally went to Japan toward the end of his life, before he did the Cleveland building, he went there and learned a lot and loved it. We had a very, very good relationship with him, you know.

GARDNER

Anything else about the building?

LEE

Well, I think we used the special exhibition galleries for various kinds of exhibitions from '71 on. The first exhibition, the first major exhibition, that was in the new special exhibition gallery in the Breuer wing was Caravaggio and his Followers. Then an exhibition that Ted [Edmund P.] Pillsbury and Henry Hawley I think did, Dutch Art and Life in the Seventeenth Century, which was drawn from our own collection largely. And then Japonisme, Johann Liss, The European Vision of America, Afro-American Tradition, Chardin, Eight Dynasties of Chinese Painting, The Realist Tradition [in French Painting], Reflections of Reality in Japanese Art, Bernardo Cavallino of Naples. Now, you can't imagine any more varied menu of special exhibitions than that. They could be accommodated in that special exhibition gallery, and Bill [William E.] Ward was intimately part of the development of that. I can perhaps best give you the idea of what it meant to the museum-- We had a big exhibition, which was not listed here because it was not an exhibition we originated, which came from Korea: 5,000 Years of Korean Art, a very major and a very beautiful exhibition. Bill Ward installed it and it was terrific. We were the last stop on that exhibition; it was supposed to go back to Korea from Cleveland. I got a phone call from the designer at the Smithsonian

Institution saying that the Korean government had given them an extension in time when they were going to be able to have the exhibition. It was going to go from Cleveland down to the Smithsonian in Washington, and they had set aside--this was about 1979 I think, so we were talking about that kind of dollar then--a budget for the installation of the exhibition of \$250,000. Did I think that would be sufficient? I said, "Well, you're not going to like what I'm about to say, but I must tell you that the installation cost us \$5,000." The partitions are all movable and there are special places to store them. Everything is done with color and paint. We have our own greenhouse, so we have all kinds of vegetation of one form or another to decorate in the galleries. In the case of oriental things, we got bamboo or palms. We got other things for others. So we were able to strip the gallery, restructure the gallery--in terms of the spaces--with the movable partitions. The cases all fit in. They have their own lighting. It doesn't cost us anything to put on a major exhibition and have it look very good. The system they use in most museums--and now the National Gallery [of Art] is the prime example--they literally clean out a gallery and build a new museum, a new gallery, inside that room. Moldings-- I mean, it costs a fortune. It just is unbelievably expensive the way they go about it. By designing that gallery that way, we were able to ensure in the future that the museum was not going to go under by the increasing costs of installation of exhibitions. There's no way you can do too much fiddling if you must do it with just moving partitions and coloring those partitions and then decorating with movable material that you developed yourself. I think it's terrific. The auditorium worked out very well. We've had everything in it. We've had symposia. We've had dance groups. We have had-- Well, we always have chamber music and small orchestras, choral work. It's very flexible and it looks fine and it's right off the lobby. You don't have people traipsing through the galleries. You can open it at night, for example, for special performances and you don't have to open them. It's just the lobby and there's the auditorium right next to it. Just as for special exhibitions. If you go into the museum from the north entrance, you're in that indestructible lobby. On the right, you see the auditorium and on the left is the entrance to the special exhibition gallery. So if you want to open this special exhibition at night, for example, and you don't want to spend the money for guards all over the place, you can do it. So that everything that is part of the special program and that is temporary is together and everything that is permanent is together but back. And it works, I

think. No, I think we all enjoyed working with Breuer and getting the Breuer wing. It was a fulfillment of long-term hopes and thoughts brought on basically by, I think, a somewhat traumatic experience of building and so forth of the 1958 wing. In the case of the 1958 wing, Leonard [C. Hanna Jr.] was still alive. He died before it was finished, before it was opened, but he was there for the groundbreaking ceremony and he saw it developing somewhat. Leonard formed a Hanna Fund, and that footed most of the bill. The museum raised some money but not very much. Emery May [Norweb] and the finance committee and I talked a great deal about the financing of the Breuer wing. We did try to go out and raise some money, basically from the museum family, the membership, and people interested in the museum. The Gartner Auditorium we were able to fund from the agreement we'd already made with the Gartners [Louise M. and Ernst L.] when they made their bequest that we could use some of the principal for the auditorium. But for the rest of it we were able to get a court order with regard to the purchase funds, the income from the purchase funds that we could use, and I've forgotten what it was. We used a certain percentage over a period of three years on the grounds that the new wing was making possible conservation laboratories--and a big increase in that--new library space, research areas, all these things that are ancillary to the maintenance of the permanent collection. So we were able to finance the considerable part of that \$6 million-plus for the Breuer wing by that method. It made some of the curators upset, because of course they kept thinking of all the little goodies they could get with that money. But in the long run it really didn't hurt that much, and once again, we didn't have to go out and have a big citywide campaign and then compete with the United Way and all this other stuff and the orchestra and etc. The third wing that we did, which was just opened soon after I retired, was a library addition, which was badly needed. The library was really tight, and there was also the area where the conservation stuff had to be expanded. So we got a local architect to plan a functional, simple library addition that gave plenty of stack space and a whole new library and above it gallery space for the much expanded collection of nineteenth- and twentieth-century art. That was done so it fit in with the galleries of the west wing of the 1958 building. We did that for, I think, about \$4 million. It worked out to something just under \$100 a square foot--this is '82 to '84. That was a very, very economical building. The architect, Peter van Dyck, who was a friend, kept saying that he was just building an outhouse. I

said, "I know what you want. You want to do something that is going to rival the Breuer wing. But that's not what we want. We want gallery space. The interior is much more important. We want a library. This is all interior stuff that's very important. We want the outside to be unobtrusive. It's set back. It's built near the back entrance of the museum. We don't want it to compete with the great 1916 classical building or with the Breuer building." One other thing about the Breuer building which I should mention: The 1958 building worked pretty well inside but the exterior was not happy. It was Swedish granite, red below and buff above, and window apertures were sort of papery looking and thin. It was not a successful exterior. One of the great genius things that Breuer did was to design his wing so it sort of enveloped the 1958 building except for the interior court, which is very attractive, and that's untouched. But it simply is as if it didn't exist, though the spaces are still in there of course. There were some people who were upset about that thing. But before it was built, the local architect, [J.] Byers Hayes, who was a very good friend of mine-- Byers, who was a real champ, wrote me a nice letter and said, "I want you to know and I want the trustees to know that I think that the design for the Breuer building"--which I had shown him because I realized this might be a touchy problem--"is marvelous, and I fully agree that it should cover the 1958 wing. I am not proud of the exterior of that building." That saved a lot of trouble. If anybody wanted to say something, just read that.

GARDNER

That's right. In 1971, also, Mrs. Norweb passed on the chairmanship to--

LEE

Lewis.

GARDNER

Lewis [C.] Williams. What were the reasons for that?

LEE

Well, she felt that the Breuer wing was her building. That was her contribution, and she felt that it was time to move on. And her husband was getting older. So she stepped aside and Lewis C. Williams, the son of Lewis B.

Williams, became the president of the board. Lew was an investment broker.
[tape recorder off] Well, where were we?

GARDNER

Lewis Williams--

LEE

Now, he was an investment broker. His father had been the vice president of the board and chairman of the finance committee and had been the Federal Reserve director in the Depression and the president of National City Bank. He was a very, very quiet, rather unassuming, very private person. A little jittery. It developed later that he had Alzheimer's [disease].

GARDNER

Really?

LEE

Yes. He's now in terrible shape, I think.

GARDNER

Oh, how sad.

LEE

But it began to show a little bit later on. His modus operandi was that we would meet at what is called the Tavern Club. They had a squash court and it was a very interesting arts and crafts building, one of the best buildings around Cleveland, with a fine, large Tiffany window. He liked to discuss things privately with me, and we would meet there for lunch usually and go over stuff. You know, we'd done the Breuer wing, and things were moving along and it was fairly quiet. The finance committee was very, very strong and Lew was president. The chairman of the finance committee before was Ralph [S.] Schmitt and then after that-- After that who was it? Oh, yes, Al [Alton W.] Whitehouse [Jr.], who was the president of Standard Oil. He was canned by BP [British Petroleum]. Alton Whitehouse succeeded Lew Williams. I would say that the committees were more powerful than the president in that late period. Harold [T.] Clark was a dominant figure. Emery May was certainly a dominant figure. Lew was just quiet and he liked things to be calm. No

surprises. All the people really like the museum and they respect the museum and they know that they've got a great responsibility, but they know also it's a wonderful one to have. Lew simply played it very, very low-key.

GARDNER

Did that have any impact on your operations or--?

LEE

No, I don't think so. The man who succeeded Lew Williams was Jim Dempsey. James [H.] Dempsey [Jr.] was my tennis partner. We were both members of the Hangar, an indoor tennis court where we met-- Anyway, we played. John Wilbur was a trustee and a player as well. They must have Jim Dempsey there, don't they?

GARDNER

I'm trying to see where it mentions him. Yes, he came out in '64.

LEE

Right. Lew Williams retired, got off the presidency, and Dempsey took over. He's a lawyer-- Squires, Sanders, and Dempsey firm--and he was a great friend of John Wilbur's. They're both Yale [University]-- Cleveland's a Yale town, as you know. Jim Dempsey had rowed on the Yale crew just as John Wilbur had been on the football team. He was a stronger personality than Lew and he was quite conservative. We saw each other very often socially and on the tennis court and we talked about this, that, or the other thing. But he, especially, didn't want any surprises. He wanted to know what problems there might be and when they might develop, etc., etc. I always kept him fully informed. He was a very, very good president and he took more charge of things than Lew had. If I had not been a good friend of his and so forth, I suspect that the relationship might have been a little more difficult, but as it was, it worked out very well. When it came time to do the financial thing for the new wing-- another new wing we knew we had to do for the library and the galleries--we did do some fund-raising and I went out to various people. Jim and I went to see Dave [David C.] Ingalls and the Ingalls family, and they made a very substantial contribution. That's why it's called the Ingalls Library. It was a million-plus dollars, which was the seed money that made it work. Other

people then came in and the thing was funded. Jim was very instrumental in the development of that financing scheme and it worked. The whole thing was done with a minimum of fuss, as far as the museum's relationship with the community or the museum's finances went. It was very, very well done. And incidentally, despite the fact that the architect, Peter van Dyck, felt that he was building an outhouse for the museum, Pete did an absolutely wonderful job of integrating that building with the existing buildings to make it work, in terms of access to the library, in terms of relationships with the galleries above, and in terms of the tremendous storage space for books down below. So the library has room to expand for a considerable period. Pete did a very good job. He just didn't get a chance to do a monumental building. He did a \$4 million building.

GARDNER

The planning for the Breuer wing had started virtually at the moment the other one had been completed. Was the same true of the library wing or--?

LEE

Well, again, you see that all these things fitted together. The old 1916 building with its central courts and peripheral galleries, then the U-shaped 1958 addition, which meant there was only one way you could go through that. It tied into the 1916 building at two different places and posed certain kinds of root problems, you see. But then, after the 1958 building was completed, we began thinking about what we were going to do about this. If we rearrange the collections, we have to have more space for conservation, we have to have more space for the library, we have to have more space for the education department. All these things. And then we had spaces in the old buildings that were not usable as gallery space but might be usable for office space, and the library, which was too small, was a very good size for the conservation department. So we had to develop a sort of plan that went in stages and meant that the key thing for the final stage was the relocation of the library totally out of its old area and the installation of the conservation department into the old library space. Having the library in the separate area adjacent to the gallery wing of the '58 building, in precisely the location where the greatest expansion had occurred in nineteenth- or twentieth-century European art, meant we could put the galleries above and tie them into that.

So everything would finally all work out when we built the library building. That would be the final thing that would make it all work. But it was carefully calculated and, again, Bill Ward, the museum designer, was very instrumental. The trustees were fully aware of what was going on. We had our own drawings, our own ideas and everything. Everybody knew that it was sort of a process that was going to require time and some juggling and working. But the final linchpin in the thing was the library wing.

GARDNER

Why the great need for a library, given the fact that the Case Western Reserve [University] would have a strong library in art history and so on? What is the rationale for a library in a museum?

LEE

Well, the Case Reserve does not have a good art history library. The art historical department at Case Western Reserve when I came here were Tommy [Thomas] Munro, who was in the museum, and Dr. Lamberton, who was over at the university. And that was it. Plus a couple of others. Finley Foster, a very good professor in the English department, did courses in English art and particularly in Hogarth in eighteenth-century England. That was it. They had not begun with a good art historical library. The museum had begun way back in the 1920s. It purposely developed and has a great art historical library. That's one of the reasons we wanted to have the joint program, so that the library would be used more by people, students from the university. So the location of the library and the size of the library was a very important part of this museum; it's recognized as one of the great art historical libraries in the United States. It's not nearly as big as Harvard [University Fine Arts Library] or Yale [University Art Reference Library] or the Frick Art Reference [Library], but still, it's one of the major, major libraries. So that requirement of the new library space was just as important as the gallery space above it.

GARDNER

Is there acquisition money on a regular basis? One of the problems for university libraries, particularly over the last ten years, was the proliferation of the journals and so on and the inability to keep up or have a budget that kept up with that.

LEE

I'm not familiar with the current budgetary situation with regard to the library. My impression is that they're going along pretty well. There are dedicated funds for the library. Not enough, but there always has been in the budget a very substantial provision for staff and for book acquisitions and periodical acquisitions. I think they may have had to cut back some on periodicals, but it's a major, major library and it's a responsibility, and so far it's been accepted and it's still healthy, as far as I know.

1.21. SECOND PART
JULY 15, 1992

GARDNER

To begin with, as we discussed, I would like you to tell me the story of the Grünewald and the ups and downs of attribution.

LEE

The so-called Grünewald. Yes. Well, the question in all kinds of things is not "Do you make any mistakes?" The question is "How many mistakes do you make?" You're simply bound to make errors. The very first Chinese painting that I bought at Cleveland [Museum of Art] was a forgery, by the famous modern Chinese painter and forger Chang Ta-ch'ien, of an orchid and bamboo scroll--almost a copy of one that no one knew about that was in China. I bought it from Howard [C.] Hollis, and within three months I was convinced that it was wrong. The trouble is that one wasn't able to do all the research first. But in any case, that made me very, very-- It was a very good lesson and made me perhaps hypersensitive on the subject. I think after that, by and large, in our collecting of Chinese and Japanese painting, we made no major, major boo-boos. I think the classic example of acquiring a forgery and the mind-set that leads up to it and sort of conditions the event was the purchase of the Grünewald, the so-called Grünewald Saint Catherine, in 1978 or the late seventies. William [M.] Milliken had emphasized German medieval art, and we had a wonderful collection of German medieval things and some very fine German panel paintings of late Gothic and Renaissance. I had been enormously impressed by the German baroque in south Germany and in Austria, and we had made a point of developing the collection of that

material, which I think was the best in the United States. So we had a real strength in German art. I got a phone call one day from Frederick Mont, a very reputable and knowledgeable dealer in old master paintings in New York. He was very excited and said he wanted me to come to New York right away if I possibly could: he had a very important German painting. I said, "Well, tell me more." He said, "Well, it's Grünewald." So I said, "Well, I'll be there." I went over and we met at his apartment. Then we went to the restorer, a German lady--whose name will occur perhaps in a minute or two--to see the painting on panel. It had some sort of remains of Gothic writing characters on the back that said "Mainz," the city. It was a panel. There are drawings for the panel and four other panels of the altarpiece that was made for the cathedral of Mainz towards the end of Grünewald's career. A few years before, I had been to see the Isenheim Altar by Grünewald at Colmar [France], which was one of the great experiences in all of art. You know the mind-set with a German collection but no Grünewald-- There's only one Grünewald in America, a painting, and that one's at the National Gallery [of Art]. There was a Grünewald drawing at the [LeRoy M.] Backus collection in Seattle which I had tried to get Dick [Richard] Fuller to get, but he thought it was just a drapery study. It didn't appeal to him, so that escaped me. We bought two, three, four beautiful Dürer drawings for the collection over the last ten or twelve years until the Grünewald came up. So, you know, it was a kind of mind-set. Here was our chance to cap the German collection. The picture was very attractive; it looked very fine. There was the preliminary drawing for the figure in Berlin, and the restorer, who was a perfectly honest, reliable person, was impressed to no end with the picture. We had it out to the museum on approval, and the conservation department went over it and everything was gung ho. I had a couple of my friends in the scholarly world look at it. Wolf [Wolfgang] Stechow at Oberlin [College] and William Suhr and Mario Modestini had expressed some reservations about it from a photograph, and they came out and looked at it and they left pretty well convinced. So we all agreed that we should go ahead and buy it and do it. So we got it. We bought it. One scholar had, I found out, said it was a fake, flatly. That was Konrad Oberhuber, who was then teaching at the Fogg Art Museum at Harvard. Oberhuber was quite intuitive and a somewhat strange man. Very, very gifted, very good eye, but very strange. He went in for Rosicrucianism and other kinds of things that were a little bit strange. I paid attention to that but I didn't-- We felt we were

okay. Then I got a letter in the mail from Munich from another man--no relationship to the source of our painting that I know of, no connection with Frederick Mont--offering us a second panel from the Mainz altar. This one looked very, very strange--and I mean really strange--and I was just in a state of shock, because I thought, "This painting is a forgery, the one that has just been offered to us, and it is clearly related to our painting." That night I couldn't sleep. I mean, it was just awful. The next day I asked the conservation department to go at it, tooth and nail. Ross Merrill, who later became conservator at the National Gallery, said that he was going to go over it again, because he had a few little questions he wanted answered. He went through it but it was quite clear. The next day I looked again at the photographs from Munich, and I just said, "You know, we've been had." And it was a fairly substantial sum of money for the late seventies. Then Ross reported to me and said that he had found something, there was a discrepancy in materials. I've forgotten the exact thing, but there was something amiss physically, scientifically. The combination was irresistible. So I called Frederick Mont and I said, "I've got very bad news. I think that painting is a forgery." He said, "Oh, it can't be." So I said, "Well, I'm coming to New York. I have all the evidence, and you just wait and let me present it to you and you tell me what you think." So I did that, and after I finished, he said, "It's a fake. I was wrong and how can we straighten this out?" Well, I told the trustees about it before I went to New York and I was authorized to try to work out something. Fred Mont was very, very honest and very straightforward, as I knew he would be. He didn't have all the cash, but about three quarters of what we spent he could give back in cash, and then he had a very fine early Italian painting, Florentine, late Gothic painting, which was in quite good condition and a really excellent painting. He would throw that in to finish it off. So I agreed that we would take that. Then we were immediately able then, without somebody else telling us, to announce that we had discovered this painting was no good and that restitution had been made that was satisfactory to both sides. It was just another example of how you must be very careful and you can always make a mistake. On the whole, it was a classic case. I mean, if someone had tried to set up a situation which would be conducive to letting down one's guard, the elements were all there. It was just a matter of their falling into place, and they did and we fell for it. And that was that. That was bad enough, but the other event that achieved international notoriety concerned the acquisition of

the painting by Nicolas Poussin The Holy Family on the Steps, which was a very important subject by Poussin, painted by him in 1648 for one of his most honored and treasured clients. There was another version of the painting in the National Gallery Kress Collection, which was presumed to be, in all of the literature by almost everyone, the original. They were exactly the same, at least at first glance. I had known the painting from a color reproduction. I'm a Poussin nut. I just love his work. It came to me rather late, but once I got it, I was crazy about it. We had two Poussins in the museum. One was not in very good condition: the Return of the Holy Family from Egypt. The other one was Nymph and Satyrs in a Landscape, an early painting which had been kicked around between Poussin and Pier Francesco Mola. But we felt pretty strongly that it was an early Poussin and gradually it received acceptance. It had been bought by William Milliken back in the thirties from Durlacher in New York. He and Henry [Sayles] Francis, who was then curator of paintings, had bought the Return of the Holy Family. It came from the Liechtenstein collection. It was not in good condition. It was in all the literature and so on, but it wasn't a very exciting painting. The Holy Family on the Steps was one of Poussin's great, great compositions, but I'd known it from a color reproduction in an old publication of the Poussin Society in Paris. I'd always liked it much better from the reproduction than the National Gallery picture, particularly in the expression of the face of the Virgin, also the general sort of balance of the picture. I received a letter from Paris wanting to know if I was interested in purchasing the picture. It belonged to [a woman who was a relative] of Paul Jamot, who had been a curator at the Louvre back in the thirties, who had written a great deal on Poussin's work. He was considered by the modern curators of our time to be rather too romantic and poetic for their taste. It had belonged to him, and its pedigree could be traced. It first entered France in modern times: it was 1907. It was purchased by Jamot. It had been bought by a French family in London at auction and taken to Paris from London. The picture had been in the English collection in 1907. Then it had been in this [woman's] apartment in Paris. So I went over to look at the painting in Paris. I saw it and I was absolutely a hundred percent convinced that it was the original. I sent our painting curator over.

1.22. TAPE NUMBER: X, SIDE TWO
JULY 15, 1992

The picture had always been described as a copy, not the original, by the greatest Poussin expert in Europe, who, oddly enough, happened to be Sir Anthony Blunt--the famous Cambridge [University] Russian spy or spy for Russia. I had some dealings with him on several other occasions in connection with export of works from England. I found him a rather-- One, he was very anti-American and, two, he was a real snob, a Cambridge snob of the highest order and very weaselly with words. In his catalog entry in the Poussin catalogue raisonné, which was a standard catalog for Poussin, he used a very curious succession of words and innuendos to say that the painting in Paris, in the private collection that we were interested in, was no good. Copy. It was one French scholar, Jacques Thuillier, who thought it was the original and had published it in his monograph on Poussin as the original, and the National Gallery, Washington, picture as a copy. So we went over and over it, and finally we agreed on a price and I sent a letter on, authorized by the trustees, that we would be prepared to acquire the picture, subject to legal export from France, which the owner had said that she was willing to do. Now, I omitted to mention that after the death of [Jamot], who had been curator at the Louvre, the later curators at the Louvre, contemporary with the late seventies, had taken most of his pictures he'd left to the Louvre and put them in storage. They hadn't done right by his library, according to his [relative]. There was a real feud, even a vendetta, going on between her and the curators at the Louvre, who were, according to her, doing dirt to [Jamot's] memory. So I went to the Louvre. I knew Pierre Rosenberg. I had been to dinner at his house. Terrible food. Just awful. I said, "We want to buy this picture, subject to legal export, and can we get some kind of action from the export committee?" He said, "That picture, I am sure, is not the original, but we really ought to have a special committee for this picture." He ticked off that they would have Blunt and Thuillier and several other scholars, German and so forth, who would examine the picture and then make a recommendation to the Louvre committee that reported to the customs. Now I went back to the [woman], and she hit the ceiling. She considered the words-- She was quite a lady, I mean just extraordinary, but the words she used to describe Mr. Blunt are not repeatable in any society. She would not hear anything of it. So I said, "Well, the deal is off then." I mean, we sent a letter that because of this impasse the deal was off. I reconciled myself to not being able to get the picture, and I got

a phone call at my desk in Cleveland one day from [Jamot's] nephew, who had, incidentally, a big ranch out in Manitoba. He was a character. I said, "Where are you?" He said, "I am at the Hopkins Airport," which is a Cleveland airport. He said, "I've got the painting with me." I said, "What do you mean you've got the painting with you?" He said, "I have it here." I said, "Well, there is no export permit?" And no, there was no export permit. There wasn't any. I mean, you know, we said that we couldn't touch that painting without an export permit. I said, "How have you got it here? I know it's a fairly good-sized painting with a big frame." He said, "It's rolled up in a tube." You know the usual tube? You know, I had visions of paint flaking off or you name it. Real problems. And I said, "Well, look. You get the painting out here to the museum right away. We'll take it directly to the conservation department. You've got to get that painting out of that roll and we've got to look at it and make sure that it hasn't been damaged and there's no prospect of immediate damage. And then you've got to take that picture and go away, because we will have nothing to do with this." So he did that. He brought it there. The conservator let it rest like this, you know, on a table overnight, and it gradually went down, flattened. As far as we could make out, there had been no damage to the pigment or the varnish, so we then made a package for it so it could stay flat. He left. He took the painting to New York, where he had it in an apartment of a friend, I understand, not a very good place for it to be. But then I got a phone call from him from New York or Paris--I don't remember where it was--asking if I knew anything about two cases, one involving silver, French silver, and the other one involving drawings, the Talleyrand collection of drawings, French and Italian drawings. Did I know about those two cases? I said, "No, I don't." He said, "Well, I'll send you the references." I got the references, and this is something that the French-- This is typical. The French had never said a word to me about these cases or their influence on the case of Poussin. But briefly and basically, the two cases involved, in the case of the silver, French works that were of high, great importance and that had been imported into France in the twentieth century. It was the same thing for the Talleyrand drawings, many of which had been acquired by the Art Institute of Chicago. They were of great importance, and the French had tried to stop them from being taken out of the country. The Talleyrand family had gone to court, and the court had decided, in both the silver case and the drawing case, that the restrictions on export of works of art did not apply to works that had

been-- [tape recorder off] There had been these two cases, and they had been decided against the museums of France, against the state, because the silver and the drawings had been imported into France in the twentieth century. This opened up, because the Poussin had been painted in Rome and had not come to France until 1907. And that was documented. So then I asked the trustees, and they said, "Let's examine it." Our lawyers went into it, and the upshot of it was that we bought the painting. The French then arrested the aunt, and ransacked her apartment as a matter of fact, to find documents and so forth and so on. Then the magistrate set a hearing, and I was subpoenaed to appear at the hearing. I said I would not go. I just didn't reply. And the whole thing was in the hands of the lawyers then. The upshot of it was that the French issued in to Interpol-- It's either a blue or something in 1984, I think, which has the facts down in reasonably accurate and proper sequence. If anybody is interested, for the record, that's the first thing one should consult. The thing was finally settled. After a lot of negotiation, it was finally settled to the satisfaction of both parties. The subpoena was withdrawn, and there was an agreement for the temporary loan of the painting on a schedule of two years, and then back in the Cleveland possession for five, and then-- Which is now just beginning to be played out. It was very unpleasant and very highly educational, I must say. Highly educational. But the cream of the jest is, of course, that after their trying to run down the picture, Blunt and Rosenberg between them, our conservation department made x rays of the painting. ticket, which meant that I was under subpoena to appear. It was not an indictment or anything of that nature. Anyhow, this thing dragged on and it got into the newspaper. Pierre Rosenberg claimed it was a moral issue. See, he had insisted the painting was a copy, but he was the one who wanted to have this special committee that was strictly extra, extracurricular, extralegal. It's outside the way in which the French were supposed to handle that export permit system. Anyhow, it became a cause célèbre. All I can say is that there is one article which was published in the Art News using the x rays, which conclusively proved, without question, even admitted by Mr. Blunt in a footnote in a later article in the Burlington Magazine. Our curator, Ann [T.] Lurie, published an article in the Burlington Magazine, that ours was the prime version. They found that the Louvre has a drawing by Poussin, a preliminary drawing, which shows in the background an arched arcade in the drawing which is not in the painting. The painting is done in architrave,

horizontal, vertical. But the x rays show the arcade behind where-- So that he had done it that way first and then changed it in the painting. So that was very, very refreshing and salutary and the best kind of revenge I can think of. But it indicates the extent to which the art market, and museums who are part of the market, are not above criticism in terms of the export/import regulations of various countries, and particularly in areas such as Southeast Asia, South Asia, pre-Columbian art from North and South America, African art. It's pretty fast and loose, and the response of the United Nations, the UNESCO [United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization] convention, which finally was achieved and was finally ratified by the United States and has slowly been ratified by various countries-- India, for example, in 1948-- There are some countries which still haven't ratified it. China does not subscribe to the convention. But there is a need for international protection of works of art against looting, theft, and willful damage. It's something that is in the back of everyone's mind, some more than others, and something that is gradually being worked out, but perhaps not fast enough. The Poussin was simply another spectacular, sensational case that caused a great deal of trial, tribulation, but also some second thoughts on the regulation system. The Japanese don't have a problem and the Germans don't have a problem. The British have a pretty good system. The Japanese have a registration system. They have over ten thousand registered objects. They can't be exported, period. Everyone knows their published lists and illustrations of their books with all these things in them. And you know where you are. There's a thriving and honorable antiquities and fine arts market in Japan. Same thing is true in Germany. Germany has a list and they have an open market. But in a lot of countries, Italy and Spain and France and others, the regulations are either so prohibitive that they simply shut down and the result is that everything becomes illegal or, in the case of the French, they twist and bend it and use their regulations through the customs as they wish and there's no consistency to it whatsoever.

GARDNER

A lot of this happened after you were no longer affiliated with the museum.

LEE

Well, the negotiations for a settlement which would remove the subpoena and me from the subpoena list and that would settle the legal title to the painting were negotiated after I'd retired. Only a few years ago were they really finally settled and the legal document signed by the French and by the Cleveland Museum of Art. But the painting was acquired by us in 1981 or '82. It had become a cause célèbre before I retired. So it's taken, I would say, about eight or a little over eight years to get the thing worked out.

GARDNER

Was it odd having a French subpoena hanging over your head?

LEE

Well, Ruth [Ward Lee] and I did not go to France from '82 until '86 or '87 I think it was. It seemed ludicrous when we finally went and nothing happened and everything was just fine. We had dinner with [Hubert] Landais, the retired director of the museums of France, at his house in the country. The only people that I don't recognize anymore are people like Pierre Rosenberg and Michel Laclotte, who were the instigators of the whole thing. I knew Mme. [Irene] Bizot, who was Landais's assistant. At the time we were arguing about this thing, just before we bought the painting--yes, before we bought the painting--I said, "What about those two court cases involving the Talleyrand drawings and the silver? You people never said a word about this to me." And her reply was quintessential. She said, "Oh! But those decisions were so unfair."

GARDNER

What about Anthony Blunt? What was he like? Did you know him well enough?

LEE

Well, he was, you know, very thin, ascetic looking, with a Cambridge drawl. He didn't like Americans. He was a very fine scholar in the field of the history of art, documents and language and so forth. His connoisseurship was occasionally, I think, suspect. I first ran into him-- We agreed to buy in London a picture, a Duccio, a small panel from Julius Weitzner which Julius had discovered. It was a beautiful, beautiful painting. We had agreed to buy it, and

the National Gallery-- Martin Davies, who was the director of the National Gallery, asked to have it reviewed by the export committee, because he wanted it for the National Gallery, he said. So they had a hearing, and Harold Clark and I went to that hearing. Blunt was on the panel and kept talking about the painting and why did the National Gallery want it. And then he would talk about the painting, and everything he said-- For instance, he thought that the throne was rather badly painted and how could they say that that really was Duccio and so forth. Well, as a matter of fact, the throne is some of the best painting in the picture. There was something just not quite right about how he discussed the paintings and used these things. He and Davies didn't get on too well. There was just something in the way he handled himself and what he said that I thought was very slippery. I think I met him once after that at an opening of one of the dealers, [Thomas] Agnew [and Sons] or someplace in London, and he was very curt and abrupt. He didn't want to talk to Americans very much.

GARDNER

The next collections-related story you wanted to talk about was the Rockefeller collection.

LEE

Yes. I think that should be explained, because it was certainly a major event for me and it resulted in a wonderful collection that is now at the Asia Society in New York, left to them by Mr. and Mrs. Rockefeller. It was in the early sixties that Mr. Rockefeller approached me.

GARDNER

Which Rockefeller was that?

LEE

John D. Rockefeller III. And the story of this is also clearly spelled out in the book by John [E.] Harr and Peter [J.] Johnson, *The Rockefeller Conscience*. He approached me and asked if I would be willing to serve as his adviser. He had met me and I knew him a little bit because of the Asia Society in New York. I was on the gallery committee of the Asia Society and I had done a couple of exhibitions for the Asia Society. Also I was on the committee of the Japan

Society, which he was also connected with. He asked if I would come talk with him at his apartment and with his wife, Blanchette [Ferry Hooker Rockefeller]. I went to talk to him and I liked him very much. He's very straightforward and very aware and very sensitive to things, and she's an absolute peach. She's very, very good, very intelligent and a very good connoisseur of modern art in particular and art in general. I said, "You know, there's a possibility--a clear possibility, a probability--of conflict of interest, because I'm the chief curator of oriental art for the Cleveland Museum of Art." I said, "We have to work that out. I would clearly have to get the permission and the approval of the board of trustees of the Cleveland Museum of Art if I were to do this." We worked out a system, which we followed when we finally went into operation, that was that if something were offered to him, he had the first refusal. If something were offered to me or the museum, then we had the first refusal. And we never had a problem. In the case of any question where there was a clear lack of knowledge of who received the first offer, it would be decided by the flip of a coin. We only had to flip a coin once and, as a matter of fact, we won it. The trustees were very-- Harold Clark was still the chairman of the board, and he thought it was a good idea. I knew it was a good idea, because with the Rockefellers and with Cleveland with its purchase funds, with the two of us working together under one adviser as it were, we would absolutely dominate the oriental art market. We would get just about first refusal, preferred treatment on anything. So it was going to help the museum as well as helping the Rockefellers. Of course, he was not interested in big monumental pieces that were sort of museum type. But it seemed to me that it would work out very advantageously, and, as a matter of fact, it did. It meant monthly meetings in New York with Mr. Rockefeller, and of course occasionally he would meet me abroad to look at things and look at the market. But over the years, it really worked out. I think he was very pleased, and I know that the Asia Society was pleased, to get the collection. I think it's generally agreed that it's a very special assemblage of Indian, Southeast Asian, Chinese, Korean, and Japanese art, just as the Cleveland Museum of Art is. And there are any number of things in Cleveland that-- For example, one thing, the Ch'eng-hua blue and white palace bowl, which was one of the great porcelains of the Ming dynasty, was at auction in London. We bid on it but we didn't get it. Then Mr. Rockefeller stepped in and bought it at the auction, and he gave it to us. He gave the difference between what our final bid had been

and what the final result was. About 50 percent of the price of the piece he donated, and it came to Cleveland. He was scrupulously fair in things. Of course, he sometimes didn't take my advice. There were occasions when he just didn't really want to buy something and I was very keen about it. Then these things wound up in Cleveland. So it worked both ways. It certainly helped the development of the collection of the Cleveland Museum of Art. That plus the collecting, in Cleveland itself, of Greta and Severance Millikin and [A.] Dean and Geenie [Wade] Perry and George Bickford in Indian art and Kelvin Smith in Japanese or Far Eastern art. Those people also were active at the same time. So, in effect, we really were controlling and were able to pick what we wanted from the art market and with a lot of cooperation from the dealers, because they knew it was in their best interest. So it was accidental and fortuitous, but it worked out.

GARDNER

Well, shall we move on to your publications? Are you ready?

LEE

Oh, yes.

GARDNER

Okay. I have them chronologically, though there will be overlap, and where there is, I'm sure you'll tell me. The first one that I have down-- And I'm ignoring the things published--the articles and so on that we discussed--before you got to the museum-- In 1954, you did Chinese Landscape Painting for the Cleveland Museum. We talked about that a little bit. Is there anything else you'd like to say? One of the things that struck me, in one of the half dozen books that I was able to track down, was the emphasis on style and on [Henri] Focillon, which recurs later as well.

LEE

Well, I definitely was brought up in a tradition of believing that art was primarily a matter of quality and sensibility and that style and the handling of the visual elements are the quintessential things that make art different from something else. As a young person just starting out at the age of eighteen or so, when I was a junior or a senior in college, all the younger, more alert

members of the various departments were reading people like Roger Fry and Clive Bell, and there was a French writer, Élie Faure. During the war, Focillon came to Yale and published his Wittenborn [Schultz] series on documents of art. The title of the book was *The Life of Forms in Art*, and one of the essays that I remember best was called "In Praise of Hands." Tommy [Thomas] Munro, of course, was a Scotch philosopher, pragmatist, pupil of John Dewey and scientific in his approach. He divided the work of art into four parts, which were: (1) Functional elements such as a carpet or a bowl. (2) Narrative, representational elements. What's represented? What is the story? What is the narrative? In a portrait, what do people look like? And so forth. (3) The symbolic, or expository elements which involve symbolism, where things stand for other things and for concepts, iconography, etc. (4) Aesthetic, or he sometimes used the word "decorative," elements, which involved visual imagery. All of these were important, but the thing that was distinctive about visual arts was the visual art part of it. That, of course, was adding something to what Fry and Bell wrote about significant form and visual analysis. Tommy also had been at the Barnes Foundation, and so he had a strong interest in the analysis of the aesthetic elements of works of art. So that was part of my background. It seemed to me clear that art can have many elements--and if you ignore those, you're doing it a disservice--but, nevertheless, the thing that makes art art is the visual side. The thing that makes music music is the auditory side, and so on. What's the old, famous--? Faith, hope, and charity, and the greatest of these is charity, right? I don't know whether that is the right quotation or not. But all these things are involved in the work of art--exposition, utility, and symbolism--but it's the visual side and the connoisseurship that is necessary in order to understand that visual side-- And Focillon was, to me, the most articulate and telling representative of that point of view, just as [Erwin] Panofsky, for example, was the most eloquent and telling from the standpoint of iconography. So that clearly influenced my mind-set from the very beginning. There was a period when I was very much under the influence of Howard Hollis and, through him, of people like [Ananda] Coomaraswamy--

GARDNER

Right. We've talked about that one.

LEE

--and that kind of thing, which I gradually began--thank God--to shuck off, because it was both unhealthy and not very nice. It ultimately played into, I think, a very totalitarian point of view. So that has always been my forte. I'm terrible at languages, and I started very late anyhow. I was able to pass my German examination for my Ph.D. by a special sort of a cram course in German that I worked at very hard and I finally was able to do it. I had a sort of average understanding of French and I could read it well and I could get along in utilitarian conversation or artistic, art history conversation. But you throw me into a French dinner party where idiomatic French is going all over the place and I'm pretty much at sea. Ruth and I married early. We began to have a family fairly early and so forth. We had no fortune of our own. Neither of our families had any money. We had to work. We had to get out there and do it and get it done at a time also when-- I first began to study art history, really, in 1937, '38. You weren't traveling to Europe and the Orient at that time and you weren't doing anything for about ten years. So the circumstances, plus my really bad tin ear, meant that in language I was very, very poor, especially for the oriental things that I wanted to go into so much. But I persuaded myself-- and I'm glad I did, right or wrong--that there was plenty to do with European languages on oriental art to be able to be useful and to make a contribution in the field of oriental art. I never pretended to be anything other than a connoisseur and a kind of-- Well, the ideal way to put it is the way the vulgarisation French put it, which is what they called *haut*. That really was my aim in what I would try to do. Also, I really studied very hard the original works of art. I did not spend my time, all my time, in documents and in the printed word. When I had the opportunity in Japan, I saw everything I possibly could. I've gone to all the museums all over the world, with certain exceptions. I've always thought the original work of art is the thing that you have to be most familiar with and most concerned about. And over the years, I didn't learn by taking courses in oriental art. I had work programs with Howard Hollis, I read a lot. But basically, I looked and looked and looked, and particularly the people who taught me the most were people like curators or dealers. The dealers are very, very, very instructive, and some of them are extremely instructive. One Japanese dealer, Setsu, taught me an awful lot, though he didn't have any English and I had a minimum sort of-- We could just barely make ourselves understood. But he taught me an awful lot. Then there were people like Larry [Laurence] Sickman in Kansas City, when I did get out there. I was inhibited

about him for years because Howard Hollis didn't like him. As a matter of fact, Howard called a lot of the stuff at [the Nelson Gallery of Art] Kansas City, some of their greatest materials-- He thought they were forgeries. Until I broke loose from that sort of Coomaraswamy traditional viewpoint-- Coomaraswamy wrote an essay once called "The Medieval or True Society," the idea that a theocracy, basically, is the ideal form of society. Coomaraswamy was very antidemocratic and said some really quite awful things, and the books people recommended were people like René Guénon and Jacques Maritain and a book on Tibet by Marco Pallis. And you go back and look at these things and you wonder how they could have gotten by. But it was part of an intellectual climate that was mixed up with totalitarianism, with the Hitlerian system and with Franco. It's that totalitarian point of view, which was rather strong in some areas. Well, I finally grew up. I think it was in Japan. When I began to actually see what was going on in Japan and see the art in Japan--the museums and the collectors and the dealers--the dominance and the paramount position of the object became increasingly more important to me. And that's what it's been ever since. Chinese Landscape Painting was not the first. The first exhibition I did on my own was an exhibition in Detroit called--I think we mentioned it--Buddhist Art, the first exhibition of Buddhist art. And it was a small effort, but it was there. At that time when I wrote about the Orient, I put out a lot of these things about the oriental or true civilization and theology, theocracy. Jim [James Marshall] Plumer, when I took two courses with him at the University of Michigan graduate school, he was a disciple of Coomaraswamy, too. He was very much interested in folk art and that kind of thing, that particular syndrome. But once I hit Japan and that extraordinary aesthetic culture in Japan and then I got into Seattle [Art Museum], where I was working hard and developing collections, and then in Cleveland, it was-- All that earlier interest was gone, and I concentrated on a connoisseur's approach to Far Eastern art. I've always believed that you have a responsibility to persuade and to educate and elucidate so that people can come to understand and share in the appreciation of great works of art. As far as I'm concerned, that's what's-- We've never made a lot of money. I was asked on several occasions-- C. T. [Ching-tsi] Loo asked me to go in with him as a dealer and Howard Hollis wanted me to, and I wouldn't even think about it. I still feel very strongly that you have an educational responsibility and that if someone doesn't write

books or write articles and try to explain works of art, the scholars by and large will not do it, because they are pursuing their agenda, which is quite right and which builds the foundation for other things to happen. But if somebody doesn't act as an intermediary between the work of art and the people who don't know about works of art, no one is going to do it. I think it's a responsibility.

GARDNER

What was the reaction to Chinese Landscape Painting?

LEE

Pretty good. It was positive. The exhibition was successful, and, as I said, the catalog went well. Dover Press issued paperbacks of it and Japanese Decorative Style. So it's been used a lot. All those publications that developed out of the museum, all of the royalties and all, that went to the museum. The only thing that I got really substantial, well, any royalties from was A History of Far Eastern Art [1964], which I wrote over a period of years, starting at the university-- When I was in Seattle and I was an adjunct professor at the University of Washington, it grew out of my introductory course.

**1.23. TAPE NUMBER: XI, SIDE ONE
JULY 15, 1992**

GARDNER

As we were turning the tape, you mentioned that it was twelve years in the making?

LEE

A History of Far Eastern Art [1964] was twelve years in the making, beginning with the introductory courses that I taught at the University of Washington when I was at the Seattle Art Museum. There was no text for history of Far Eastern art. There were texts on Chinese art, on Japanese art, on Indian art, but almost nothing, except in French, on Southeast Asian art. In particular, because of the importance of Buddhism in Eastern Asia-- If you gave a course in Chinese art, you always had to go back to India and explain about the coming of Buddhism to China. It was very important in Japan as well. So it seemed to me that it was very important that there be some kind of an

introductory text to the art of Eastern Asia that would follow the international movements and also follow the national developments. Certain aspects were international and certain aspects were national, and one had to take this into account in preparing a text, to use the whole area and show the interrelationships where those interrelations were paramount. There was no such book. That's the way I taught my course and that's the way I started to organize the text.

GARDNER

Did [Harry N.] Abrams [Inc.] find you? Or did you find Abrams?

LEE

Well, that was serendipity, because-- When I had been a graduate student in Cleveland and had been a volunteer assistant to Howard [C.] Hollis, Milton Fox was the assistant curator of education under [Thomas] Munro. He was an artist, an extraordinary man, a live wire, very intelligent and very active. He was very, very liberal. Whereas Howard Hollis was very reactionary politically, Milton was very liberal politically. As a matter of fact, each of them used to take me aside and say, "You've got to be very careful." You would get, "You're going to be in trouble if you keep on with that other guy there." Milton the radical or Howard the reactionary. But during the war, Milton went west and he was in camouflage in the army I guess. Then he got interested in the movies out in California and he did some work, but not very successfully, there. And then he became editor at Harry Abrams in New York. He was the first editor for Abrams. So I knew him very well and I liked him. When I told him I was doing this thing, he was very interested right away and they said they would do it. As a matter of fact, it was very funny, because Milton was also a fly fisherman, and when I got to where the thing was almost done but there were all kinds of loose ends and badly phrased sections and this, that, and the other thing, we had a session up in the Adirondacks with Ruth [Ward Lee] and Ruby Fox, his wife, and some of the children up there in a cabin up in the Adirondacks. I remember we just worked almost eighteen hours a day for a week to try to get the thing pulled together and ready to go to press. We had a wonderful time up there. Milton was an extraordinary person. And it's worked out very well ever since.

GARDNER

Four editions, then? The fourth about to come out?

LEE

There were four editions. The fifth edition is scheduled to go to press in October. And it's a thoroughly revised and enlarged edition. Just finished the other day.

GARDNER

Oh, really! Oh, congratulations! Okay, I'd better go back to my chronology, and you can comment again as much as you like about any of these. In 1955, you did something called *Streams and Mountains without End: [A Northern Sung Handscroll and Its Significance in the History of Early Chinese Painting]*, with Wen Fong.

LEE

Oh, yes. Oh, yes. Despite the fact that I'm not a great scholar, we've done some things that are firsts. *The History of Far Eastern Art* was the first text for the whole of Eastern Asia. I bought for Cleveland when I first came here, the second year I was here--thank Leonard [C.] Hanna [Jr.], who gave the money for it--a Chinese landscape handscroll called *Chi Chan Wu Chin*, "Streams and Mountains without End" or "Endless Streams and Mountains." A painting of the twelfth century that we were very lucky to get. I got it from a very--what's the word I want?--peculiar dealer named [Walter] Hochstadter, a German, who was a case. He was one of these very, very picky, neat, precise types, and it would drive you crazy to watch him do all these things, the rituals he had to go through to show you something. So anyhow, Walter first had a painting he showed me which was a very famous handscroll and which was spectacular. I took it home on approval and studied it in Cleveland, and I decided that it was later, a copy, which I still believe. So I took it back to him and explained. I had told Leonard Hanna and Leonard agreed to give it. And then I had to go back to Leonard and say, "Leonard, I think the painting is a Ming copy and I don't think we should get it." He said, "All right. Fine." So then I took it back to Hochstadter, and after a moment of shock and all kinds of things, he agreed. Then he said, "Would you be interested in another handscroll?" He went out and pulled out this one, which was super. So we bought that. Leonard magnanimously trusted this judgment that had failed once, and we bought it.

Then I was introduced to Wen Fong, who was then a graduate student finishing his Ph.D. at Princeton [University]. He had come from Shanghai and was a wunderkind. He had studied calligraphy and painting and was very famous for his calligraphy. And I thought that-- I didn't know Chinese, and I certainly needed help anyhow. He came and didn't have anything to do and didn't have anyplace to stay. So we invited him, and he came to Cleveland and stayed with us at our house for most of the summer of '53, I think, and we worked on Streams and Mountains without End. I wanted to do something that had not been done before, and that was to study a single painting in great depth, as a kind of monograph. Perhaps over a period of decades, if various people would do this with various paintings, we'd begin to build the corpus of well-researched and solid materials for standards. So Wen and I worked very hard all summer and we got it done. It was published as a monograph in the Artibus Asiae monograph series. Not long after, some others began to come out. Chu-tsing Li did two monographs: one on Chao Meng-fu's Autumn Colors of the Chiao and Hua Mountains and then he did another one on the Sheep and Goat picture by Chao Meng-fu. I think it made a contribution, and it also, in terms of methodology, combined the elements of connoisseurship with a thorough analysis of seals and inscriptions and ownership and so on. I'm glad we did it. I think it was a useful thing.

GARDNER

The next one I have on my list is 1960. Rajput Painting?

LEE

Well, that was the Asia Society exhibition, I believe.

GARDNER

I see.

LEE

Yes. Well, I've always been interested in Rajput painting. When I first went to Detroit [Institute of Arts], I had a little exhibition with no catalog of Rajput painting at the Alger House, the branch museum of Italian Renaissance decorative arts there. They were very inexpensive. Boston Museum [of Fine Arts] had a very fine large collection that [Ananda] Coomaraswamy had put

together, but they weren't terribly well known. The Asia Society was always looking around and trying to get people to do exhibitions. I suggested that they do an exhibition on Rajput painting and I would do the catalog, which I did. It was back in the days when Rajput painting was not as thoroughly known as it is now and where it was mistakenly simpler, in terms of geography in particular, because of the exact locations of all the different schools of painting depending on the patronage of the local rajas. That had not been thoroughly explored. So it was an introductory exhibition and catalog and one which has been superseded by subsequent research by a lot of people who had been working in that area.

GARDNER

The next one was Japanese Decorative Style [1961], which we've talked about.

LEE

Yes, we talked about that.

GARDNER

Do you have anything to add?

LEE

I don't think there's much to add to that. I think what I said there takes care of it.

GARDNER

And then in 1963 you published Tea Taste in Japanese Art.

LEE

That was something I wanted to do very much, and the Asia Society liked the idea. The tea ceremony has been, as far as I'm concerned, a controversial element in Japanese art. For people to love the tea ceremony and think of it as absolutely the most important element of Japanese art always has struck me, particularly when I first lived in Japan-- It always struck me as having something very, very artificial, almost a ritualistic thing, that had long outlived its usefulness. The word got around that I was not a devotee of the tea ceremony. Also, a lot of tea ceremony types were also the types who thought that Coomaraswamy and [René] Guénon and so forth were just terrific. They

were very, very conservative types. So the word got around in '46 to '48 that I was not impressed with the tea ceremony. I didn't like it. And two of the great old tea masters, Matsunaga and Hatakeyama, approached. Hatakeyama went to Howard Hollis and me. Howard was still there and I was his assistant. He wanted to give a tea ceremony and try to explain. He made a point of explaining the origins of the tea ceremony and its character in earlier times as a much less formal, less ritualistic gathering of like-minded people for conviviality in the exchange of ideas and also for show and tell, as collectors of things that they had gotten recently or something, and also having a meal, not just going through the green tea bit. Then Matsunaga did it the next year for me. Howard had gone into business. I was educated by that experience and I looked at it more carefully. And I began to see also, in terms of education, that the tea ceremony and the flower arrangement business all had a very definite function in Japanese society that was lacking in almost all Western societies. That was a kind of aesthetic ritual which was shared by all, whether they knew it or not and whether they understood it or not and whether they practiced it in a persnickety way or in a generally convivial way. But it was a kind of aesthetic glue that bound understanding of art together in that society, and it was sadly lacking, certainly, in the United States. I wanted to do that exhibition and to-- There were books on the tea ceremony. There was a famous book by the Australian, [Arthur L.] Sadler, which tells you all you want to know and more about the tea ritual. But I wanted to do it, and I chose the title *Tea Taste in Japanese Art* so that it wouldn't be a book about the tea ceremony but would be an introduction to what was involved in the tea ceremony in the way of taste, in connoisseurship, and how it affected the non-tea elements around it in the Japanese culture. Anyway, it was quite successful and it is still used by a lot of people as an introductory text for understanding the influence of tea taste. So I think, again, that was a work of vulgarization but one that was very much needed because of the strictures and inhibitions and the misunderstandings that developed as part of this ritualistic, worshipping attitude towards the tea ceremony. There are several different sects of tea ceremony. There's the Sen group in Kyoto. Then there are others, such as Omote. They are world-wide organizations, and they have a pyramidal structure. All the dues and memberships all around the world flow up to the peak of the pyramid in Kyoto, and they are extremely profitable. The same thing is true of calligraphy societies in Japan and flower arrangement

societies. They're organized. And they are self-appointed preservers of a flame. And this kind of super-worshipful and rigid attitude I think can tend to be very harmful. But the concept of a common ritual involving aesthetics is so good and so important in terms of art education, which a lot of Western people talk about, but it doesn't work out very well. I thought it was worth stressing those aspects of it.

GARDNER

Fascinating. I want to go see if I can find that one somewhere. We talked about the History of Far Eastern Art. In 1968, as a part of the exhibit program, you did Chinese Art under the Mongols: [The Art of the Yüan Dynasty, 1279-1368].

LEE

Yes. Well, we discussed that a little bit earlier. But that has proven to be, I suppose, in terms of the scholarly contribution to the field--that exhibition and that catalog, on which Wai-kam Ho was the coauthor with me--the major thing that I've been associated with in terms of scholarship. As I said earlier, the Yüan dynasty was a sort of dumping ground. We knew about the origins of the literary man's style of painting from them, but we didn't really pay much attention to the other kinds of painting of Yüan. The birth of the Chinese blue and white tradition occurred in Yüan. It was a really seminal period, and it was under foreign rule. Wai-kam was very interested in the idea. We worked very hard at it together and we got a lot of cooperation from our colleagues in Britain, especially, because they were very much interested in it. It really was an event and people came from all over. We had visitors from Japan, from Hong Kong, from Germany, all over. People came to see that particular exhibition. And one sort of a mercenary proof of a success is that the catalog of that exhibition is now totally unattainable, and when it does appear at a bookseller's, it costs hundreds and hundreds of dollars.

GARDNER

Does it really?

LEE

Yes. Yes.

GARDNER

I hope you have twenty or thirty put aside for your old age.

LEE

No, I've only got one. And it's dog-eared.

GARDNER

That's wonderful. The same year you did a publication Ancient Cambodian Sculpture.

LEE

That was another Asia Society exhibition. I've done several--more than several--exhibitions for the Asia Society. It's a wonderful venue for a relatively small, concentrated exhibition on a subject that is not all that well known and its primary audience is an educated and sympathetic lay audience. That's my meat. Doing exhibitions for other scholars is not as exciting to me as the other. There had never been an exhibition of Cambodian sculpture in the United States. Ever. I don't think there'd ever been one anywhere except in Paris, where the Musée Guimet has that great collection. There were certainly a lot of very interesting and beautiful sculptures in America, and it just seemed to me that it was an opportunity to do something that hadn't been done before and introduce a lot of people to this material. [tape recorder off]

GARDNER

At that point that you wrote that piece on ancient Cambodian sculpture, did you travel to Cambodia? Or have you traveled to Cambodia?

LEE

Yes. We got into Angkor just before it all closed down. We were in Bangkok. We saw some friends of ours and grabbed a plane and got a car and we were able to see quite a bit of the material in situ. I've always been interested in Cambodian sculpture. I acquired pieces when I first went to Detroit. I bought a bronze-- Of all places, Pierre Matisse had a beautiful Cambodian bronze Garuda, a bird-beast. Paul Mallon was one of the dealers that I knew very well, from whom we bought ancient material, but he also dealt in Cambodian material and had sold a lot of the best pieces in France and in the United

States. I learned a lot from him. When I came to Cleveland, we made a point-- Howard Hollis had bought some very good Cambodian sculptures from Paul Mallon. We built more and more on that, and I think Cleveland has now probably, I suppose, the best Cambodian sculpture collection in the United States. The best in the world, outside of Cambodia, is the Musée Guimet in Paris. The British don't have a great deal. The Germans have some. But it's always been an interest of mine because it's such an extraordinary style. It's a combination of the sensuousness of Indian art, even to a point of sensuality, combined with an almost Egyptian kind of architectural character, which is an interesting combination and, I think, very beautiful. The greatest piece of Cambodian sculpture in Cleveland, one of the two greatest in the United States, is a piece that I knew even before World War II. It had been acquired by a Belgian collector, a famous collector, in 1922 or 1923. I followed that piece and I knew there was a chance to get it. It took me twelve years to finally, finally get it. It's a fascinating story, one of the most extraordinary stories of a combination of archaeology and art and absolutely unbelievably improbable circumstances. Maybe at the end we could say something about it.

GARDNER

I'm going to make a note of that.

LEE

Or we could deal with it while we're talking about ancient Cambodian sculpture.

GARDNER

Sure.

LEE

All right. Let's do it. This piece was the most famous single piece of Cambodian sculpture in the Western world. It was acquired by Adolf Stoclet, who was the aluminum king of Europe in World War I and afterwards, and he got it in 1922 or 1923. It was a head and torso, minus arms, legs, and thighs, of Krishna holding up Mount Govardhan, one of the famous episodes in the avatars of Vishnu in Hindu cosmology. It was reproduced in Coomaraswamy's pioneering

text on Indian and Indonesian art. Whenever a Cambodian sculpture was reproduced, the Stoclet piece was there. Paul Mallon, the dealer I mentioned to you, had told me about it. He had not sold it to Stoclet. Somebody else had. But he had a file on it which he showed me. It included photographs of the piece. But also, a few years after he bought the piece, the French archaeological authorities in Cambodia had dug up from the site, Phnom Da, material that they were sure belonged with that Stoclet piece, fragments of legs, arms, and sort of a supporting strut. They had sent it to him as a present, and Paul had photographs of these pieces as they arrived in Brussels. The Stoclets owned the most famous modern house in all of Europe. It had been built for them by Josef Hoffmann and it had decorations inside by Gustav Klimt and others of the Vienna Secession group. Fabulous house. When Adolf Stoclet was dying, he had the Cambodian Krishna-- He had a little theater where they put on plays and things in his house. He had it [the statue] moved, and that's where he kept it, on that stage. He had his couch rolled in to the Krishna when he was dying, to see that piece, one of the last things that he ever did. Before he died, these pieces arrived. They were photographed, and Paul Mallon, who knew the Stoclets very well, was permitted to take these photographs. They showed all the pieces and they showed that they had tried to fit them onto the piece. And indeed, some of the pieces fit. Some of them didn't, but some did. But Mrs. Stoclet didn't like it with additions. This is typical of the-- This is an extreme of the aesthetic point of view. I don't subscribe to it. But there it was. And so they said, "Now we're not going to use it. We like it the way it is." So they, according to Paul Mallon, had thrown the pieces away in the garden. They had buried them in the garden. Well, I remembered all this. Then the Stoclet estate was divided. Then it was subdivided, because there was a niece. I was introduced by the Mallons to the Brussels main branch of the family, and I saw the house and so forth. Phillipe Stoclet lived in New York, and we had bought from his collection a Romanesque crucifix. Then another Stoclet, a niece, was in Barcelona, and she's the one that got the Cambodian Krishna. Ruth and I went on a trip to Spain. We knew another dealer, Nat [Nathan V.] Hammer, who was a very amusing, terribly funny man, who knew the niece, because he was a guitar player and he knew all of the Spanish guitar masters. She evidently had this house where I guess everything went on: drugs, music, and everything under the sun in Barcelona. So when I knew that she had the piece, we went to

Barcelona. We tried to get to see her and it was impossible. We got special interpreters, but one said, "This place is a madhouse. I can't make any sense of it." So we failed. We had to leave without ever seeing her. Then we heard that the piece had been given to be sold. I called the Mallons and they knew the lawyer for the Stoclets. Well, I tried through him. I was told the piece was in a free-zone warehouse in Zurich, but this lawyer couldn't get to it. Then all of a sudden, Nat Hammer said he could get the piece. And it was very complicated, but he did. He got the Krishna. But then he died and the piece was once again in limbo. To cut a long story short, finally, a few years later, one of Nat's friends, who was a famous dealer in old master paintings and modern art, Eugene [V.] Thaw--he works with Artemis in London--was able to get the piece, and he offered it, unknown to me, to Mr. [John D.] Rockefeller [III]. John showed me the photographs, and I said, "Well, I think it's a great, great piece. I've been trying to get that piece for over ten years." He said, "Well, I'm not keen." This was just the torso and the head. He said he wasn't keen and it was too fragmentary, and so, as he said, "I'm not going to take it." Boy, we bought that so fast, at a very substantial price. We got it in a big hurry, but we got it. Then I made a date, my next trip to Europe, to go to Brussels and see old Mme. Stoclet, who was still alive, to try to find about the missing pieces. So we went to see her at this marvelous house. She was very, very hospitable, very nice. She said they'd put them someplace in the garden. That's all I could get out of her. And then more serendipity. Our curator of Indian art, Stan [Stanislaw] Czuma, ran into the curator of oriental art at the Musées Royaux d'Art et d'Histoire in Brussels, who turned out to be the daughter of an artist who had made sculpture bases for the Stoclets. She said to Stan that she remembered something that her father had said about this. Well, then we went tearing to try to get this thing straightened out. We found from her that her father no longer lived in the place next door to the Stoclet house. It had been rented to another artist. The pieces had been buried in the rose garden of that house. So we went to see the artist who now had the house, and he didn't want to disturb the rose garden. We finally made a deal. We said, "We'll pay for the laborers. We'll pay for the whole thing to put it back just the way it looks. You have to be satisfied." He finally said okay. So then Stan went over. We hired a couple of day laborers and started digging. The first thing they found, the first piece, was on the ground being used as part of a stone border for the rose garden. It was part of a thigh. They dug and they found, well, I

think about a dozen different pieces. It was an excavation being conducted in Brussels for the remains of one of the great pieces of early Cambodian sculpture. So we had it all shipped over. We fixed the garden up so he was happy, and all of the stones wound up in Cleveland. We started to work to put it together. I can show you what it looks like before and after. You'll be interested to see. But now it's monumental. It's as high as that beam there. It's a great, great sculpture, and it's just such an unbelievable story. It also shows how you have to be lucky and you also have to know-- I mean, none of the scholars know anything about this. This is a kind of thing that dealers know about or guitar players or-- It's unbelievable. [laughter]

GARDNER

That's a wonderful story. In 1970 you published *Asian Art: [Selections from the Collection of Mr. and Mrs. John D. Rockefeller 3rd]*?

LEE

Yes, that was the first volume of the Rockefeller catalog. The collection was of course known and much admired by all the people who knew about it, but it had not been publicly shown. John and Blanche [Ferry Hooker Rockefeller] wanted very much to have it used and known, and so they had two showings. The first showing was *Asian Art I*. The second showing was *Asian Art II*. There were selections displayed from all countries and a different selection for the second showing. And, again, it was to introduce the collection to the public.

GARDNER

In 1974, *The Colors of Ink: [Chinese Paintings and Related Ceramics from the Cleveland Museum of Art (with James Robinson)]*.

LEE

Yes. That's an exhibition which I think is quite wonderful. I think it had a degree of originality to it. But it was called forth simply by the fact that I got a phone call from the gallery director at the Asia Society, Allen Wardwell, saying that they had a cancellation of an exhibition and they were desperate. They needed to have an exhibition in I think it was about six months. Six months or eight months. Well, I said, "Okay. Let me see if I can cook up something." One of the things that I was always interested in, and one of the key things-- The

difference between Far Eastern painting and Western painting is that in Western painting you think in terms of oil paint, fresco, lots of colors, solidity, and etc. Far Eastern painting, though there is very colorful painting--there's wall painting and there's tempera painting--one thing's first: characteristically, the majority of the paintings are executed in ink. And that's quite, quite different. Europeans or Westerners find it hard to understand how Chinese painting can be looked upon as so important when it's really just a form of drawing, according to their mind-set. Whereas the Easterners don't understand why the Westerners can't see that ink is such a flexible, varied medium that it is unbelievable. And there are texts-- The title of the exhibition is a quotation from one of the Chinese writers who spoke of "the colors of ink." There is warm ink, there's cool ink, there's pale ink, there's silvery ink, there's brown ink, and so forth and so on. So I thought we could put together very quickly from our own collection, basically, monochrome paintings to illustrate and explain the concept of colors of ink. And to add interest to the show, we could use ceramics of black and white in character, which would include the, not peasant, but lower-class wares of the Sung dynasty, Tz'u-chou ware, which has black and white painting, but also including some of the porcelains. Their Ting-yao is a warm white, and the early Ming monochrome white porcelains are a greenish blue, cold white. So we made an exhibition. James Robinson and I wrote an essay and catalog entries, and we got the show done, the catalog printed and everything in time for the show to happen. It was very successful, and I think, again, it made people stop and think about the differences in concepts between East and West.

GARDNER

In 1975, you published *On Understanding Art Museums*, which we happen to have sitting right here. And you wrote an introductory essay as well, as I recall. Could you talk a little bit about how this came about and what the purpose of it was and what it said?

LEE

The American Assembly, which operates still I think out of Columbia University, is an organization, a non-profit foundation, that each year holds an assembly, a conference, on a subject. It can be on disarmament, on the law, abortion. It can be on what you want, and they wanted to do one on art

museums. It was '74, and they approached me and asked me if I would be the responsible person for organizing the conference and editing the publication which they usually issue after the conference is over. Not a bad idea at all. So one had to select the participants who were to write. I said I would write the introduction, along with my friend Ed [Edward B.] Henning, curator of modern art [at the Cleveland Museum of Art]. Then we asked Joshua [C.] Taylor, who was the director of the National Collection of Fine Arts in Washington [D.C.] and who had written articles on the history of art museums, to write the essay on the art museum in the United States. Then Charles [P.] Parkhurst, who had been director of the [Allen Memorial Art] Museum and a professor at Oberlin [College] and who was a very logical and very factual type of person, to tackle the different kinds of art museums, such as the organization and so forth. Then, in terms of education and scholarship, George [Heard] Hamilton at Yale [University], who was an authority on postimpressionism and also was very much interested in the history and the development of scholarship in America. Then Dan [Daniel C.] Rich, who had been a very good director of the Art Institute of Chicago and who is well versed in his subject, which was "management, power, and integrity," particularly the relationships between boards and trustees and patrons and so forth and museums. In addition, I wanted to have an artist, because one of the things that I always try to remind people is that art museums, at first anyway, were primarily for artists. That's where Cézanne and Degas and all those boys found the inspiration and the means to make their great contributions. But I'm a conservative. Walter Darby Bannard is an abstract painter and a very, very good one, but he had always been more intellectually interested in relationships between museums and artists. He's not one of the sort of flaming radical types of artist. He's a thoughtful conservative artist. Finally, I have always admired the essays of Robert Coles. I happened to run across him because I had gone out with a professor from Boston University who was a teacher of my youngest daughter for a brief time. He invited me to go out with him to dinner at E. H. Erickson's place out in the country, and I dined out there. He was wonderful. He was a marvelous man. But he talked so much about Robert Coles and how he had been doing such wonderful work. I read his essays and I thought they were terrific. And I thought we should definitely have somebody who was not an art museum person, who was not an artist, but somebody who is dealing with everyday life and our society and dealing with it in a sensitive and effective

way. I asked Coles if he would do it, and he did. And that's how we got the lineup. The conference was, like most conferences, a big hurly-burly of discussion and argument. Most of the artists wanted to burn down the museums. There were some business types there who wanted to make them efficient. Everybody had their own ax to grind. But it seemed to have been successful. Then it was carried on. It was developed further by the American Assembly in cooperation with the Ditchley group, where they hold annual conferences at the [Ditchley] estate, out near Oxford [England], where the secret code and coding research had been done during World War II. It was an estate owned by [Sir Herbert] Beerbohm Tree and Marietta Tree and that acting family. It was a very nice eighteenth-century estate. The interior was fine, but the furnishings had fallen on sad times. It was a different kind of conference. It was specifically oriented to museums. We had all the museum directors of Europe. I mean, John [W.] Pope-Hennessy and Carl [A.] Nordenfalk from Stockholm, and from Berlin [Stephan] Waetzoldt. Everybody was there. Germain Bazin from the Louvre was there. He was then still curator at the Louvre.

**1.24. TAPE NUMBER: XI, SIDE TWO
JULY 15, 1992**

GARDNER

We'll continue the story of the gathering.

LEE

There was the conference. We had a couple of representatives from East Germany. I think the one thing that was very constructive that came out of it was everyone one was trying to pave the way and get conversation going and get agreements underway so that there would be more cooperation in East and West in terms of the needs of art museums. I remember the former director of the museum in Naples [Raffaello Causa], who was a fine scholar, a very interesting man, but he was quite pessimistic. John Pope-Hennessy was the chairman of the Ditchley conference, and he was a very intelligent man-- kept everything straight. One of the highlights was that it was wonderful to get all these people together. We met for three days, and each evening there was a lecture after dinner. The last lecture was to be given by Germain Bazin,

and it was based-- I think he was then writing his book called *The Museum Age*. He spoke partly English, partly French, and he kept going on and on and on. Pope-Hennessy was asleep and Nordenfalk from Stockholm was lying full-length on chairs and he was asleep, and Bazin kept saying, "I'm almost finished." And everybody was just going crazy. It must have lasted almost two hours, and this is after dinner and drinks and so forth and so on. And that finally was over with. There was a lot of good fellowship, and for me it was fascinating. It's one of the last occasions I can remember in the form of a conference or an official gathering of people-- And, I mean, I count that as involving all the different professional organizations I've been in and so on. But it was one of the last occasions in which you had a lot of basically like-minded people, of varying temperaments and minds, but all dedicated to art museums and their purposes and all very civilized. The European museum directors are remarkable people. It just had a wonderful resonance to the thing. It was very civilized. And when I think back, things really began to change much more after that. You began to get these more prosaic or institutionalized, business-oriented, finance-worried kinds of gatherings, where things are really-- Well, they don't leave you with a good taste in the mouth after it. But it was an interesting thing to do, and I think this book *On Understanding Art Museums* is still used in some circles, perhaps more conservative ones. I think it's a good summary of the traditional, mid-century concept of the art museum, and if you want to understand that concept, I think this is a useful, useful publication.

GARDNER

What kind of reaction did you get to it? Aside from the general celebratory one that you described. From those who were not--

LEE

You mean after the publication and so forth?

GARDNER

Yes. Right.

LEE

My recollection would be that it did not have much impact. I think it was held at a turning point and the new generation was not interested in this kind of thing. There were a few reviews of it. And Coles's essay attracted considerable attention, which I think it should have. It's very good and very moving. George Hamilton's I cut in half. You can imagine-- I would have had to have given half of the space of the book for his first essay. That made him very angry. But I would say that it came at a turning point. This is '74 we said.

GARDNER

Right, '74 to '75.

LEE

Yes. The late sixties had happened. And the financial crunch was beginning. The inevitable contraction of the art market in terms of quantity and quality of works available was happening. And perhaps the conference and the publication are more important as a memorial, as it were, to mid-century thinking on museums. The new wave was just beginning to take full hold, and naturally they weren't looking back. I would say that we've now had over twenty years of the new wave. It seems to me that it might be time to reread and restudy what some other people in the past who have had a lot to do with museums thought and did about it. There might be some surprises that might be useful.

GARDNER

In 1980, you published *Eight Dynasties of Chinese Painting*.

LEE

Well, we've already discussed that in terms of the exhibition and serendipity of Kansas City [Art Institute Gallery] and Cleveland [Museum of Art] working together to mold the two collections together as the most important holding of Chinese paintings in this country. Even more than Freer [Gallery of Art] or Boston. And the two collections complement each other very well. The publication I think is out of print. It's been very useful. It occurs constantly in the literature, the scholarly literature, because it was the first time that the two collections had been, in a sense, presented to the scholarly world with scholarly apparatus. And that's one of the reasons that we wanted to do the

exhibition, because it meant that we had a catalog available. One of the things that I always felt at Cleveland was terribly important, something that American museums are guilty of not doing, is to publish catalogs of their collections. They don't do the things that the Europeans used to do. Now, I'm not talking about popularization; I'm talking about scholarly research. If there's no catalog of a collection--not a picture book and not an introduction and not masterpieces, but a catalog, a real catalog like the catalogs of the Wallace Collection or the catalogs of the paintings in the National Gallery of London--there's no way that the scholars can know about what is there and know what other people know about what is there, unless they happen to go there and the stuff happens to be available to them. Many museums don't have-- can't have because of conservation requirements--their paintings on view all the time. Sometimes there simply isn't enough staff to provide for adequate changing of collections, so there's a constant turnover. Sometimes it's just sheer laziness. It is a chore to do this, but unless there's a catalog of the collection so you know what is not on view and what there is to be known about it in terms of state of knowledge about that thing, you're in the dark. The museum and the scholars in the museum have not fulfilled their responsibilities to other scholars. That was the major reason that Larry [Laurence Sickman] and I said we had to go through with this and do it, aside from the fact that Larry also was delighted to tweak Wen Fong a bit on his exhibition.

GARDNER

[laughter] In 1981 you did *A Thousand Years of Japanese Art. So Eight Dynasties* and *A Thousand Years* in successive years, that--

LEE

Well, that was an exhibition at the Japan Society. Rand Castile asked to have the exhibition. He wanted to have an exhibition of selections from the Cleveland Museum of Art collection of Japanese art for the Japan Society so that people in New York could see it. We thought that was a reasonably good idea, so we worked on it. We had several of the curators and assistants who helped on the catalog, and we got it out in rather short order. The Japan Society was responsible for design and production, and they made a very beautiful catalog. Have you ever seen it?

GARDNER

No, I don't think I have. [tape recorder off] Is there anything else you want to say?

LEE

No. I think the Japan Society did a marvelous job on that catalog. We had a tough time getting it out on schedule because it was, again, something that was planned not all that far ahead. But it looked very well. And I must say I think a lot of people in New York were sort of "bouleversed" when they saw all this stuff that had piled up in that provincial town of Cleveland.

GARDNER

In 1983 you did Reflections of Reality in Japanese Art.

LEE

Well, we've discussed that rather briefly. It has been a follow-up on the other side of the medal of Japanese creativity, from Japanese Decorative Style in '63 to Reflections of Reality. It really was a stunning exhibition. I think it made a real contribution. I'm interested in connoisseurship. I'm interested in scholarship, as far as I'm capable of doing it. I'm interested also in ideas. I find I have very little patience and a very short fuse with pedantry. And I think an awful lot of scholarship has become more and more pedantic. One of Marion [J.] Levy's eleven laws--he's professor of Far Eastern political science at Princeton [University]--is that "No amount of genius can overcome a preoccupation with detail." I think that's true. Especially in a field as difficult because of language problems and so forth as Chinese art and archaeology, Chinese painting, Japanese art, scholars I think are absolutely obsessed with a fear of being caught in error. There was a symposium held in Cleveland in connection with Eight Dynasties of Chinese Painting. The editor, who had moved from Cleveland as a curator to Kansas City, has had the manuscripts from the various people in the symposium since that symposium in 1980, and the record--that is, the proceedings of the symposium--has still not appeared in print. I think it's a responsibility to get things out. I think everybody makes mistakes. I don't think one should downplay mistakes. I don't think one should ignore them. I think one should try to avoid them, if it's possible. But you're going to make mistakes. My favorite aphorism--I've said it over and over so

many times that my children and my grandchildren just cringe when they see I'm going to say it again--is one written by Guglielmo Ferrero, who was an Italian psychologist of the nineteenth century. And it is very simple. It says, "What makes good judgment? Experience. What makes experience? Bad judgment." Well, that's how you learn. And I think that it's a responsibility to educate people. It's your responsibility to be as accurate as you can. It's your responsibility to do what you can do best. And it's your responsibility to expose yourself to error in order to move ahead. That's just the way I'm built and the way I do it. Anyhow, we were talking about Reflections of Reality. I still think that exhibition and its texts were useful. The essay is my doing. The catalog entries were divided among three or four different curators working for the exhibition. I think it made a contribution. I know visually it was a smash and everybody was amazed at that. The Japanese cooperated fully and in a way I never thought they would. I think the exhibition made a point, and I don't think the exhibition had the impact, in terms of the catalog and its concept, that it should have had. I think, in part, again, because it is sort of against the grain. The things that are published now are basically very, very detailed and circumscribed in their perimeters. The idea of saying things about general movements, about things in general, is not too much in favor. Historians like William [H.] McNeill at [University of] Chicago, who has written the quite wonderful general histories of the world and of the impact of the East on the West and so on, he's against the grain. You get these reviews of his books, for example, where they're looked upon as anomalies, not focused enough and too general. And there's "This is wrong and this is wrong." Well, you've got to have both. You must have the scholarly article, the monograph, the detailed consideration of esoterica. You must have that and you must also have works that try to tie things together or propose new concepts and ideas. It's just as you've got to have businessmen and you've got to have aestheticians and museum people and you've got to have orchestra directors. Live and let live and everyone try to do the best they can. It's a simple, pragmatic way of thinking and I like it. I wish more people did.

GARDNER

Also in 1983, the [G.] Braziller book came out, Past and Present: East and West. How did that come about?

LEE

Well, this was done by the museum. They asked Remy Saisselin, who had been at the museum and had done the Style, Truth, and the Portrait exhibition-- He's now professor at the University of Rochester. That's where he's been. He's written some very interesting books on French taste in the late eighteenth and the early nineteenth century and so on. We like and admire each other. He was a great friend of Ed Henning's too. But they decided that they would do a book which would pull together some of my articles that might not otherwise have been called to people's attention. Yes, it's a kind of a collected essays sort of thing. I heard little about it because they didn't want me to know too much about it.

GARDNER

Really?

LEE

Well, they wanted a surprise. That's how it came about, and then, you see, Ed Henning wrote an introductory note and the preface was written by Saisselin.

GARDNER

Then there was a foreword by Nelson Goodman as well.

LEE

Yes. Did I tell you about Nelson Goodman and the association of art museums [American Association of Museums]?

GARDNER

No, because we're still--

LEE

We're coming to it.

GARDNER

We're still putting that off.

LEE

Okay. Right. It won't hurt. Anyhow, I admired Nelson and he liked me. We saw each other whenever I went to Cambridge. He gave the museum a very

beautiful early Marsden Hartley painting. We had connections. Remy thought it would be kind of nice to have him write an introduction because, I think, he's a distinguished philosopher, especially for aesthetics in art, and people might pay attention if he did something. So that's how that came about.

GARDNER

So it was originally published internally, or was it that the--?

LEE

No. Braziller.

GARDNER

So the museum arranged for Braziller to be the publisher of it.

LEE

Yes. Right. Braziller wanted to do it, and I don't know, but I suspect the museum put in something to make it easier to do.

GARDNER

What did you think of the selection of articles? The first half are philosophical really.

LEE

Yes.

GARDNER

The second half are-- I guess one would call them "critical" perhaps, dealing with works or periods or types of art.

LEE

Right. Right. I think it's a good selection. There are various things that I'm still interested in and I think they're useful articles and a variety of subjects. I think they also reveal interests and my own development, beginning with "American Watercolor Painting," "The Illustrative Watercolors of Charles Demuth," and my interest in Western art and my primary interest in oriental art. So I thought it was a very wonderful gesture and I much appreciated it. There were other articles that I think are interesting too. I think it's a sound

selection, and I respect Remy Saisselin's judgment a great deal. He knows what's what.

GARDNER

I was interested in some of your philosophical essays, because they elucidate a lot of the things you've talked about the last couple of days. I don't know whether to ask you about all of them because I don't know how long it's been. Do you recall them all well? Or shall I--?

LEE

Vaguely. Well, somewhat.

GARDNER

Okay. I won't quiz you. The "Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of--What?" is an article that you referred to yesterday.

LEE

Right. It's the one that I gave at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

GARDNER

Yes. The College Art Association [of America].

LEE

Right. It's sort of highly critical of the turning of a museum into a boutique and a place of entertainment and so on. I felt very strongly, and I still do, about this. I think it's a pretty good speech. In fact, I must confess sometimes I get these things and after I look at them and read a few things out of it I say, "You know, that's awfully good. How did I think of that?" [laughter]

GARDNER

[laughter] When you wrote these things, let me ask you this, as someone who writes, did anybody review them? Do you have anybody who served you as a sort of second pair of eyes or an editor or anything like that?

LEE

Well, for A History of Far Eastern Art, the fourth edition and now the fifth edition, I have a very good editor, Naomi [Noble] Richard.

GARDNER

For these essays, as you prepare a speech, is there anybody to look over the speech to--?

LEE

No. I would occasionally ask Miss [Jo] Zuppan, [Merald E.] Wrolsted's assistant in the publications department, to just take a quick look and see if there were any major boo-boos in terms of grammar or phraseology. In terms of content, I occasionally would ask Ed Henning to read an essay and see what he thought or my wife, who's very down-to-earth. She can keep me on the direct approach very well. But, in general, no. I didn't change an awful lot of the-- I write everything longhand on legal, yellow paper and with a pen. I cannot type, and I still believe in [Henri] Focillon's "In Praise of Hands." I believe there's a very definite connection between the mechanical process of writing and moving your arms and so forth and the operation of your brain. There's an essay by the English philosopher R. G. [Robin George] Collingwood which is about piano playing and music, in which the connection between the movement of the hands and the piano and the case of the feet and the body-- Which you don't really use when you're writing, but still the connection of the movement of a human being and the human being's constituent parts, which are all interconnected with the brain and with the emotions and so on. I think it's what make people human. Frankly, I know I'm remiss in not having taken two years out of my late life to learn how to use a computer. But, frankly, I'm glad that I never did. I may have once or twice experienced the twinge of regret for not having done something about the computer, but it goes away very quickly and it's replaced by a feeling of great ease and of delight at not having done it.

GARDNER

[laughter] Do you remember much about the essay "Art Museums and Education"?

LEE

Yes. This was the one, I believe, that was the foreword to the big volume.

GARDNER

Right. The Art Museum as Educator: [A Collection of Studies as Guides to Practice and Policy]. It was put out by Art International. Can you talk a little bit about that? I'm especially interested since that was obviously a commitment and interest of yours from the beginning. I found the essay very interesting as well.

LEE

Well, having gone through an educational process, albeit not at one of the great educational institutions of the United States-- My primary education was in New York City in Brooklyn. I went to PS [public school] 177 and I graduated from PS 119--this was in the twenties. So then I went to public high school. I went to Brooklyn Technical High School for one semester and then I went to James Madison High School for one year. Then my family moved to Detroit. I went to a public high school, Cooley High School, for one year. And then the first high school--I may have mentioned this earlier, at the very beginning-- where I was exposed to anything was Western High School in Washington, D.C. But my whole education and the most formative years of my life were in public school education. I remember courses in music appreciation. I remember courses in art appreciation. I also remember history courses. I remember the terrors of mathematics, and so on. And then I've had four years of undergraduate education at American University in Washington [D.C.]. I had a year of graduate school in Washington. I had two years of graduate school. I've always been in an educational institution all the way through. When I was taking my Ph.D. program in [Case] Western Reserve [University] in Cleveland, my wife put me through school. My father [Emery H. Lee] contributed too, because he would have to pay anyhow, and he was very understanding about that. But I worked in the education department at the Cleveland Museum of Art on Saturdays teaching children. They had a lot of high-powered people in that Carnegie grant program: the psychiatrist that I mentioned, Barnhart, and a Betty Lark-Horovitz. I was exposed to that. Tommy Munro was a big figure, and he had been a pupil of [John] Dewey's. So that all the way through I have always been a creature of the educational system, if you will, the public educational system. The educational department at Cleveland was an important part of the museum and had been from the very beginning. If you were alert, aware, and paying attention to what was going on, there was no way you could miss problems of education, whether it was children's

education or adult education or continuing education. Since I have a certain amount of what I suppose we would call the missionary character-- I love art and art has meant a great deal to me, all kinds of art and all kinds of places. I like to think that other people might enjoy it too. I know it takes a long time to understand it and do something about it, but I like to persuade people that's important. As one moves on after you graduate--you become a professional and you're working--you also realize something that you find recurring in these essays. People inside the field, the vast majority of them, simply forget that there are very few people outside the field who are interested in art seriously and who will support programs for the public schools, will support museums and museum exhibitions, publications. I mean, we can't always have people who are going to give us support so we can do the things that we feel are important to do, on the assumption that we're so bright and we're so special. You remember the famous, the great elitist remark in World War I of the Cambridge or Oxford don, who, when asked why he wasn't in the trenches or something, said that he represented the civilization they were fighting for. Well, that is an elitist remark. Also, it's a very snobbish remark and it's also an insensitive remark. But it also has a degree of truth in it. But if you're going to have art, the study of art, the enjoyment of art-- In connection with art-- whether it's literary or poetry or art or music--I love the word "delectation." There's a book which was very, very important to me by the poet Richard Wilbur. It's a book of poetry. I think he's a very good poet. And the title of the book is *This Way, Delight*. Well, that struck a chord in my thinking and led me to look up, in what Tommy Munro's secretary once called "Roget's thoracis," "delight" and also to look up the Latin, *delectare*. I think it's a wonderful word, and I think it's what art provides. Sheer delight is another catchphrase, but that is really what it's all about, and I'm all for it. I love to study symbolism. I love to read about iconography. I love to understand the technology of how you make bronze casting, etc. But the ultimate purpose of the thing, if it's worth a damn or for anything at all, is to provide delight. If you're going to have that continue, then you've got to have support and you've got to have educated, informed, and sympathetic support. That's why you have to have a degree of vulgarization, of propagandizing and so forth, without sacrificing quality and the things that make delight possible in the process. As for the business in "Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of--What?"-- If in the process of getting people interested to support the arts, you kill the very nature of art

itself, you've dug your own grave. It's a funeral ceremony, not a celebration. That's why I'm interested in education. I went to the education conferences. Adele Silver, who was in the education department and is now the public relations person at the museum, and Dan [Daniel J.] Silver--who was a great, great rabbi--understood the importance and the need for educational work. When we did the big publication--Barbara Newsome in New York and Adele Silver with the editors--I worked with them and I observed what was going on. And I've tried to keep up with that aspect. I have said repeatedly, and I believe it absolutely, that as gradually the art market contracts and dwindles, as the financial resources get tighter, as the society gets bigger, that one of the most important functions of the art museum, which has become more important every year that this has been happening, is education. The weight has shifted. Collecting is now lower in priority to education, and museums should seize that opportunity. The schools should seize the opportunity of using the museums and of using the material from museums. I've often said that if we could ever develop something, not like the tea ceremony, not flower arrangement, but something comparable that could catch on and become a real part of American society, things would be an awful lot better. Because there's no doubt that you just have to look around you. Just be observant and be honest and evaluate what you see. Art, the interest in art, is a minority interest. And therefore you must educate. Because in a democratic society, what the majority is going to be interested in is the thing that is going to prevail. So do it.

GARDNER

Well, shall we leave the book now or are there any other comments you'd like to make pertaining to it?

LEE

Well, just one thing. "The Art Museum in Today's Society" began with the "Lamentations of Jeremiah."

GARDNER

Right.

LEE

That was a given. A first given, immediately after [Thomas P. F.] Hoving's accession to the throne and his doing of the Harlem on My Mind exhibition, and boy, I meant every word of it. I still think I mean almost everything. I think it may have been perhaps a little of an overreaction. But, I tell you, it made a sensation in Dayton, Ohio. They loved it. It was very much praised and applauded. I think it didn't go over with the avant-garde, but that's their problem.

GARDNER

Yes. The avant-garde doesn't read Jeremiah. There was something I read I guess in the article about you, that appeared about your leaving, about the Temple of Dendur and having to do with the-- I thought, since we were talking about Hoving at this point, you would want to--

LEE

Well, that's very interesting. For a while, for a period of years, our curator of Egyptian art--ancient art, but he was primarily an Egyptologist--was Jack [John D.] Cooney, who had been the curator of Egyptology at the Brooklyn Museum and was a very fine connoisseur of Egyptian art. He was knowledgeable, scholarly, but basically a very fine connoisseur. Jack had a wicked sense of humor, and he couldn't stand Hoving and the policies he represented. I think he also was a little bit suspicious of some of the people in the ancient art area in the big city. Anyhow, the Egyptian government was making this gorgeous gesture to the United States by giving the Temple of Dendur to be placed in a conspicuous location for educational purposes and understanding of ancient Egypt. The Smithsonian [Institution] had wanted it badly. The Metropolitan wanted it badly. I don't remember exactly. I think Boston was not all that keen about it. But it had to go to some big population center. And Jack Cooney was on the committee that was appointed, I think, by the Smithsonian to decide and make recommendations for the location of the Temple of Dendur. Well, Jack and I have discussed this many, many times. The Temple of Dendur is a very late, very uncharacteristic, very debased-- In terms of quality, it may not be D-, but it's certainly not better than D+. It's very big. It poses problems of conservation, because if you have it outside in a modern American industrial, city climate, it will go to pieces in no time. Well, it was, in our opinion, Jack's and mine, a white elephant. So the question didn't become which institution

should receive the wonderful Temple of Dendur. The question became, for the committee, which institution was going to be saddled with the white elephant. And I think Jack took considerable pleasure in influencing the committee to give the temple to the Metropolitan Museum of Art. I thought it was a kind of nice, poetic gesture.

**1.25. TAPE NUMBER: XII, SIDE ONE
JULY 16, 1992**

GARDNER

The first area I'd like to discuss today is the nature of scholarship vis-à-vis museum directors. As I commented to you off tape yesterday, your record of publication is enormous. First of all, is that something that's common among museum directors?

LEE

Well, no. It isn't. By and large, it has not been the practice, at least as far as I know, in the history of American art museums for museum directors to be publishing all that much. I'm sure that, for example, Herbert [E.] Winlock, who was an Egyptologist who was the director of the Metropolitan Museum [of Art] back in the thirties, of course, published a great deal in the field of Egyptology. I think he published somewhat less when he became director. George Harold Edgell, who was director of Boston Museum [of Fine Arts] in the early thirties, wrote a book, a general book on Sienese painting [A History of Sienese Painting], which I think was very well received at the time. But I don't think there were too many other publications. But he certainly was one who did publish. Then Daniel Catton Rich, who was a very fine director at [Art Institute of] Chicago for many years in the late thirties or forties, wrote quite a bit on the field. He was particularly interested in the field of modern art, and also he was interested in what they now call "museology," the activities and philosophies of art museums, and he wrote on that. Larry [Laurence] Sickman was the director at Kansas City [Nelson Gallery of Art], and of course his name has cropped up very often in our conversation. He wrote probably the best single-volume history of Chinese art [The Art and Architecture of China] with Alex [Alexander C.] Soper, who wrote the section on architecture. The book was marred by the fault of the publishing firm. It was part of the Pelican series

of the history of art, and the British, with characteristic Western prejudice, included only architecture, sculpture, and painting in their series. So in dealing with China without dealing with the decorative arts--ceramics and metalwork, Chinese bronzes--that hampered the completeness of the book. But it's a wonderful book. Sickman was a director. He also wrote a few articles, but he didn't really publish much. It is hard to think of a lot of serious publication or even just decent popular publication on the part of most museum directors. All of the museum directors who have been most effective in the early days of American art museums in the twenties, thirties, and forties--people like "Chick" [A. Everett] Austin at the Wadsworth Atheneum--didn't publish. He just bought wonderful baroque paintings before anybody ever thought of doing it, and so on. By and large, museum directors in the past, certainly up until the fifties, came from a relatively closed club of Harvard [University]-, Yale [University]-, Princeton [University]-, NYU [New York University]- educated people. More Harvard, Yale, and Princeton. And they basically had A.B.'s. Very few had doctorates, if any at that time. It simply wasn't part of the job, as it were. These things began to change as museums in the fifties and sixties began to try to close the gap, which was a very substantial gap in the thirties, in terms of self-respect and mutual respect between the academic world and the museum world. [tape recorder off]

GARDNER

You were talking and comparing museum and academic--

LEE

Oh, right. Right. And this sort of lack of mutual respect was really very severe. The academic people thought the museum people were flibbertigibbets and dilettantes. The museum people thought the academic people were pedants and wedded to the book and the photograph. I think World War II was a dividing line in many, many ways for many things: oriental art, museums, art history. I think that as museums began to be more serious about their educational responsibilities and their scholarly responsibilities, as the art market became more complex and the exhibition situation became more complex and as expertise became more specialized--more and more information, more and more objects, etc.--the need of the museum side for the scholarship of the academic side and the need on the academic side for

the exposure and the influence, in terms of general public influence, sort of reinforced each other. There began to be some reconciliation, as it were, between the two sides. In my case, for example, accident had a lot to do with it. You studied art history if you were interested in art in college, and then if you were interested in going on further, in graduate school. That was basically oriented to producing a college professor to enter the academic world. And the Depression, the years of the thirties and then World War II--and then even after World War II, when there was the aftermath, as it were--meant that sometimes the jobs were not all that easy to find and some people moved into something outside the academic world. Some people even--"even," that shows the mind-set right away--became dealers. It was accidental, I think as I mentioned at the very beginning of this interview, that I finally did get into the museum world, because I just accidentally was able to get a much better position than the one I could in the academic world. So these things all play a part. In recent years--I mean the last two decades, especially even the last ten or fifteen years--you have more and more people with graduate degrees who became museum directors, but on the whole, again, they didn't publish that much. I mean, for instance, [David W.] Steadman at Toledo [Museum of Art] was an excellent museum director, has a Ph.D. in art history, but has not published very much. The directors that I have known at Los Angeles [County Museum of Art], at [the Fine Arts Museums of] San Francisco-- Well, in the oriental field, for instance, [Yvonne] D'Argencé, who was the director at the Asian Art Museum [San Francisco] some time ago, had published some very substantial things. The present director of the Asian Art Museum in San Francisco is Rand Castile, who used to be the director at Japan House Gallery. He has written a very, very good book on the tea ceremony [The Way of Tea], but, again, not much in the way of additional publication. *[And of course there was Edgar P. Richardson on American painting at Detroit, already mentioned.] So I would have to say that on the whole, certainly museum directors don't publish very much. Curators, in terms of their relationship to academic personnel, probably have come up a lot, but they * Lee added the following bracketed section during his review of the transcript. still probably do not publish as much as the university people, in part because of the pressures of simple day-to-day operations of any museum in curatorial matters and partly because the opportunities for extended and concentrated research are not so much there.

GARDNER

How were you able to be so prolific and still run the museum?

LEE

Well, first of all, if you look at the list of publications in a relatively rapid way, I think there are a few very serious scholarly publications that I've been involved in. A History of Far Eastern Art [1964] is a general book, but I think it's sound. It's going to be sounder in a fifth edition. Chinese Art under the Mongols: [The Art of the Yüan Dynasty, 1279-1368 (1968)] was, I think, a genuine contribution. I think Japanese Decorative Style [1961], Chinese Landscape Painting [1954], Reflections of Reality [in Japanese Art (1983)] all in their way made what can be called, I think, a scholarly contribution. But the kind of a big, fully documented scholarly study, intended really for experts within the field, is not conspicuously present on that bibliography of mine, and I would be the first to admit it. I was always sort of in between the academic and the museum world. Wherever I went, I tried to teach, as well as being in the museum. I like teaching. I like students. I also like to feel that I'm contributing to the educational effort in making the arts, and oriental art specifically, more available, more accessible to the educated and interested lay public. In order to do that-- My wife [Ruth Ward Lee] is very patient. When I was much younger, I really burned the midnight oil a great deal. I always had a room to study where I could work undisturbed. I just did an awful lot. Being a museum director made certain things much easier, as I have found out to my sorrow in retirement. You have secretarial help whenever you want it. You have library help wherever you-- You have help in the slide department. That is, you don't have to go and pick out each one of your slides piece by piece. And you have colleagues in your own field--expertise--who you can discuss things with, you can get advice from, you can propose ideas and get criticism, and that's all very helpful. But still you've got to write it and you've got to do the research and be familiar with the literature. You've got to take your notes. You've got to do everything you're supposed to do. And that takes time. That means you have to do it outside of museum hours. As a curator, you can do it on museum time. As a director, you don't really have the time to do it. But it gets done if you are interested in doing it and have enough energy and, as I said, have a patient and a very helpful wife who doesn't share other people's enthusiasm for going out to dinner every night or going to this occasion or

that party and so forth. We've always been home and family oriented. And that's the way it worked.

GARDNER

To move from there, since we've started to talk about the relationship of museum people to academics-- The other night you mentioned that you'd like to discuss this sort of triangle of museum people, academics, and dealers. I would be interested to hear what you have to say about them.

LEE

Art museums in the United States are a relatively recent development. One can make a case for the first museum being way back in Philadelphia with Charles Wilson Peale in 1797. But the art museum as we know it, the endowed institution or state-supported institution dedicated to the acquisition, display, preservation, and elucidation of works of art, really is a product of post-Civil War America. Boston and the Metropolitan were founded almost the same time, I think in 1870, if my memory is right. Each one thinks they were first. They were both about the same. Of course, the National Gallery [of Art] is later. The Art Institute of Chicago goes back to 1879. But the earliest institutions were basically formed by wealthy, cultured, well-educated citizens who wished to have a cultural amenity represented by an art museum in their city, in their location. That's a little different from the kind of thing that happened in, let's say, Germany, where museums really didn't begin to become vital and developing and growing institutions until the late nineteenth century, and then under state support and with the help from patrons, of course, but also with the use of public funds for acquisition. [Wilhelm von] Bode was a voracious museum director for the Kaiser-Friedrich-[Museum] and bought an enormous amount of material. In England, you had a longer tradition of aristocratic patronage in collecting in the Age of Enlightenment in Europe, the days of the European tour. It was absolutely *de rigueur* for an aristocrat to travel in Europe and bring back artistic evidence that he'd been there. That's how a lot of the collections, places like the Fitzwilliam [Museum] and the Ashmolean [Museum of Art and Archaeology] and the National Gallery, developed at first. With the increase of endowment and with the participation in some cases, such as the Metropolitan Museum of Art, of the city in operations-- [tape recorder off] With governmental participation, the

Metropolitan Museum gets a very substantial amount of money from the city of New York for its operations, utilities, and so forth, guards and other things. Museums became increasingly professional: that is, the director of the Boston museum was an expert on Sieneese painting; the director of the Metropolitan Museum, in the case of Winlock, was an Egyptologist; Jim [James J.] Rorimer, who was a very important director of the Metropolitan, was an expert in medieval art, and so on. Staffs began to develop as well as curatorial expertise, and you had an institution that was, in the first three quarters of the twentieth century, developing and acquiring by gift or by purchase. There was a very conscious sense of competition with England, France, Germany, Italy, because we wanted to get our museums up to snuff, as it were. So there was a definite drive and a definite bias towards the acquisition part of the museum situation. Also, it's the most exciting and the most psychologically gratifying in terms of helping to assuage greed and the acquisitive instincts and so forth. It's the glamorous part of museum operations. And it was dominant. That's the museum world in the early twentieth century. The academic world, on the other hand, was-- Again, like the museum, many of the professors at the major institutions having to do with the history of art-- Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Institute of Fine Arts [New York University]--were professors who were second sons or third sons of wealthy families. There was definitely a genteel tradition in that group. They spent their summers abroad. It was part of an American genteel tradition. At the same time, it was scholarly, and it also considered itself above the hurly-burly of the marketplace which would be the dealer's world or the marketplace which would also be the museum world, because the museum world was in that up to their necks because of the acquisition process. So in that triangle, it made the dealers--who actually spent all their lives, all their waking hours, trying to find works of art and sell them--closer to the museum world, because in the case of most museums that had a lot of money, they were major clients. Collectors tend to buy just what they like, and sometimes they may have a very narrow range of interests like paperweights or medals or plaquettes. But a museum has to be more general, has to satisfy different segments of the society and their different interests. Consequently, they were interested in everything. In order to do this and with staffs that were not all that big, they had to rely a great deal on dealers, because the dealers were working at it, as I said, on a twenty-four-hour-a-day, three-hundred-sixty-five-days-a-year basis,

whereas the museum curator or the museum director could work at it only on a part-time basis. The simple reality of the acquisition of important works of art is that, by and large, they appear either in the dealer's hands because of the contacts he's built up over, sometimes, generations or they appear at auction suddenly in an extremely commercial environment. If one is to get the best things for the museum, you have jolly well got to be well aware of the dealer world and you've got to be sympathetic and give them the kind of respect that they deserve for the contribution they make. You still hear, especially from the new breed of deconstructive moralists in the academic world, about the skulduggery and the crookedness and etc., etc. of the art market. The art market is just like the banking or law industry in the sense that the same human beings are working in these different things, and human beings being what they are, in my opinion, you have some good ones and you have some halfway good ones and you have bad ones. You have wickedness and you have greed and all the things that we read about in the seven deadly sins, for example. I gave a lecture and wrote an article called "Collecting and the Seven Deadly Sins," which I liked, and it's kind of a whimsical, very nice article. Bill [William D.] Wixom was crazy about it. It's amazing how the seven deadly sins fit into all the drives and the faults in the art market: avarice, envy, lust-- It's marvelous.

GARDNER

Lust?

LEE

Oh, yes. The lust for art. I mean, it can be a disease. Anyhow, the dealers make a very real contribution, and of course some make more than others. But a good dealer-- There are different types. There are old firms, like Rosenberg and Stiebel in New York or [Thomas] Agnew [and Sons] in London or the old firm of Colnaghi in London, which is now, I guess, not terribly much tied to the past. Certain modern dealers like Sidney Janis or Curt Valentin, back in the midcentury they were connoisseurs, and also they knew the living artists. They went out on limbs and exercised judgment and risked capital. If you're putting your capital-- risking it--on an artist, you have made a kind of commitment. This is before the days of hype and advertisement. But if, like Paul Rosenberg, a great dealer in postimpressionists in early twentieth-century painting, they

made commitments to artists at the time who were not getting all those big prices, they also knew they had to know their stuff if they were going to deal. It's disastrous for the reputation of an important dealer to present a forgery. It's catastrophic for him to accidentally misrepresent a work which is in bad condition, let's say, because he hasn't read the condition properly. So, one, they know something; two, it's their lifework; three, many of them have very good character and they are sympathetic and they know more about the work of art, in a nonscholarly way but in a way essential to the understanding of a work of art, than a lot of the famous professors or the famous curators. I gave an address at the annual meeting of the [Art] Dealers Association [of America]. I've always gone out of my way to try to give them the kind of credit and respect that I think they deserve. They're an absolutely essential part of that triangle. Each corner is essential, and the emphasis varies from time to time depending on circumstances, but the dealers have made a real contribution over many, many decades. There are many important works of art in Cleveland [Museum of Art]. For example, there's a Romanesque ivory from a very famous retable, of which other panels are in the Metropolitan, in the [J. P.] Morgan Collection, and in Berlin and so forth--Ottonian, the rarest and the most beautiful imperial work in ivory of the early eleventh century. A dealer I knew in Paris, who we bought a few things from but-- We discussed things, and I listened to him a lot. We had a sympathetic relationship. He called me from Switzerland and said he had found, in a good private collection in Switzerland, this large ivory panel of Christ with the twelve apostles, and he thought it was right and it was Ottonian. I got Bill Wixom and he got on the line with me and we quizzed him about it and so forth. And then we just went. We asked him to hold it and we just went, separately. I went to the Dolder Hotel and met the dealer in Zurich. He had the ivory and it was fantastic. Bill recognized it right away. It's the central panel for this retable. And it was fairly expensive for that time but not outrageous. But we would never have known about that if the dealer had not simply said, "Well, this is the thing that Cleveland should be interested in" and called us up. And that's happened a great, great many times. Ruth and I made a trip to-- The first time we'd done anything terribly much together. We went to Bavaria and to Austria. We met a dealer in Salzburg we had not met before, who's now gone, Kurt Rossacher, who had an art history doctorate from a German university. He was very nervous and excitable and he jumped from one thing to another. He operated

in the medieval field and German baroque. He did Italian baroque, sketches. He made a gallery of sketches in the Schloss Mirabell, Salzburg. He didn't appeal to some people--one of our curators very much so--because he thought he tended to overclean and tamper with works of art, which he did to a certain extent. But he was so enthusiastic. And I, for the first time in my life, saw--this is back in I suppose about '59 or '60--some of these German baroque churches, and it was as if you'd hit me on the head. Something had been born that had never had a chance to get out before. It was a revelation: the extraordinary inventiveness and the verve and just sheer delight involved in that style in architecture, sculpture, and to a certain extent in painting. We bought very important things from Rossacher. In a sense, he got us started. Later we bought material from other dealers to develop our German baroque collection. But again, if it hadn't been for Rossacher's enthusiasm and his giving a push and telling us where to go to see these great churches, probably it may not have happened at all. [Ching-tsi] Loo, who as a merchant began as a concierge in Paris, became the most important dealer in Chinese art in the world, and, as I've told you earlier, I used to go there after he died, to his successor [Frank Caro], and just study for days the hundreds of scroll paintings that he managed to accumulate during the late thirties and the forties. We ought to face the fact that we owe them a very great debt indeed and that their influence has been, on the whole, very beneficial and very crucial in the development of American collections. Now with the decline in quantity and quality available in the field of ancient art and medieval art, art up to the contemporary, the balance has shifted. You now have contemporary art as the most available material, and it's also the most subject to advertising hype, special interests, etc., etc. Consequently, the responsibilities I think, as I've said earlier, of the museum in terms of education have become more important, more weighty, and this shifts the relationships in this triangle. I would say that now, today, the relationship between the educational institutions and the museums is more important and should have greater weight than the relationship that is there present in the art market. I must say that another great advantage with the dealer and why I really much prefer to discuss works of art with a good dealer than with a good professor is that they're object oriented. We don't get off into abstruse interpretations of the Trinity or something. We're dealing with the work of art qua work of art, and that involves its aesthetic quality, its condition, its relationship to other

comparable works of art, etc. Also, they, most of them, are enthusiastic, and they've learned that lesson which I think is so important, which is that they're human and they make mistakes and they know about that. Sometimes people complain about dealers marking things up so much. Or sometimes people complain that they're making any profit at all. If a dealer pays, let's say, \$5,000 for an object--not at auction, privately--and he sells it for let's say \$15,000, that's a 300 percent markup. Well, that seems like a terrible sort of scalping of the client. But think of those things that he bought that he had to sell at a loss or he just had to put away because they didn't turn out to be what he thought they were or because the condition wasn't any good. They have to make decisions on the spot. That's one of the reasons dealers get great objects and museums sometimes don't get them at the first go-around. It's because the dealer can walk into a source and see something and he can say, "I'll take it." He can write a check out very often and give it to them. Whereas the museum comes in and says, "Oh, that's very interesting. I'd like to reserve it. Can you send me the object so I can study it?" And so on. Then in many cases, many museums are very insensitive to the requirements of the art market. They will take objects and have them on approval for study sometimes for months, even in many cases over a year, sometimes even several years. And sometimes--not sometimes, a good percentage of the time--then they return it and say, "I'm sorry. We've decided we don't want it." Well, I mean, most of the dealers don't have ready tremendous sums of money. They're like anyone: they have to go to the banks, they have to borrow, they have to make arrangements for payments, etc., etc. But the museums sort of take it for granted that the dealers are there to serve the museum world. In many cases, they tend to treat them as if they were servants. That's not fair. I've learned an awful lot, both in the field of oriental art and in the field of European art and ancient art, from what I think are the good dealers. So if we think of the triangle as an eternal triangle but with shifting emphasis on the three different corners of the triangle, I think one can get, perhaps, a better idea of what it takes to develop collections. I'm talking now especially of the period between roughly, I'd say, 1900 and 1970 or 1980, when the development of collections was the sort of big thing for American museums. When you think of that period, you think of the collections in the United States, and I'm talking about general collections of the art of the world. When you think of the great collections you think of Kansas City [Art Institute], Detroit [Institute of Arts],

Toledo [Museum of Art], Minneapolis [Metropolitan Cultural Arts Center], [the Fine Arts Museums of] San Francisco, Seattle [Art Museum], to a certain extent Los Angeles [County Museum of Art]. Then you go to the obvious places: [the Art Institute of] Chicago, Cleveland [Museum of Art], Buffalo [Albright-Knox Art Gallery], Washington [National Gallery of Art], Philadelphia [Museum of Art], New York [Metropolitan Museum of Art], Boston [Museum of Fine Arts], Worcester [Art Museum]. Then down in Texas in more recent years, the Kimbell [Art Museum] and the Amon Carter Museum [of Western Art]. These all have been developed in the first three quarters of the twentieth century, these fantastic collections of quality and importance and of inestimable value for the education and delectation of the American people. But that age pretty much is grinding to a halt. Again, it means the triangle is going to shift and change a lot.

GARDNER

Okay. Thank you for that exposition. That was very interesting. Now we'll move on to organizations.

**1.26. TAPE NUMBER: XII, SIDE TWO
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GARDNER

You've mentioned that you wanted to add one thing.

LEE

I want to add one footnote which I think is a significant comment on these relationships we've been discussing. I'm always amused by the press releases that come out from museums. For example, I was in the elevator across the street from Rosenberg and Stiebel at a small dealer's place, Kleinberger, who had very good Spanish paintings. Harry Sperling was the owner of it. I'd been there and I got in the elevator and was going down. In the elevator was a very, very nice black gentleman who worked for Julius Weitzner, who was a kind of very interesting but very quirky and eccentric dealer in all kinds of paintings. This Weitzner's helper's name was Herbert. I said, "Good morning." And Herbert said, "Good morning. Have you been across to Rosenberg and Stiebel?" I said, "No." He said, "Well, they've got a very sexy painting over

there." I said, "Oh, fine. I'll take a look. Thanks for the tip." So I went across the street to Rosenberg and Stiebel and, indeed, they had the big Jacques-Louis David that we bought of Amor and Psyche, which, as our painting curator at the time, Henry [Sayles] Francis, said, was the most expensive Valentine's Day card he'd ever seen. [laughter] But at the same time at Rosenberg and Stiebel, they had a large Tiepolo which had already been reserved by the Boston museum, Time Revealing Truth, a very splendid, large ceiling decoration. Boston bought it, and in the press release was a quotation from the director that--I'll paraphrase it--the museum had made this wonderful discovery of this long-lost Tiepolo, etc., etc. I mean, if you go into one of the two or three best dealers in the world, whose clients include-- They buy from the Rothschilds and Pannwitzes and so forth and so on. They show you a painting and they give you all the information. You haven't discovered that painting. I mean, if anyone's discovered it, the dealer discovered it. And that kind of relationship is one of the things I think has always been a problem between the dealers and the so-called professionals. I just want to add that.

GARDNER

It's a good story. Okay. On to organization. Let's start off with the American Association of Museums [AAM].

LEE

Well, this will be relatively brief. I was a member and I was active. All these things go back now. I suppose I joined AAM when I was at Seattle [Art Museum], when I first came there in '46 or '47. It was a small sort of professional organization that was to help assist the museums as a whole in relationship to governmental policy or regulations on different levels: city, state, federal, technical assistance. The sorts of things that a professional organization does. I was on the board of trustees for a while, and we always had these discussions. One of the things that was very, very clear was that there was a serious tension within the American Association of Museums among the constituents' special interests. You had the science museums, the history museums, the art museums, the zoos, the anthropological museums, etc., etc. Gradually, you could see it happening. They began to have the rise of a concept they called "museology," which I think is a dreadful word. But anyhow, they began more and more talking about and considering methods of

display, of education, under the rubric of museology, as if that was a unifying discipline rather than the intellectual discipline represented by the type of museum. This struck me as being absolutely "bassackwards." The important thing about a museum is not that it is a museum. The important thing is that it's an institution dedicated to a significant intellectual discipline: art, history, anthropology, science, technology, etc. I argued in meetings of the board of directors and in our annual meetings, in the different study groups, that they really ought, I thought, to not centralize under a concept of museology but to decentralize under a concept of disciplines, but trying to use what they called museology to see how that was useful within the discipline and how it necessarily would be modified or changed because of the peculiar requirements of that particular discipline. So I tended to emphasize, when I was arguing in this case, decentralization. The administration of the museum association, particularly, for perfectly obvious reasons, are empire builders, just like all other people. They emphasized centralizing under the concept of museology. Of course, they were aided and abetted by the exhibitors of the annual convention, the commercial firms that sold cases and this and that other thing. Obviously, for example, if a case maker could design a case that could be used by all these different kinds of museums, regardless of whether it was designed specifically for an art museum or for a science museum, it was economically more feasible. I didn't get anywhere with that, and gradually the museum association grew and grew in size and in the administrative bureaucracy. Of course, the rise of funding by the federal government from the arts endowments and so forth all was part of the same thing. Though, for instance, the humanities and the arts endowments [National Endowment for the Humanities and National Endowment for the Arts], on the whole, do a pretty good job of balancing the requirements of the disciplines and the overall institutional containment of the museum. Well, the AAM was going to meet in Cleveland. We received an invitation about the time of our fiftieth anniversary, I think. I was the chairman for local arrangements and I was on the program committee. I discussed this with a couple of people I have particularly discussed things with at the museum, Ed [Edward B.] Henning and Bill Wixom. I said, "You know, more and more we get these conventions where the keynote speaker is somebody who doesn't know anything much about anything in particular and gives a general thing saying how wonderful museums are and so forth. Why don't we do a program that's different and try

to re-establish some kind of intellectual content and intellectual rigor and also have somebody who is someone in an intellectual field give the keynote address." So I got Nelson Goodman. Nelson said he'd love to do it. I explained to him what I was trying to do. He thought it was a good thing to do. He was all for it and said he would do it. So we had the big meeting and Nelson was the keynote speaker. He gave a very interesting address about, in particular, the philosophical aspects of aesthetics in relation to the teaching of art in an institutional context. I thought it was terrific. It was a total absolute lead balloon as far as the constituency went. I have never seen anything go over so badly. They simply weren't interested in any kind of serious philosophical, intellectual consideration of what it was they were doing. They were simply interested in dashing around from this exhibit to that exhibit or discussing the federal legislation or the funding. They were talking about all the mechanics, all the bureaucratic processes involved in what they called museology. They were not interested in the slightest in the disciplines that they represented. Well, I lost interest after that in the museum association. I think I finally let my membership lapse a couple of years ago. To me, it's an organization of no interest.

GARDNER

What about the spin-off group that you participated in? The museum directors? Wasn't that part--?

LEE

Oh, no. That's a different story.

GARDNER

Oh, is it?

LEE

Yes. And which I'm perfectly happy to begin.

GARDNER

Okay.

LEE

Now, for art museums, the most important organization, supra-local organization, was the Association of Art Museum Directors, the AAMD. When I became associate director at Seattle, I was not eligible. I became director in Cleveland in 1958, and I was elected, because I was the director of the Cleveland Museum of Art, the following year. There's a lapse of a year. I knew about the organization, and I'd seen it from a distance in operation before the war when I was a graduate student in Cleveland. William [M.] Milliken had been one of the big figures in the AAMD. So I finally became a member in 1959 and we invited them to meet in Cleveland. I don't remember when it was but it was the early sixties, before '66. The AAMD indeed was a perfect reflection of the state of American art museums before World War II. It was a kind of club. It was an exclusive club. The first few meetings I went to were a continuation of the prewar situation. Each year, the host museum had wonderful luncheons and they had wonderful dinners, two dinners, and good wines and wonderful food and then the receptions with all the upper echelons of the museums, the trustees, committee organizations. And they had sessions that were sometimes interesting. There was a European organization, basically organized by the Germans, which discussed forgeries on the art market and an annual meeting where they talked about--to just keep themselves up-to-date--what was happening in the great forgery market. They had a report by one of the members. William Milliken was a member of that European organization. They would have a report on what they discussed. They discussed the latest legislation. But the AAMD was not incorporated, not for profit. It was not eligible for receiving funds from any of the federal or municipal or state organizations or receiving funds from foundations.

GARDNER

Or donors.

LEE

Or donors. Also they liked to be informal. They liked to be like a club. And, indeed, there were occasions when there were some directors who were not admitted to the club. They were selected as individuals. Well, I thought this was, frankly, a hell of a way to run a railroad. I had a few friends who were directors and we talked about it. Freddie [Frederick B.] Adams [Jr.] was the director of [the Pierpont] Morgan Library. He was one of the club but he saw

what the problems were. I think Jim Rorimer was somewhat sympathetic. There were a few directors who were aware of the problems. I was a fairly new member but brash, as usual. Anyhow, I began agitating. When they had the meeting in Cleveland I began agitating and got my friends also to, and we really staged a kind of palace revolution. We moved--and it was approved--that they would apply for incorporation, I think, in the state of New York as a nonprofit organization to be eligible to receive gifts. We made the change for the qualifications for membership so it was the institution that was the qualifying thing. Whoever was director automatically became a member of the AAMD. We also began to expand it so as to include more of the types of museums that were not part of the main-stream, such as university and college museums. Some of the smaller institutions, we reduced the requirements for budget, size. In short, I would say we made the AAMD more democratic in whatever the best sense of that word is. Also, we made it more efficient so that we could have an endowment and get income so we could actually do something as the AAMD representing art museums, something the AAM couldn't do because they didn't recognize the disciplinary separation. So this was part of that same sort of thinking and argument involving what kind of representation there should be for the art museums in the United States. Since the AAM wasn't doing it right, why didn't we do it right? Some of the directors weren't happy with this, the party types and the old aristocrats, but we got it through. And to show you how I mean-- I'm not complaining and I say it as a purely factual matter, which can be checked against the list of presidents of the AAMD. The custom had always been, and still is, that the vice president becomes the next president and every president serves only one year and then the next. I was vice president, and I was scheduled to be the next president, succeeding Freddie Adams. And Freddie, who I respected enormously, was helpful in this business. He was a very, very well connected and very, very bright man. Anyhow, it was the only time in the history of the AAMD that they elected a president to succeed himself--at that particular meeting where we had the palace revolution. Then I became president the next year. But it was quite obvious they didn't want the brash director of Cleveland to be president on the first occasion where all this new power and all this new stuff was going to be in place. I don't mind, but I thought it was kind of interesting.

And the organization continues?

LEE

Oh, yes. It met here in Raleigh/Chapel Hill [North Carolina] this last June and it all went very well. And they have very substantive sessions now. They have very good committee reports. They take up things; they go after their own people. They've produced a code of ethics and professional practices for art museums. Recently, for example, the administration of Brandeis [University] went after and did succeed in selling works of art from the Brandeis [Rose] Art Museum and using the money for operations for the university. The AAMD made what amounts to a boycott of the Brandeis art museum at Brandeis University and [wrote] a very stiff letter, a representation to the president of the Brandeis University. They've operated in a very professional way now for a long time. They have been very effective with Congress for furnishing people to testify and to work with the endowments on things. They defended, of course, the Cincinnati [Contemporary Arts Center] in the brouhaha about the [Robert] Mapplethorpe show. I think that they're an effective organization and one of the reasons why I think the AAM, as far as art museums, is rather useless.

GARDNER

The next thing on my list is the College Art Association [of America].

LEE

Well, you know, I've been a member of that ever since I think 19-- Well, when I was a graduate student-- 1939, 1940, or something like that. I have just recently indicated I'm not renewing my membership, which I'll get to in just a minute. I was always a member. I was on their board of directors for some years. And I really made it my goal, my purpose within the College Art Association, to try to improve the relationships between the world of academia and the world of art museums, which, as we've indicated in previous comments, was not always all that cordial. I think I had some effect, and I found some like-minded people and we did all we could to improve that. And also, trying to suggest that the academic members in that could be more helpful in volunteering for advisory positions and in working with art museums. I think it was part of a general shift in the triangle we discussed

from acquisition-oriented institution to more education-oriented institution. So I think it was in the air and it was something that could be encouraged. I tried to encourage that. Back in the old times, let's say the fifties, the annual meetings were large compared to before World War II. The number of art historians, it's like a population explosion. You've got thousands of them. But even more, you get thousands and thousands of artists. The meetings were always divided into two sorts of groups. There were the art historians and then there were the artists who were teaching the practice of art in colleges, universities, and degree-granting art schools. So you had the artist sessions and the art historian sessions. And I would say that in a four-day annual conference there would be a maximum of three to four, perhaps five, different sessions going on at any one time. Morning session, afternoon session when papers were presented by art historians or artists. But the artists were in the art sessions and art historians in art historian sessions. And they had, say, four to five sessions going at any one time.

GARDNER

So if you're interested--

LEE

I'm interested in all kinds of art, but if you're an oriental art historian, there would be maybe one oriental art historical session with maybe four or five papers, but only one at that time. Even then, sometimes they didn't have oriental sessions. But you'd have to choose whether you wanted-- For instance, there would be one session on ancient art and a session on medieval art, then maybe one on nineteenth-century art with papers being given. You couldn't go to all of them at once, so you had to pick and choose. But with four or five. In the last fifteen years, it's burgeoned to a point where they have literally as many as twenty, thirty, or forty sessions going, with each specialized group with its own session. Very few general sessions. Gradually, in the last ten years, with the increase in interest in gender studies and minority studies and multiculturalism and so forth and so on, you've had a further fragmentation and division, and you also have had some pretty extraordinary performances in terms of presentations by special interest groups. It has become such a vast operation that is really, I think, heavily fragmented. The most depressing part about the College Art Association annual meetings was

always, from the beginning, the sight of literally thousands of artists who took a membership in the College Art Association primarily because they wanted the placement service in that context. They needed jobs, and there weren't that many jobs. And to see these thousands of souls going around lugging their portfolio from room to room and being interviewed and so forth with little prospect, really was, I thought, a downer of the first order. It really was depressing. But the combination now, with the proliferation of the artists' problems and jobs, and now the art historians are having a hard time-- The whole fragmentation of the thing in terms of specialization and also the new special interest groups really has made it increasingly unattractive and not very useful, at least as far as I'm concerned. And some time ago they divided the publication program into two major publications. The College Art Bulletin, which is the super-scholarly publication, has got some very, very fine, very detailed, and full-apparatus, full scholarly construction, which is supposed to be a more general and more popular collection of essays and things. Incidentally, the College Art Journal articles but on very, very narrow subjects. It still goes on. Then you have the new publication--at least it was new twenty-five to thirty years ago--which is the College Art Journal was the publication which reprinted my address "Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of--What?" many years ago. But now they basically are organizing it according to theme issues. So we have a constant succession of issues of the College Art Journal dedicated to issues within the fashionable ones of the moment: gender, race, multiculturalism, etc. And, you know, it goes on and on with repetition and with many articles that are plainly not objective but in my opinion totally unobjective. Some, a few, very good ones, but basically the whole thing is gone. And I sit down here in Chapel Hill--I'm retired but I'm still busy; I'm writing and I'm teaching--and this thing comes and I look at it. I dip around in it. And it just-- It's not useful to me at all. So I finally, since I don't want to spend my money on everything, what there is of it, decided, "No, no more. This year it's out." So the museum association and the College Art Association are, in my opinion, not useful to me anymore.

GARDNER

Next on my list is the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

LEE

Well, that's an honor. Actually, I'm flattered that I was selected to be a member. And I pay my dues. I read with considerable interest the quarterly publication, *Daedalus*, which, as you know, has dedicated each issue to a variety of subjects, whether it's nuclear disarmament or the arts or literature or science. I find those essays, by some of the most distinguished people in the particular field very often, very interesting and useful and helpful. As far as my own activities go, I try to keep informed so I can vote intelligently on the annual recommendations for membership. But in terms of any sort of really useful involvement in their program and their particular requirements, I don't do anything.

GARDNER

At what point were you elected? Do you remember when?

LEE

Quite a long time ago.

GARDNER

Do you know who nominated you? Or is that a secret process?

LEE

It's a secret process. I don't know who did. I know who nominated me for the Century Association, but the American Academy I don't know. No. I must have become a member in about the early or mid-sixties. Some time ago.

GARDNER

Well, tell me about the Century Association.

LEE

Well, it's kind of a wonderful place. Jim Rorimer was, I think, the one who nominated me. I'm a non-resident member. William Milliken was a member of the Century Association, too. They go way back. And one of my good friends, my fishing companion who was a professor of art history at Yale University, Sumner McKnight Crosby, was also a member of the Century Association. As you know, the building in New York is a landmark. The interior is the nearest thing I know of in the United States to something like the Garrick Club in London. Now of course it has, as it should have, women members. But when I

first went there, it was all men. They have programs in the arts, as you know. Everyone knows what they can do. But they have this wonderful collection of paintings by the former members of the Century. It was founded by artists, and it was primarily, in its early years, solely an arts and letters association. In the twentieth century it's become increasingly-- It gets heavily into academia and it's into media members and so forth and so on. So it's broadened a great deal, but it's still a very lively place. They have the long table which is the communal table for dinner. If you don't have a guest or aren't a part of a party, you just sit there, and whoever is next to you is which I thought were not necessarily all for the best. He defended them very, very well, and I think I ended the discussion with perhaps a much better understanding of what it was all about. But it was a lively and interesting conversation. Other times, I've sat at the table and ran into people I know. whoever is next to you. And the tradition is that you're not supposed to say who you are and so forth, which I find rather peculiar. Anyhow, I've sat next once to Ved Mehta, who writes for the New Yorker and is a very interesting blind native of India and very literate and a very interesting mind. We had a long discussion because--- What was it? Yes, I was complaining to him a little later, halfway through our dinner, about changes in the New Yorker I haven't used it all that much because it does not provide living accommodations, so it doesn't help when you're making your trips to New York and trying to avoid the enormous costs for a hotel room up in the area where you've got to work. I used to use it more often because I'd go there for lunch or in the evening for dinner when I was in New York for three or four days for the museum. But since I retired, when I get to New York, I usually get there for a very specific purpose. It's no secret, and I'm sorry, but I find New York very unattractive in recent years. I was raised in New York. I loved it. We had a wonderful time when I was in the early museum world, but it's gotten increasingly so expensive and such, I think, a dishonest and depressing contrast between wealth and poverty and the increased expense of things and the deterioration of the theater in terms of the kind of theater I like-- We've been-- Ruth goes with me-- Well, I think this year we've been to New York twice together. But normally when I go for a meeting I fly. It's wonderful. Raleigh-Durham [airport] is twenty minutes from our house. I can go in the morning, get a plane, go up to New York and spend a whole day there and get back in time for a late supper, and that's it. So I haven't been in the Century that often in recent years. I was asked to write the obituary in

memoriam for Sumner Crosby, which I did. But the only other major event was when the presidency and the trustees of the Century polled the membership on the sale of the William Sidney Mount painting that Mount had given to the Century back when he was a member. I got a letter from the committee on the collection asking if I wished to join with them in protesting this suggestion. And I said I did very much indeed wish to. The management trustees of the Century wanted to sell the Mount, which they thought was worth something like \$8 million, in order to establish a fund from which the repairs on the building and all these operational and maintenance problems could be solved. There were some of us, including Charlie [Charles] Cunningham, who thought this was not a good idea in a club with so many well-known and, in many, many cases, wealthy people. At the Century, there surely would be some way which they could make a campaign to raise money for operational support. The Century had been founded over a hundred years ago by these artists and continued as a major artistic thing. The collection had been there for that purpose. It was just simply unconscionable to invade that trust and just remove it in order to raise money for fixing the roof. So I wrote a letter in support to the president and I got a rather tart letter back. I've forgotten exactly what he said, but, anyhow, I took exception to his reply. So I wrote another letter, which I made a little bit more astringent than my first letter, and I got just I think a postcard or something about no basis for further discussion.

GARDNER

Oh!

LEE

And so they finally sold the painting. The painting, as a matter of fact, was purchased by the Cleveland Museum of Art. And they didn't pay anything like \$8 million. They didn't get anything like that. But I'm glad the painting is in Cleveland, where it's in good company and can be seen. And I'm very sorry that the Century has lost one of its best paintings that goes with the other paintings that had been part of the heart of the Century Association and what it was all about. But I maintain my membership. There is, I think, probably a degree of vanity involved here, but it's a great club and I enjoy being a member.

1.27. TAPE NUMBER: XIII, SIDE ONE
JULY 16, 1992

GARDNER

Tell me about Sumner [M.] Crosby and your friendship with him and the whole notion of the two of you as fishing companions, which is something that hasn't come in here yet.

LEE

Well, I've always been interested in fishing. My father [Emery H. Lee] was not a fisherman. I don't know how I happened to run across it. Field and Stream magazine or something or other. About at the age of eleven, I decided I wanted to go trout fishing. And my grandmother [Carrie Johnston Baker] was always, as I think I mentioned, very indulgent. I was able to buy a steel fly rod. I mean, that's unthinkable today. Of course, in those days they didn't cost all that much, maybe a dollar and a half or something like that. And some cheap reel. I tried to find out--I think it was in the New York Times-- where you can go trout fishing. Among other places, it mentioned Brewster, New York, on a river up there. Open to the public. And also a stream that flowed into Lake Ronkonkomo on Long Island. So my poor family was dragooned. My grandmother, my father, mother [Adelia Baker Lee], in a car and we went. First time I went fishing was Lake Ronkonkomo, and I didn't catch a thing. But it was beautiful. That's now all developed in the area, but it was beautiful woods and lake and what they called "Indian slippers," these orchid-like flowers growing in the woods. It was just wonderful. I always have had an interest in nature in the sense of forest, woods, streams, and so on. Then I tried it up at Brewster. My parents took me up there early in the season. Soon after opening day there would be dozens, sometimes hundreds of fishermen. Not much. And then I discovered Flat Brook, which is in northwestern New Jersey up near Port Jervis. There I actually saw a man catch a trout on a fly. That was very exciting. This was three or four years before I caught a fish. So I've always been nuts about fly-fishing. And I persuaded my family to let me stay--I think I was about thirteen or fourteen, just before we left New York--for four or five days at a farmhouse on the Neversink River up near the Catskills so I could go trout fishing. Then I couldn't do much with it, certainly in the Cleveland area when I was a student or in Washington [D.C.]. When I was an

undergraduate at American University, the chemistry professor [William B. Holton] was a fly-fisherman. He was also the tennis coach, which was the only reason I ever passed chemistry, because [laughter] I was the number one singles player on the tennis team. But he was a fly-fisherman. A very good one. We went up to what is now Camp David. This was open to public fishing. Beautiful little stream up there where I caught fish with him, and he taught me a lot about fly-fishing. I've always been interested in it. So when my family moved to Detroit, when I went home from school or when I was there living, I went fishing up on the Au Sable River near Mio in the northern part of the lower peninsula of Michigan. I liked camping out. I used to go up when I was fifteen or sixteen, when I was beginning college, to Mio and just camp there by myself and go fishing with some of the local fly-fishermen. When my wife [Ruth Ward Lee] and I were married, we spent our honeymoon, believe it or not, hiking on the Appalachian Trail, which made her mother absolutely burst into tears. So I've always been interested. Well, I happened to meet Crosby on the boat when I was coming back from Europe in the early sixties and his wife [Sarah Townsend Crosby], a very lively, attractive lady. We hit it off--just met on the boat. He started talking about salmon fishing. I said I was a trout fisherman, I'd never fished for salmon. He said, "Well, you ought to come up to our place." He's from one of the Minneapolis flour companies. Sumner was one of these second sons. I believe I mentioned that. So he invited me to go salmon fishing up on a-- There are two main rivers up in that area, the Gaspé. One is the Upsalquitch River, which flows in from New Brunswick into the Restigouche River, and the Restigouche River, which forms the border for a while between New Brunswick and Quebec. He and his family, one member of his family, and friends owned a small fishing lodge up on the Restigouche River, which was one of the great salmon rivers of the past and I guess still is. And it's quite expensive. He asked me if I'd like to come but that I would have to share expenses. I said, "Sure. We'd love to." So Ruth and I went up there. We used to go up then every year for about seven or eight years in a row, and I was introduced to fly-fishing for salmon, which is one of the most exciting sports, I think, in the world. And since that time Ruth and I have gone with friends: Joe [Joseph] McCullough, who was the director of the art institute in Cleveland [Cleveland Institute of Art], and with our friend in Japan, Yuji Abe, who was a crazy fisherman. We went fishing in Ireland. We found a nice stream which was very good and not many people. Very inexpen- sive. In

Scotland I tried it. I've gotten fish there, but basically it's been a terribly long time between fish, because the whole salmon fishing industry for Atlantic salmon has gotten to be so difficult, so expensive with the netting and poaching. Unless you're in on some ancient stream where your family has owned the beats for two hundred years, you pay a fortune. Yuji Abe and I paid quite a bit of money to go fishing in Iceland. We went to northern Iceland just before the summit meeting at Reykjavik--two weeks before the summit meeting. We did quite well in northern Iceland, but it's so remote there's nothing to do except fish. There are very few trees and the river is very difficult to fish. But at least there were salmon there and we got them. But it's been very difficult. The last few years we've tried a very nice place in England which is on the border between Cornwall and Devon, but to no avail. That's how I got to be a good friend of Sumner Crosby's. Sumner was the head of the department towards the end, and he was the victim of sort of a palace revolution at Yale [University] in which younger professors, including the famous Vincent Scully, succeeded in getting him out as the chairman of the department because he's very conservative. He was the authority on the abbey of Saint-Denis in Paris, and he published many articles. Then he had a terrible time bringing his work to a conclusion. But I think he basically did finally, and then, unfortunately, he died not too long ago.

GARDNER

Thank you. The next on my list is the Asia Society.

LEE

Well, the Asia Society, of course, was a natural because of their-- They had a gallery--the Asia [House] Gallery--first in the building that was designed by Philip Johnson, down on East Sixty-fourth Street. And they had usually a show in the spring and a show in the fall and maybe a summer show. Before I ever became an adviser to John [D.] Rockefeller [III], I was active with them. They have a gallery committee which advises them on exhibitions and so on. I was asked to be on that early on, I think before I was director, in the fifties. It just was a natural relationship and one which has been a continuing one right up to the present day. Its program became very strong when I became adviser to John Rockefeller because the disposition of his collection was a matter of great interest to the Asia Society. I was very active. I became chairman of that

gallery committee, which is still in existence, and I'm still chairman. And I will be going off as chairman next year. When they decided to move the headquarters of the Asia Society from Sixty-fourth Street to a new and larger building up on Seventieth [Street] and Park [Avenue], I was one of the members of the building committee and I advised them on the selection of the architect and development of the gallery areas in the building. So I've had a continuing and very friendly relationship with them. I was made a trustee in the late sixties, maybe the early seventies, and I'm now an honorary trustee, for life, of the Asia Society. I've enjoyed it and found them a wonderful organization. The board of trustees is a very interesting, well-balanced group, quite a few businessmen, more in recent years than before, but people also from Hong Kong. Joseph Ho-tung, who's a great collector of early Chinese jades, and then Johnny [Myron T.] Falk, who died recently. He was a great collector in New York of Chinese ceramics. There's Cynthia Polski, who collects very good Indian material. It's just intimately concerned with Asia in general and very specifically with Asian art. Of course, that's been my cup of tea for a long, long time.

GARDNER

Right. What about the Japan Society?

LEE

Well, same thing except in a special area of Japanese art. I was a trustee of that for a while. I was on their building committee. They finally had not gone ahead with the building. I've been on the gallery committee there, and, as I mentioned, we did a couple of exhibitions for them from Cleveland. It too has been a very, very, I think, mutually rewarding relationship, and one which I wouldn't have missed for the world. Cyrus Vance was the chairman of the board of trustees. You get to talk and know the people like that who have real breadth and knowledge, and it's a very, very positive experience. I feel very lucky to have been able to be related so closely with both the Asia Society and the Japan Society.

GARDNER

Where's the Japan Society located?

LEE

I think it's 333 East Forty-seventh Street. It's right by the United Nations. They have a very nice building designed by a Japanese architect, a modern building and very attractive. If you've never been there, you ought to go there. They have regular programs of dance and music and the art gallery, and they have a library. It's really a very, very attractive place. The Asia Society is too, but the new building has not been received all that favorably by the cognoscenti. But it's a good building in many ways. It's just that I think they haven't been able to come to grips with how to deal with things like the lobby, for example. Have you been to the Asia Society?

GARDNER

No, I haven't.

LEE

Well, you better go there too.

GARDNER

Well, it's on my next visit to New York.

LEE

Oh, absolutely! And, you see, the Rockefeller collection now-- That gets back to what I was going to say, because the Asia Society, of course, was very, very anxious and interested as to what the disposition of the Rockefeller collection was to be. Fairly early on in my relationship with Mr. Rockefeller, the question came up, and he wanted me to advise him. He asked me, as a matter of fact, to prepare a paper for him on alternative dispositions for the collection. Ruling out any selling of it at auction or anything like that, in essence, what should be done with it? And where should it go to do the most good? I tried to think as coolly and objectively and sympathetically as I could, and I came up with three different scenarios. One, that the collection be given in its entirety to the Asia Society, where it would provide a basic collection on a smaller scale than the vast collections that are available in Boston and New York, the Metropolitan [Museum of Art] for example. But that emphasis be upon aesthetics and experience but closely tied to the educational purposes of the society and the increasing appreciation and understanding of the culture of East Asia. The second alternative was to give the entire collection to an art institution, a

major art institution where the receipt of that collection would substantially complement and dramatically increase the effectiveness of that institution. The third alternative was to break the collection into discrete units that had a cogent and persuasive intellectual framework, such as Cambodian sculpture, Indian bronzes, Japanese art, Far Eastern ceramics, and play with the different concepts, and then to place these units in institutions where they would become important, where they particularly filled a sadly missing area. For example, the Freer art gallery [Freer Gallery of Art], Smithsonian Institution, in Washington, has no Cambodian works to my knowledge. They have some Gandhara material, they have some medieval Indian material, but nothing of Southeast Asia. And as an example, that would be where that particular unit block would have a big impact. Retain the Rockefeller name, of course, as the donation, but make it flexible enough so that they weren't required to have it exhibited as a separate unit in a separate environment, make it flexible enough so that it could be integrated with the collection, and because of that, it would seriously improve it. I indicated to him that I thought the last alternative was the preferable one. I thought the collection would have a greater impact and would do more good for more different people in more different areas than any other solution. Several museums were after it. It was a question of great concern and of great interest to a lot of people. And John made a decision and he basically felt that he wanted it to be kept together. He didn't want to break it up into discrete units and he didn't want it to be swallowed up in a large collection like the Metropolitan or Boston [Museum of Fine Arts]. He wanted it to be kept together. And he was seriously interested in the contemplative aspects of oriental culture and he was very much in favor of a disposition of the collection that would permit it to be used as a source for understanding the contemplative aspects of Asian culture. The idea of having the collection as small and quiet but silent and effective in that kind of an environment appealed greatly to him. So that's what he finally decided, he and Blanchette [Ferry Hooker Rockefeller]. Blanchette was also a major factor in the decision. And that's what they did. So the collection is now at the Asia Society. One of the problems that has developed is that in the current intellectual and cultural climate, contemplative intentions and environments are not precisely a number one priority. More and more, there's interest in what I call entertainment and excitement. At the Asia Society, I think there is a serious uncertainty involving the trustees and the management and the

professionals in charge of the gallery as to how to use the Rockefeller collection and at the same time have their exhibition program and at the same time have a kind of interest and excitement and entertainment component that the management felt was important in order to get people to come into a still not terribly well known entity. I think they're beginning to get that worked out. They've got a very active and bright director for the galleries now. As a matter of fact, she used to work in Cleveland. Vishaka Desai [Oxnam]. She was in the educational department for a while. I think they're beginning to work it out, but it's just another symptom of tensions and problems that exist generally in our culture.

GARDNER

Next I'd like to ask you about the [Isamu] Noguchi Foundation, on which you serve as a trustee.

LEE

Well, I can't remember a specific date. I met Noguchi on one or two occasions in New York, in terms of getting to know him and understand him, and our friendship developed. The impetus was provided by the producing of the sculpture for the Justice Center in Cleveland, Portal. Noguchi did a fantastic job. I was absolutely impressed by his artistry but also by his technological know-how and ingenuity. Because we didn't have a big budget, we were lucky to get-- I think we had a total budget of \$70,000 or \$75,000 for sculptural embellishment for this huge Justice Center, which included a jail. A big, big thing. So the major sculpture at the entrance had to be something that was big, and of course how do you get something big where you're going to be able to spend a maximum for that particular work of something in the neighborhood of \$50,000? We ended up with a sculpture of thirty-- I think it's thirty-six feet high. Isamu remembered that they were doing the Alaska pipeline and they had made special pipe for that pipeline of unusually large dimensions.

GARDNER

Three feet.

LEE

No, I think it's forty-eight inch diameter. He checked and found out if they had any left and could still produce it. And he was able to get the pipe company to produce the pipe and also the forty-five- and ninety-degree-angle joints that were required for his design. Fabrication was done in Cleveland at one of the smaller steel fabricating plants, a family operation. They were very interested in this project, from a technological point of view, and they could see that Isamu knew his stuff. He wasn't just an artist coming way out; he knew his stuff. And they worked together very well. Then I saw him after that in New York occasionally and also in Tokyo. I mean, once I was standing at the desk in the Imperial Hotel checking in and I felt somebody sort of goose me from behind. Isamu Noguchi was there. He had about a twenty-foot-long pole with a hand or something at the end of it which was part of a prop, and he had other things that some people were carrying to a Martha Graham dance production. And I ran into him in Kyoto in a small modern art dealer's place not far from Miyako Hotel. We sort of ran into each other and we were very sympathetic. Then we were able to get the Putnam Fund--thanks to Mildred Putnam and Peter Putnam, her son--to fund the big set of sculptures, three granite sculptures outside the main, now north, entrance of the Breuer wing. That involved a lot of back and forth. So we got to know each other very well. Then when he set up the foundation, well before he died, to operate the [Isamu] Noguchi [Garden] Museum and also ultimately to handle his estate and the development of the museum and the cooperative relationship with the people at his Mure studio outside Takamatsu in Japan, he asked me if I would be willing to be a trustee of the Noguchi Foundation. I said I would be delighted. We had a very good relationship. Then when he died very suddenly, we had all the problems involved with the estate and then just setting up of the more or less, not final, but complete form of the museum in Long Island City. We also have responsibilities for the sale of works of art for the benefit of the foundation and the museum in Long Island City. We meet at least four times a year in New York. It's an ongoing thing. We have a fairly small board, but it's fascinating to deal with it. Have you ever been to the museum in Long Island City? I bet you haven't.

GARDNER

I haven't been to Long Island City since I was about four.

LEE

Well, it's an experience. It's a gorgeous museum with an outdoor garden, Japanese style, with his sculptures. It's a loft interior. It's about a block and a half from where-- God, names! Oh, he's a famous sculptor--big hanging steel pieces. There's one at the Hirshhorn [Museum]. [Mark Di Suvero] Well, he has a huge perhaps three- or four-acre area and a warehouse next to it, where a lot of his big sculptures are still that have not found a place. So that's interesting to see too. "The Isamu Noguchi Sculpture Garden and Museum" is the title. It's on Vernon Boulevard in Queens, Long Island City, and I urge you to go see it. It's beautiful. Just beautiful.

GARDNER

Okay. Now I have three things on my next trip.

LEE

Yes.

GARDNER

Well, you're on the visiting committee of the Freer.

LEE

Freer art gallery, yes. Well, I was appointed to the visiting committee for the Smithsonian Institution. I'll have to say that this happened after [S.] Dillon Ripley retired as the secretary of the Smithsonian Institution because Mr. Ripley and I did not hit it off too well together. The visiting committee for the Smithsonian met always in October, and I would always go to Japan in October. I said, "I can't get to these meetings. There's no point and I think you should let me off." And instead, they asked me if I would be on the visiting committee for the Freer art gallery. There's a visiting committee for the Freer. There's also a visiting committee for the [Arthur M.] Sackler Gallery, which is oriental art too. They usually meet jointly, the Sackler and the Freer. But I'm specifically on the Freer because-- I get along fine with the people now, but Mr. Sackler and I were not the greatest of buddies. As a matter of fact, I resigned from a Harvard [University] art department visiting committee. I resigned from that because of the circumstances of the gift of the money and the building of the new addition to the Fogg Art Museum, the [Arthur M.] Sackler Museum, which is another story. But the Freer is, I think, a very, very

interesting visiting committee because the Freer is part of the Smithsonian Institution. Now, it was given to the nation by Charles Freer, who made his fortune in the Pullman Company back in the late nineteenth century. He was a friend of Whistler's and he developed a passion in the late 1930s for American painting through his friend Abbott Thayer and others. American painting, twentieth century, especially that kind of painting that was related in some ways to oriental art: Whistler, [Thomas W.] Dewing, [John Henry] Twachtman. He had a few paintings by Homer and others, but his great passion became oriental art, and he collected very well under the influence of the people up in Boston like [Ernest F.] Fenollosa and Denman Ross and others. But the Freer is a very peculiar institution. Anything that enters the Freer Gallery cannot leave it. They can't lend to exhibitions by terms of the bequest. He specified that any gifts could only come in certain ways. The idea is that they had a purchase fund and they acquired. It was to be a museum of the highest quality, maintaining the highest standards of scholarship and so forth and so on. The directors of the Freer have always been sinologists or specialists in Japanese. The first director was Lodge, John Ellerton Lodge, who was the brother of the famous Senator [Henry Cabot] Lodge who defeated Wilson's concept of the League of Nations. He had been curator at Boston, and he tried to stay curator at Boston when he first went down as director of the Freer. And then he gave up the Boston job for obvious reasons. But he was a sinologist, and of course he was succeeded by his handpicked successor, Archibald [G.] Wenley, who was a sinologist. And he, in turn, was succeeded by John [A.] Pope, who we have mentioned and who was a sinologist and who especially didn't like my approach to oriental art history. And then Pope, in turn, was succeeded by Phil [Phillip] Stern, who was a specialist in Japanese art, and he, in turn, was succeeded by Tom [Thomas] Lawton, who was a sinologist--a good friend of mine and who later asked to be relieved of his administrative duties. He's a senior research curator at the Freer now because he couldn't cope with the Smithsonian under Ripley and his big expansion and glitz and so forth. Anyhow, that's the tradition we have. The visiting committee-- Larry [Laurence] Sickman was on the committee, and I think basically I came in and sort of replaced him. We meet once a year, and the meetings have been particularly significant in the last few years because the Freer, as you know, has been going through a total renovation to restore it to its original quality, to enlarge storage areas, bringing conservation spaces up-to-date, etc., etc. So

it's been closed for over two and a half years. This is entering the third year now, and it's scheduled to reopen in spring of 1993, in May I think. This has been a very interesting time and we have been helpful I think. The visiting committee are really an expert group of collectors and curators from different areas: from Southeast Asian studies, from Chinese studies, museum people such as myself, and then a few political figures, and Joseph Ho-tung from Hong Kong is a member of the committee. And we meet, as I said, once a year, and we have a fairly good, long agenda. A couple of us make a point of being guardians of the lamp. Marvin Eisenberg, professor of art history at the University of Michigan, whose specialty is Italian Renaissance painting--and I've known him for a long time--he's on it. The two of us, in particular, are constantly trying to find out information that we think we need or the committee needs to know. For example, one of the things that developed in the course of reports on the progress and the renovation of the building was the need for totally new cases for the ceramics and bronzes. The Freer has had beautiful cases made in their cabinet shop with beautiful hard woods. We said, "What's happening with those?" Well, they weren't suitable and they were too high because the children couldn't see into them, and they have to be lower. And I said, "Why can't you reconstitute the supports and lower them a bit?" Well, they couldn't do that because the chain gear that produces the means of raising and lowering the glass extends down below that level, and they said that the new act of Congress on the impaired would not-- They couldn't fulfill the obligations under that act. And that was news. So Eisenberg and Lee immediately start asking questions about this act. The act, it seems, is very simple. A few pages. But the regulations implementing the act--I've got a copy of this--it's over four hundred pages. Not only that, but there's a special committee in the Smithsonian Institution for the impairment problem, who issue further regulations for within the Smithsonian, as detailed as saying what size type a label should be, what color paper, what the light candle should be for reading a label, the height of the floor for display level of a case. I mean, unbelievably detailed. I think it's an example of bureaucracy gone absolutely, totally out of control. Well, the committee knew nothing about this. So we asked if we could be provided with a copy of the act, a copy of the congressional regulations. We finally got them just the other day. This was a few months ago. So things keep coming up that-- One collector on the committee is a very important collector of Tibetan and Nepalese art, and he

always gives a speech that the Freer should and the Sackler should do more about Tibetan and Nepalese art. And Joseph Ho-tung from Hong Kong is a very, very smart businessman and he asks questions occasionally about their financial operations, income from investment and so forth and so on. So I think the Smithsonian people worry a bit. I know the director of the Sackler very well, Milo [C.] Beach, and I keep telling him, "If any time you want to kick me off, kick me off, because it must be rather boring for you to have all these sometimes combative questions come up." He said, "Oh, no. No." He says-- and it looks as if he means it--he likes to have that. So it's a very interesting thing because it does involve one of the great and distinctive institutions for oriental art in the world; two, it's been a period of change and transition; and three, we've had some impact and something, I think, creative and constructive to do about it. As long as they'll keep asking me to go, I'll go.

GARDNER

You'll keep going. Tell me the Sackler story at the Fogg, unless you think it's not worth telling.

LEE

No, I think it's worth telling. I think it's just another one of these things that kind of go with the turf of the last quarter of the twentieth century. The Fogg Art Museum received many bequests. The Grenville [L.] Winthrop bequest, a fantastic collection of oriental art: Chinese, Korean, and some Japanese sculptures, paintings, bronzes, jades, a great collection of early Chinese jades, so forth. They also received the [Henry Lee] Higginson collection from Boston of Chinese--

**1.28. TAPE NUMBER: XIII, SIDE TWO
JULY 16, 1992**

GARDNER

You have just begun to tell the story of Sackler.

LEE

Well, the visiting committee at Harvard was like all visiting committees. They didn't have much power but they did have a considerable-- Especially the ones who are potentially donors to the Fogg, people like Joe [Joseph] Pulitzer [Jr.]

and others. It was a congenial group and they met once a year. They had received all these bequests and gifts over a period of years, capped off by the [Maurice] Wertheim gift of impressionist and post-impressionist paintings, which is a very impressive group of major works and enough to fill a whole large-sized gallery. They were just bursting at the seams. And Harvard and its typical attitude of every barrel on its own bottom wouldn't let them deal in the fund-raising work of the university. So they had to go out and raise money. They first raised enough money so they built a big but very economical, low-profile, mostly underground and one story above ground library expansion so they could take care of their great library properly. But they were just bursting at the seams in terms of works of art and so on. So they went out to raise money, and of course they had asked the visiting committee, especially the people who had dough on the thing, to contribute. They began to raise things, but it was kind of painful. Seymour Slive was then director, and I've known Seymour a long time. He was spending almost all his time, to his disgust, on trying to raise money. Then I got a phone call from one of my friends who said, "Have you heard about the Sackler gift to the Harvard Fogg Art Museum?" I said, "No." "Well," he said, "it was \$5 million, but you ought to know, since I know you're on the visiting committee, that there are all kinds of strings and conditions attached," which in my informant's opinion were onerous, and I think he knew that in my opinion they would be onerous. I never heard a word from anybody at Harvard about this, you see--nor, as far as I know, had the visiting committee at its last meeting--that even approaches had been made. So I called up Harvard, and I think I talked to Seymour. I said, "Seymour, what is all this about the big bequest? Does that mean you're going to be able to do the building?" He said, "Oh, yes. It's wonderful," and so forth and so on. I said, "Well, Seymour, please level with me, because I've heard some disturbing rumors about strings and conditions." And Seymour began to waffle a bit. I said, "Look, it's going to come out sooner or later. What are we dealing with? As a member of the visiting committee, I think I ought to know what's going on." And it turned out that there were so many different conditions, including some petty ones that indicated clearly what the intent of all these restrictions was. Because, for example, all the official stationery should read "the Sackler Museum and the Fogg Art Museum of Harvard University." Anyhow, Sackler came first. Secondly, all the labels had to contain a legend indicating that this was the Sackler Museum, which meant that people like Grenville Winthrop

and Higginson and all these people who are giving all this great stuff worth much more than \$5 million were always going to be second fiddle to the Sackler name. Furthermore, whenever the object was lent or published, that the credit lines should all have this particular legend. And there were other restrictions. Well, I said, "Seymour, this strikes me as being just the sort of thing we have always discussed in our meetings and the sort of thing that I wouldn't think that you would want to do." He said, "Well, I know. I don't want to do it. But it's the only way we're going to get the building. And because the university trustees won't raise a finger to help-- And as he is the only one that's going to give us enough so we can actually get started on the thing--" And so forth. I said, "Well, suppose you wait a while. I mean, you've lived this way for a while. Why do you cave in to this kind of--? Blackmail is what it is, pure and simple." There were other people involved, and of course they wanted it so badly and so on. But I said, "Okay. But I'm resigning from the visiting committee because I just don't want to be a party to this thing. I know this man. I know about him. This is the way he works, and he gets away with it because he's ruthless and he knows what the situation is. He's very smart and he knows he's got you over a barrel. He's going to make you pay for it. And I just don't think one ought to give in to that stuff if it's humanly possible to avoid it." So I did. Of course, he did the same thing down at the Smithsonian. And the reference to them [the Sackler Gallery], I mean, it comes before the Freer art gallery's. They have their own visiting committees and it's just-- I just think I was just too fortunate and too lucky and brought up in Cleveland, where philanthropy was philanthropy and people gave things. For instance, Leonard [C.] Hanna [Jr.] categorically refused to let his name be used on the wing [of the Cleveland Museum of Art] that he funded. And this has been true in a lot of places. But increasingly, you have had in museums this kind of what I call a form of blackmail. Bobby [Robert] Lehman, and the Lehman trustees after he died, were shopping around desperately to try to place the collection. Boston they tried and so forth. Then finally, the Metropolitan agreed to their demands, which were that the collection be kept together--well, at least for twenty-five years, so that it wasn't forever that it had to be all kept together-- but also that it had to be displayed in a manner comparable to and recalling the installation in Mr. Lehman's apartment, including-- They put in a false staircase because there was a staircase in a room in the Lehman apartments. And then when the Linskys [Jack and Belle] made their bequests to the

Metropolitan Museum, they agreed to something far worse. They agreed to keep it all together in a manner comparable to the way it was exhibited in the Linskys' apartment in perpetuity. They had to stick it in with other collections, but it had to be maintained as a separate entity. They made a point in the case of some of the older bequests, like the Altman Collection, the Friedsam Collection-- What had been bequeathed back before World War I or just after World War I-- Not too long ago they went to the courts and they got what they call a "variance," I guess, which permitted them to integrate the Rogier van der Weyden, and the Friedsam Collection went in with the Flemish paintings instead of having a separate room and the Altman pictures were done that way. They also did that with the Bache pictures. But here they were doing it again, right away, in a museum so large and so good. As a matter of fact, they really should control the situation. The donor needed them more than they needed the donor. But you get nowhere with that today. In general, that's the way things are done in terms of gifts. In the case of many museums, the combination of greed on the part of the directors and the curators--I'm as used to it as anyone--the combination of that with the desires of the donors leads to the acceptance of large collections as gifts, which bring with them the responsibility for the conservation and the storage and maintenance. It's why museums have become so big and their budgets have swollen so much that they get even further into financial trouble. So this business of how to deal with the old tradition of bequests and gifts and the new desire to use them as leverage, as a means of personal aggrandizement, fame, fortune, and so on, is I think a problem. It's not a major problem perhaps, but still I wish that there would be more people who would say just occasionally, "No, we are not going to accept that."

GARDNER

The next institution is the Amon Carter Museum [of Western Art], which you serve as a trustee for?

LEE

Yes. The Amon Carter Museum was founded, as you probably know, by Amon Carter as a museum of western art, the art of the American West, and was fundamentally that at its beginning: the Carter collection of works by Frederic Remington and Charlie [Charles M.] Russell. And this is an art form that I can

take or leave alone very easily. But the tradition from the beginning at the Amon Carter Museum had been that there was a Ruth Carter [Stevenson], who was Amon Carter's daughter, who is the president of the board, and the museum is supported almost totally by the Amon Carter Foundation, which has also other responsibilities, hospitals and education and so on. So it's a very closely held private corporation. Ruth Carter wanted it to develop into more. She felt that they needed in Texas something other than just works of the West. That there should be a good American art collection. So when they began, she wanted very much to have at least one, or perhaps more than one, professional museum person of some knowledge and some reputation to be on the board so as to provide a professional point of view for a board that was basically laypersons. She has always an architect there on the board or a designer. And of course there are members of the Carter extended family and people of some significance and power in Fort Worth who could help the museum and so on. And Bartlett [H.] Hayes [Jr.], who was the director of the Addison Gallery of American Art at the Andover Academy, was I think the first museum-professional trustee of the Amon Carter. They asked me to go on the board, oh, it must have been about, I think, the early sixties, which I was happy to do. And then Bart was-- I think he died. And I was the only professional then. A few years ago, they appointed Evan [H.] Turner, my successor at the Cleveland [Museum of Art], so we're both on that board. They have a beautiful building that was designed by Philip Johnson, and they have had one addition to it already, designed by Philip. They're going to have to have some more expansions fairly soon, and Philip has given his blessing, but he's not going to be the principal architect for it. They have developed a very good American collection. Small but very high quality. And they don't hesitate to pay what I consider to be outrageous prices for American art, including paintings by Church, Frederic Church, or Thomas Cole or [William] Harnett. You name it. But they have a wonderful collection. The board meets twice a year, usually annual meetings held in Fort Worth at the museum. They always have a second meeting, but it's often held at some other place where there's a major museum or something to see. And over the years, she really runs the place, and the director, who used to be in Cleveland, as a matter of fact-- God, these names! I know it, I just-- Ruth!

RUTH LEE

Yes.

LEE

What's the name of the director of the Amon Carter?

RUTH LEE

You mean Jan [Keene] Muhlert?

LEE

Jan Muhlert. Yes. She used to be at Cleveland. Her husband [Christopher Muhlert] is an artist. I know him quite well. She's very, very good and really well organized. It's a very well-run museum. But Ruth Carter, and now Stevenson-- She's married to the chairman of the board of the National Gallery [of Art] in Washington, who is Mr. [Paul] Mellon's lawyer, Jack [John R.] Stevenson. He's an international law lawyer. They really do get advice from the people and their professional expertise on the board: the architect, designer, or the museum professional. It's a very, very interesting operation and one which is so well done. They've made it into an absolutely first-class institution, doing a lot of work in publications, including good popular educational publications. They have a huge photographic collection, which I have warned them about constantly for the last twenty years, and it's only now that they're beginning to find out that I wasn't all wrong. They've got over a half million negatives and images now, and they have to be kept at forty degrees. Other collections have to be kept at seventy-two. Humidity is a different requirement. And they're finding that this is a big, big problem. They're in it up to their necks, and some of them are beginning to think maybe photography is not the ultimate art form. But it's one of the more interesting trustee things that can be done and well worth doing. It's nice that it's right next door to the Kimbell [Art] Museum, which is really, I think, an extraordinary development and wonderful collection and one that shows what can be done with money and knowledge and taste in a very short time.

GARDNER

The next that I have, and the last really, on my list of organizational endowments is NEH [National Endowment for the Humanities].

LEE

Well, the National Endowment for the Humanities, as you know, and the National Endowment for the Arts are creatures of congressional acts setting up the National [Foundation] on the Arts and Humanities. There's a council for the arts and there's a council--national council--for the humanities whose members are appointed by the president of the United States and who serve for terms of six years. And along about-- When did [Richard M.] Nixon go out?

GARDNER

Nineteen seventy-four?

LEE

'Seventy-four? Well, I think I was appointed by Mr. Nixon in 1973 or '72 to be on the National Council for the Humanities, whose chairman was Barnaby [C.] Keeney, formerly president of Brown [University].

GARDNER

I think so. Brown or Dartmouth [College], one of those. Brown, I think you're right.

LEE

Brown. And who had been appointed by [Lyndon B.] Johnson or [John F.] Kennedy, one or the other, whichever it was.

GARDNER

I think Johnson.

LEE

I think Johnson. And it had distinguished people on it. I remember particularly, for example, Hanna [Holborn] Gray, who was then president of the University of Chicago and later went on to be president at Yale, who's a very, very intelligent and distinguished person. Very impressive. Some of the other appointments of Mr. Nixon were Irving Kristol and Sidney Hook, both very conservative, as you know. And John Hollander, another conservative. The conductor of the Utah Symphony [Orchestra], [Maurice] Abravanel. There were professors from here and there, but it was humanities, not art. But art was represented. They didn't make grants in the arts unless they felt it was related to the humanities. Well, I don't know how my name got up to Mr.

Nixon. I have no idea on that. But anyhow, when I walked into the first meeting of the National Endowment for the Humanities-- They were in a small room. They kept moving from sort of small quarters to small quarters around Washington and Foggy Bottom and other places. I remember I was looked upon with considerable suspicion and wariness because I'd been appointed by President Nixon. And I think they rather early on decided that I was not a conservative, that I was middle or to the left of the middle, and things warmed up. There was a lot of work in connection with it in terms of reviewing of grant proposals, because we had to make recommendations to the chairman who made the grants. Barnaby Keeney, who was a very, very bright and a very sympathetic liberal person, was succeeded by a person I had no respect for, whose name was [Ronald S.] Berman, who was from University of California, San Diego. He belonged to the group including Kristol and Hook--a very neoconservative type. And also, I would say his attitude towards women was what I would describe as "semi-Neanderthal." That made life difficult, but with people like Hanna Gray and some others, we could manage to get some things done. The staff was very good. Nancy Englander was on the staff at that time, and that's when I got to see her work. I think I got to know her. We had big policy discussions despite the fact that we could only recommend. I think the meetings, as I remember-- There were two days, and we went through an awful lot of stuff and we had a lot of homework to do beforehand. We were, each of us, sort of assigned to one of the review committees, and I was usually assigned to either the art history area or the museum grant area in order to just know what was going on in that area. And it was interesting and, again, very useful.

GARDNER

How long was the term?

LEE

Six years. And I wound up as the deputy chairman of the arts of the National Council for the Humanities. That was not Berman's doing, because the deputy chairman was selected by the members of the council. So I got to know the inner workings of government and I had to pay attention to a lot of things I might not normally have paid any attention to. Like most of these things, you find yourself learning more from the process and from them than they learn

from you. That, I think, is all to the good. In connection with that, I think twice I was called upon, not as a member of the humanities council but as a member of the museum association [American Association of Museums] and as the president of the board of the arts organization [American Arts Alliance], which I did towards the end of my career--I've testified before congress and once in connection with the UNESCO [United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization] Convention on Cultural Property and once in connection with the reauthorization of the National Endowment for the Arts. And I got to know Sidney Yates a little bit, and I have a very high regard for him. I think without him in Congress that we would have been in more trouble much earlier than the endowment is now. All that is part of what goes along with being a director of a major museum and also [with being] a person who finds it very difficult to say no to things that look kind of interesting but you don't quite realize how much time or how much energy they're going to take. But I don't regret it. I think I could have done without doing so much work for the American Association of Museums. But these other things have been, I think, very useful to all parties.

GARDNER

Let me ask you about your politics, because it's come up in this conversation about NEH. I would imagine, given the comments that you made all through, that you were perceived within the arts community as something of a conservative. How do you reconcile that with your personal politics?

LEE

Well, I consider my personal politics to be somewhat conservative. I consider the policies of those who called themselves conservative to be reactionary. My reputation as a conservative basically comes I think more from my positions on the collecting, publication, and connoisseurship of contemporary art than from anything else. I'm a skeptic about the claims of a great many people in the field of contemporary art, and I believe in the marketplace for contemporary art to sort things out. I think many museums become much too involved in the right here and now thing and are used by both modern dealers and collectors as a means of aggrandizement for their cause. And that puts me definitely in the conservative camp. I've even said on numerous occasions that I thought there's nothing basically wrong with the old requirement at the

National Gallery [of Art] in Washington that no work could enter the collection until the artist had been dead for fifty years. I think that's a little too strong, but the idea behind it and the intention is, I think, laudable. On the other hand, in terms of education, in terms of popular education and in terms of what is now called "multiculturalism"-- And that is what I take originally to be an interest in the different cultures of the world, not only of the past but of the present, and a sympathetic study of them, among other things, in order to find out if there are some things there that are worth emulating. And in that I would consider myself to be, not in the pejorative sense, a liberal. Basically, I have voted in the vast majority of times with the Democratic Party. And a few times, I have voted with Republicans in local cases where one knows the individual concern far better than one does in statewide or national-- But I would be hurt and offended if I were described socially and politically as a pure conservative, because I don't think it's true. On the other hand, all my instincts are-- I found myself more deeply in sympathy with the Far Eastern philosophy and morality of Confucianism and with the Mediterranean philosophy of Stoicism than anything else. And both of those tend to make you-- And I'm not now speaking politically, I'm now speaking strictly from a social and intellectual point of view. Confucianism and Stoicism tend to make a conservative. That change just for the sake of change is not always wise. That you ought to look before you leap. That kind of philosophy, which I think was really middle of the road-- When one studies the Age of Enlightenment and one studies the founding fathers of the country, the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, one is most aware of the middle path. I took a course in constitutional law in college, and I love reading the opinions of the different majorities and minorities in the Supreme Court. I think that kind of conservatism has been the saving grace for humanity for several hundred years. I'm not easily persuaded that one should embrace the latest radical invention or the latest radical idea or organization simply because it represents something new and completely different.

GARDNER

Anything else on politics?

LEE

That's enough.

GARDNER

Okay. I have the three honors that you list on your résumé. Do you want to talk about them at all? Can I run through them quickly and you can tell me what they are and how you got them?

LEE

Uh-huh.

GARDNER

First of all, the Chevalier de la Légion d'Honneur, which impresses me to no end.

LEE

Well, there's a certain amount of mystery in that. I cooperated with the French government in connection with an exhibition held in Paris in homage to one of the great art historians--and especially sinologists and art historians--of oriental art, René Grousset. They had an exhibition in commemoration of his activity after his death in Paris, and I think I wrote a few catalog entries for them and we lent them some material for the exhibition. I just don't know how it happened to come about or anything, but all of a sudden, there it was. And it was presented to me by the French consul general in Cleveland, at the home of Emery May Norweb, the president of the museum at that time.

GARDNER

It didn't help when you had your problems with Poussin?

LEE

I never mentioned it.

GARDNER

You didn't tell the French government, after all, you're a chevalier?

LEE

No. I never mentioned it. The only occasion in which it helped me that I know of was in parking, I think it was in Auxerre. We were going with a friend. Ruth was with me and we were with friends. I parked in one place and they parked

next to me. And when I came up, there was a policeman there, and he took a look at my little ribbon in the buttonhole and he removed a ticket from my car but left a ticket on their car. [laughter] That's the only time that I know. We had very good cooperation between the French and Cleveland and with me personally. On Treasures from Medieval France we had a wonderful co-spirit and active cooperation, and on other things that are in connection with oriental matters and so on. I've always had a great rapport with my friends in France at the Bibliothèque Nationale, at the Musée Guimet, at the Louvre, at [Musée des Beaux-Arts] Dijon. Oh, this should go in. The Cleveland Museum of Art had four of the pleurants, the alabaster marble pleurants, from the tombs of the dukes of Burgundy. Leonard Hanna had bought two of them back in the thirties, and William [M.] Milliken had bought two at the same time. They came from the [Clarence H.] MacKay collection in Long Island, and they have been out of France since the time of the French Revolution, which is when the tombs were damaged and despoiled. And then they were reconstituted, but these four figures were out. The French, the mayor of Dijon and the director of the museum in Dijon, who was named Pierre Quarré, had always been bedeviling William Milliken about returning them. Well, this was ancient history that goes back to the French Revolution, and William had no intention-- Finally, they simply said, "Well, would you please give us plaster casts so we could have empty places on the tombs filled?" They're masterworks by Claus Sluter and Claus de Werve made for the charterhouse of Dijon. And William would never-- He said, "They're too fragile. We can't do casts," and so forth. He would never, never do anything about it. One of the first things I did when I became director, I told [Hubert] Landais, "You know, this is ridiculous. We'll make good casts, as accurate as we can in terms of colors and everything else, of the four pleurants from the tomb, and I'll be happy to give them to them." And then I got a letter from Quarré saying he was overjoyed--and the mayor of Dijon--and that they would like to have us bring them and have a presentation ceremony at the museum in Dijon where the tombs were. We went there and there was a presentation ceremony. I gave a brief address in French, which I practiced for days beforehand, trying to get it all right. I had my French friends make sure that it was idiomatic. And we had the ceremony of the presentation. And Ruth was there, of course. Then we retired to the Faisan d'Or, which is a restaurant not far from the museum, where our host was the Comte de Vogue, who owns the-- I think it is the Romanée-Conti vineyards in

Burgundy. And we had a meal that was an absolute killer. It had everything. And everybody was so looped and out of it by the time they finished, and the cognac and everything else-- It was just unbelievable. Now, I'm trying to remember whether that gift of the four pleurants may have been part of that reason why they-- I can't remember exactly. I'll have to check whether that happened before the presentation of the Légion d'Honneur or whether it happened afterwards. But it may well have had something to do with it.

GARDNER

Okay. I have time. You're also a member of the Order of the North Star of Sweden.

LEE

Yes. That's very simple, because the king of Sweden, Gustavus Adolphus, at the time I was in Cleveland, was a great collector of Chinese art. And I had two specific connections with him. I've met the king on several occasions at openings of exhibitions. I met him once in London at a dealer's. He was very tall. He was six feet seven or six feet eight. He was an avid tennis player. He played tennis until he was eighty-two or eighty-three. And I was a tennis player, and that helped pass the conversational time. But when they had an exhibition circulated by the International Exhibitions Foundation in Washington, which was run by the wife of John Pope, Annemarie Henle Pope-- They organized an exhibition which traveled to three places in the United States: Asia Society, Cleveland, and I think Boston. John Pope was in charge of the display at the Asia Society. Cleveland, I was responsible for the arrangements. And I forgot who the third person was. So that was one thing that I had done for and with the king. The second thing was that I knew quite well Carl [A.] Nordenfalk, who was the director of the National Museum in Stockholm. When I was there, he asked me particularly to come at a certain time because they were in the process of considering or buying a Vermeer, a soi-disant Vermeer from the Beit collection in Ireland, later famous for the theft of the other Vermeer from the Beit collection that happened some decades ago. Beit had two Vermeers, one which was good and one which was very iffy and chancy by reputation and by photographic appearance. But Nordenfalk asked me if I would come by when the king came over to look at it, because the king would have to get the dough out of the royal treasury,

discuss it with him. So I said, "Fine. I'll be happy to." So I met Nordenfalk and the king in the gallery where they had the picture hung. It was all roped off so nobody could get in. So I studied the picture and discussed it with them and so forth. And they finally decided that it really wasn't worth the chance and they didn't get it. But those were the two things which probably led to that award. I should mention that Sweden is the only one, but we were carefully informed by the Swedish consul general from Chicago at the presentation ceremony-- Which was also held at Mrs. Norweb's, because it's a diplomatic occasion and she had been all through the diplomatic business during her life, so she loved doing these things. But the Swedish consul general informed us very carefully, explicitly and at some length, that the award, the medals which I have in my bureau, were not given. They were lent. And that after my death, they had to be returned to the government of Sweden.

**1.29. TAPE NUMBER: XIV, SIDE ONE
JULY 16, 1992**

GARDNER

The third of these honors that I have, you're listed as the Order of the Sacred Treasure, Third Class.

LEE

Yes. I hasten to add--as my wife [Ruth Ward Lee] has always instructed me to do--that there are, I think, six classes, so it's not as bad as it sounds.

GARDNER

[laughter] You don't simply ride on the wooden seats on the railroad.

LEE

No, no. You know, I've been going to Japan every year for more than I think thirty years now, and I know the people I've worked with at the National Museum [of Modern Art]. During the occupation I was in charge of the protection and preservation of Japanese cultural property. I've been writing books on Japanese art. I've done a great deal in relation to my colleagues in Japan for Japanese art, in terms of exhibitions, publications, acquisitions, and so on. But the thing that triggered it was something that we have not mentioned and which I had forgotten. On the occasion of the two hundredth

anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, the State Department asked me if I would take charge of organizing an exhibition to be held at the Tokyo National Museum and at Kyoto, to be lent from the museums of the United States in honor of the 1776 celebration, and to make it a special occasion in Japan. I said I would do it and we went ahead. But I said, "What should we do?" I thought it would be taking coals to Newcastle to bring Japanese art over. I began thinking, and it suddenly dawned on me that one of the things that I was supposed to do during the occupation and which I did try to do, as I hope I've explained, was to encourage what the occupation authorities called the "democratization" of museums in Japan. I had a personal interest. One of the things that is very striking when you go around museums around the world-- If you should go to Egypt, you see Egyptian art; in Italy, basically, you see Italian art; you go to Greece, you see Greek art. It's only in Germany, France, the [Museo del] Prado in Spain, and of course England and the Scandinavian countries and the United States where you go to a museum and you see the art of countries other than the one you're in. And Japanese museums-- One of the things I tried to do during the occupation-- It took a lot of talk and a lot of argument, but they finally did it. The Japanese had a very good collection of Cambodian and Southeast Asian art which I suspect had been acquired while they were occupying Southeast Asia, but there had been no hue and cry about it. It wasn't displayed, and I argued for months with the people and the director of the National Museum. I knew the deputy director, who's the real professional director, who was a philosopher named Tanikawa. We got to be very good friends. He was a collector. He collected various things, including Egyptian things. I said, "You know, you've got some Chinese art on exhibition. You've got some Japanese art on exhibition. You've got this good collection of Cambodian art--you ought to put it on exhibition. You ought to broaden out so people in Japan get an idea of what other art looks like. It's so different from the things you have." Finally they did make, in the ground floor lobby area, a section where they had some Cambodian stuff. That gave me the idea, when I was asked to do the show for the 1776 celebration, that I should have an exhibition where I selected from American museums the best things I could find that showed what American museums were like and what a culturally diverse society it represented and try to encourage the Japanese museum family and the public that it was worthwhile diversifying, trying to get more diverse collections. They were beginning to do it in the contemporary

field, in buying Picasso, etc., etc. But in terms of the past traditions, it was not done, with one exception, which was a private museum, the Ohara Museum, where Mr. Ohara had collected before, in the twenties, some old master paintings, including El Greco and Renoir and so forth. That was the only place, though, where you had that kind of a mix. And it was a private museum. So that's what I tried to do in the exhibition. So we had French Gothic tapestries, we had Indian art, we had Cambodian art. We had what would be considered exotic from the standpoint of the United States, but to show the wide range and extent and depth of the cultural diversity that was represented in American museums. And it was well received. I think the Japanese came, and as they always do, they're much more interested in art than anyone else. They came and it was very successful. The last day, when we were scheduled to leave and start home the next day, there was a frantic, urgent request from the cultural ministry, from the ministry of education. They had to get ahold of me. When they got ahold of me, they said, "You've got to come. You must be present at the ministry at such and such a time." I didn't know what the hell it was about. "And you have to be dressed rather formally." So I came and Ruth came with me and a friend of ours. We came to the ministry, and there we were informed that I was going to receive this order. I had to wait in the anteroom and then we were ushered in. This is an order that is not personally bestowed by the emperor but is bestowed by the minister. And there I was presented with this award and a nice big medal for services to Japanese art and culture. I was informed after the ceremony by one of my friends that this had been very difficult and sorry it was such a rush, etc. But he said, "You realize that this award is usually given to people who are over seventy years old." And I was at that time, I think, probably around fifty or something like that. So I think I understand fully the rationale behind their giving that particular honor. I understand the rationale behind the other two, but certainly I feel that the Japanese award was the least mysterious of the three.

GARDNER

Now, I'm going to return to some biographical things. Before I do that, I'd like to take a break. [tape recorder off] What led you to choose Chapel Hill upon your retirement from Cleveland [Museum of Art]?

LEE

Well, a variety of factors. First and foremost, the idea was that one had to get out of town when one retires. I have no sympathy for chief executive officers of anything, whether it's a bank or a business or a museum, or for somebody who sticks around and inevitably, willy-nilly, whether he or she wants to or not, gets in the hair of their successor. It's inevitable because of their connections, especially if they had been in the institution for a long time. So, one, we--Ruth and I--fully agreed that we were going to get out of town. It took us a long time to convince the trustees that indeed we were retiring at age sixty-five and as scheduled. It wasn't until we bought this house two years before we retired that they really, really believed us. Secondly, we wanted to be someplace where there were seasons, but we wanted to be someplace that was temperate. Cleveland-- No one becomes director of the Cleveland Museum of Art because of the marvelous climate of the city. It's one of the two darkest places on the sun map of the United States. The other one is Seattle.

GARDNER

How about Buffalo?

LEE

Buffalo is part of the Cleveland center and Erie and Toledo to a certain extent. So we wanted to be someplace where it was temperate and lots of sunshine. We did not like Florida. We did not like California. Number three, Ruth's family and Ruth come from North Carolina, the western part of the state, and she knows the form and the people. And, four, we liked it because we knew Chapel Hill because all of our children were there when we bought the house--were in Chapel Hill or Raleigh--and all the grandchildren, six grandchildren. I liked the university and I liked the ambience. It's two and a half hours from the sea and it's two and a half hours from the mountains. It's right in the middle. Also, we did not want to go to a large city or anything like that. We wanted lots of the peace, quiet, and tranquility--or what we thought was the peace, quiet, and tranquility--of a smaller town. So it was inevitable. It was the obvious choice, and that's why we did it.

GARDNER

How did the contact with UNC [University of North Carolina] and Duke [University] come about?

LEE

Well, I've been teaching since my early days. I didn't teach at a university when I was in Detroit, but from the time I was at Seattle on, I was always teaching at a university, in a university context. I liked teaching. I think it's good for the teacher and I hope it's good for the students. And I just asked if they were interested. They said, "Oh, absolutely," that they would like me to teach. And I asked at Duke, and I conceived the idea, in order to sort of spread the word on oriental art, that I would teach alternate years at UNC and at Duke in the spring semester--one course--because it was our custom to go to Japan in the fall. I was particularly anxious to do it because there had been no courses given in oriental art at the University of North Carolina aside from-- It was part of a general course in religious art that had been given by one of the professors, who has retired. But not anything, just a segment of a course. At Duke they'd had a very good visiting professor for one year a few years before. Kidder. Professor [J. Edward] Kidder, whose specialty is early Japanese art. So they'd had no exposure, and I thought that it was an ideal situation in which to try to do some good. Also, there were no graduate programs in oriental art. Couldn't be. There were no professors, no courses given. And that appealed to me because I really like to teach young undergraduates. I think they're more sympathetic than a lot of graduate students. So I've been doing it ever since in alternate years. And it's been I think, on the whole, successful. Several of the students have gone on. I've gotten postcards from Japan, a girl who's been studying there. One who is in China. And so on. There's been an impact on the student body, and I think that's good. And I've enjoyed doing it.

GARDNER

You've mentioned that you had four children and six grandchildren here in 1983 when you moved. We haven't really picked up on your family since their origins in the, I guess, early forties and after. Could you give a rundown on your kids? What became of them and what they're all doing?

LEE

Well, our oldest daughter is Katharine [Lee Reid]. She took her A.B. at Vassar [College] and she went on to get a master's at Harvard [University] in art history, doing Dutch painting. She studied at the École du Louvre in Paris on a Fulbright for one year. Then she became an intern under the Ford Foundation program at the Toledo Museum of Art and then became curator of the Smart Gallery at the University of Chicago. Then she became deputy director of the Art Institute of Chicago, a very responsible position which she was at for some years, and recently, last August, she was made director of the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts in Richmond, which is a very responsible position indeed with a very big museum and a big collection. And she's working hard at it and I think doing very well. She was married to a curator, John Keefe--who is now in New Orleans--and divorced after a few years. She has subsequently remarried an investment broker, semiretired, Bryan Reid, who was in Chicago. They're both in Richmond, Virginia, and doing very well. It's always a pleasure to have somebody go on in the museum world in the family. She calls me up quite often about this, that, and the other thing. And now that she's moved to Richmond, it's much easier. We can get up for openings up there and get together. So that's all terrific. When she was here, she was chief curator at the [William Hayes] Ackland [Memorial] Art [Center] under Evan [H.] Turner, who later became the director who followed me at Cleveland. Our second daughter is Margaret [Lee Bachenheimer]. She got her A.B. from Smith [College], and she went on and took a master's degree at the Bank Street School of Education in New York. She has become a teacher specializing in first-, second-grade pupils, the ones I think are most interesting, and she likes it very much. She's been married and divorced and remarried. Her first husband was a psychologist, primarily child psychologist, Arne Gray. They moved, when she took her teaching position, to Chapel Hill. They've been at Chapel Hill for sixteen, seventeen years. They were divorced--mutual agreement--a few years ago. She remarried a professor, Dr. Stephen Bachenheimer, whose specialty is virology, viruses and so on. He teaches and does research at the university in the medical department at UNC. They're interested in art, but they're not devotees, shall we say. Katharine has no children. Margaret has two children by her first husband, Aaron Gray and Cecelia Gray. We see them all the time of course because they're right here. Our third daughter is Elizabeth [Lee Chiego]. She went . We decided we had to get out of town that evening. We made it. to Bradford [College], then to Boston University. Then she took her

A.B. from Case Western Reserve University and she went into library science school before the school closed at Case Western Reserve. In the process of doing that she met a graduate student and intern, William Chiego Jr., who got his Ph.D. in art history from Case Western Reserve University. They were married and went abroad and Elizabeth-- Well, he went abroad and then Elizabeth followed him abroad, and she went--like Katharine did--to the École du Louvre and got some good training there and some education in the realm of art. Then they got married at a civil ceremony in Paris, where the witnesses were Greta and Severance Millikin, the trustee of the Cleveland Museum and chairman of the accessions committee. And then there was a church ceremony which we attended at Saint-Germain-des-Prés in Paris later on, on the thirteenth of July--the day before quatorze juillet Elizabeth has worked in library work quite a bit, not always on a full-time basis. And Bill Chiego was chief curator at the North Carolina Museum of Art at Raleigh when we first came down here. There was a brouhaha involving the new director appointment and Bill had-- I think he was quite right that he had not been dealt with fairly. So he looked around for another job and became director of the Allen Memorial Art Museum at Oberlin [College]. He was there and they were there for seven years. Elizabeth worked in the library at Oberlin and Bill was director in the museum. That of course is a wonderful college museum. And then he was offered the job of director of the [Marion Koogler] McNay [Art Institute] in San Antonio, Texas, which is a museum devoted to nineteenth- and twentieth-century art, and that's more or less his field. His doctoral dissertation was on the French romantic painter Horace Vernet. He's now director at the McNay. They've been there a little over a year, a year and a half. And they're doing very nicely. They have two children, Ruth [Chiego] and Rose [Chiego]. Ruth is a great swimmer. She's won all kinds of medals both up in Cleveland, where she went to Laurel School, and down in San Antonio. She's a marvelous swimmer. And Rosie is-- She's a sort of budding thespian. She's very bright and very volatile, always thinking up odd things to do and perform or simulate. They keep life very, very busy for Bill and Elizabeth. Our fourth child is Thomas [Lee]. Thomas took his A.B. in English literature at Kent State University and then married Christie Llewellyn and came down here. I'm trying to get this straight. But he decided that he didn't want to do anything in English literature. He was more interested in horticulture, so he took another degree at North Carolina State University

here in horticulture and then became a horticulturalist at North Carolina State University. Now he moved over a couple of years ago to Duke. They have two children, Annah [Lee] and then Sherman [Lee], who is now eight, and I guess Annah is ten or eleven. And they live in Raleigh. So it's very nice. We're going to the beach tomorrow, and the Chiegos are coming from San Antonio and the Reids are coming down from Richmond, and we'll have everyone together for at least a part of the week. And we've done that every year now for the last seven or eight years.

GARDNER

Terrific. Now that we've talked about your family, including one daughter in art and one son-in-law in art, what about protégés from the Cleveland Museum? You've talked a little bit now and again about people from the museum who went on to other jobs. Are there protégés of Sherman Lee spread throughout the country?

LEE

I don't know that I'd use the word "protégés," but there are quite a few people who have, in one way or another, been involved in the programs of the Cleveland Museum of Art either as full-time employees or as part of intern programs and so forth. I can just name a few off the top of my head. I mean, after all, Hubert Landais, the director of all the museums of France, was in our internship and museum study program for almost a year. Ted [Edmund P.] Pillsbury, the director of the Kimbell Art Museum, was a Ford Foundation intern at the Cleveland Museum of Art. He's gone on to do that great job he's done down there. I think I've mentioned I've had graduate students like Tom [Thomas E.] Donaldson, who's a professor of Indian art and he took his doctorate under me; Kleinhenz, who did ceramics; and then Linda York Leach, who did Indian miniature painting and is now in England working for the Chester Beatty Library in Dublin; Bill [William D.] Wixom, who was curator of medieval and Renaissance art at the Cleveland Museum of Art for quite a few years, who did the Treasures from Medieval France exhibition. Bill was stolen away from us by the Metropolitan Museum of Art as director of the Cloisters and chief curator of medieval art at the museum. So he's moved onward and upward in a big way. Most of the curators stick around. Henry Hawley, our decorative arts curator in seventeenth, eighteenth, nineteenth century, is still

at the museum. He's a very distinguished curator. He's done some very interesting publications, made some interesting discoveries in the field of eighteenth-century decorative arts and in the field of early twentieth-century decorative arts. Jack [John] Brown, our librarian until I retired--just after--is now the librarian at the Avery Library at the Art Institute of Chicago.

GARDNER

That's a good enough sampling. I mean, it's pretty impressive.

LEE

We've put people out and up. We had the Ford Foundation intern program at the museum, and I can't remember all the innovations. But Pillsbury is the most outstanding example of the production of that program. And I guess that's about it.

GARDNER

Were you involved in the process of choosing Evan Turner as your successor?

LEE

I was involved in the process, yes. The answer is yes. I was asked by the trustees to submit names that I felt would be good replacements for the director--good candidates for the director's position. And I don't wish to be very specific, for obvious reasons, but I submitted five names. There were discussions--private discussions and that--but the basic formal meetings and discussions with the candidates were the business of the search committee, appointed by the trustees, and of the trustees themselves. I think that's appropriate.

GARDNER

Have you stayed in touch with the museum since your leaving?

LEE

Oh, yes. I'm going up to give a lecture in a colloquium involving imperial patrons of art in connection with the exhibition of the art of the Sun King, Amenhotep III of the eighteenth dynasty in Egypt. I'm doing that in September. I have, in the past, each year made trips to the Orient, where I have searched for and recommended to the museum possible acquisitions. I

can happily say that though not all of my recommendations were adopted, I think the most important ones were acquired, and they're, I think, a pretty wonderful bunch of things. And it's been interesting to do that. My successor as chief curator of oriental art is Michael Cunningham, who had his Ph.D. from University of Chicago under Harrie Vanderstappen. He is a specialist in Japanese art and has continued to develop the collections in general-- Japanese art, but has also made a very definite and new effort to develop the collection of Korean art at the museum with a great degree of success. I have given other lectures there in the past eight years. I wrote the essay in their seventy-fifty anniversary publication about my particular period of directorship. I would say that I've maintained touch. I would say we have gone to Cleveland in the last eight years an average of maybe twice a year. We see old friends when we're there and I play golf up there with some friends. I've never played golf up there before. And occasionally at night I do some research in the library because the libraries here are not very good. And I go up especially for exhibitions that are of particular interest for me. We've maintained a cordial and friendly relationship.

GARDNER

The next thing and nearly the last thing I'm going to ask you about is your own collecting.

LEE

May I interrupt?

GARDNER

Sure.

LEE

There are two things that we should have done or should do. One is relationship to the Ackland.

GARDNER

Okay.

LEE

I think we should do that. Another thing is we have said nothing about [Circa] 1492, have we?

GARDNER

No.

LEE

Should we go for 1492? [tape recorder off]

GARDNER

Let's start talking about your relationship with the Ackland.

LEE

Well, I knew the museum because, after all, my daughter Katharine was chief curator for several years. Evan Turner was there. We'd come down to Chapel Hill quite a bit to see the kids and so on, and we always saw the Ackland. I know the director before. The first director of the Ackland was Joe [Joseph C.] Sloane, who's still alive and lives up here at Carol Woods. And we see him reasonably often. So I've always known the museum as a small but very, very good university museum with its own endowment fund and with a steady income for acquisitions, which very few university museums have. The North Carolina Museum of Art does not do anything with oriental art. I was asked by them to advise them, conceive an exhibition and advise them on it, which I did, and I spent a lot of time and effort on it. I recommended a curator for the exhibition, who spent even more time on it. But that exhibition, which was going to be a very good one, has fallen through. The North Carolina Museum of Art is primarily an old master collection, which is very interesting, very good. I enjoy going to see it and it has some good modern paintings. But it basically is not so interesting to me. The Ackland is a good university museum. It's right there with the art department. And the present director, Charles Millard, who succeeded Innis [H.] Shoemaker, who was briefly director-- She was curator of prints and drawings. But she didn't like being director. She's now up in Philadelphia [Philadelphia Museum of Art] as curator of prints and drawings with a wonderful collection. And then Charles Millard came. He was chief curator of the Hirshhorn Museum and he's now director of the Ackland. He's very sympathetic. He knows what he's doing. He's a thorough

professional. He suggested that it might be useful to try and develop some oriental art, and I didn't contest this suggestion at all. I thought it was a very good idea and I'd be happy to help them out within a much more obviously limited budget and limited scope than the kind of thing that went on at Cleveland and Seattle [Art Museum]. We have, in the last three or four years, developed it. And also, there's a local couple, the Yagers, who are interested in Indian art and have bought and given some very, very nice Indian miniatures and sculpture, so that there's a really reasonable representation of Indian and Southeast Asian art. Charles is an indefatigable searcher for donors. We found a very nice lady [Lena Stewart Brillhouse] who was in the foreign service and who collected Southeast Asian ceramics who lives down in Southern Pines. She's given some very nice things to the museum. I bought stuff for the Ackland in Japan and in Hong Kong. And we now have enough Chinese, Japanese, and Indian and Southeast Asian material to fill two galleries twice a year, rotating, and including some really good things. At least I don't think there's anything that is terrible on exhibition, and there are some things that are good and there are some things that are very, very good. It's the only display of its kind between Richmond and Florida, as far as I know. And that's fun to do and I feel that it makes a contribution. I must say that when they opened the renovated galleries and the remodeled building, which took two and a half years to do, they had a wonderful turnout and a wonderful reaction on the part of the local populace. It's manageable enough, in terms of what I have to do, that it doesn't become onerous, and I really enjoy doing it.

GARDNER

Now, the other thing that you'd wanted to talk about was Circa 1492. That's mea culpa, because it was on my list.

LEE

Well, you see, a lot of people seem to think that-- What are you doing down there? Chapel Hill, what--?"

GARDNER

Well, we know that you're playing golf every day.

LEE

"How do you spend your time?" Well, my average out I think on golf is probably maybe three to three and a half days a week, all year round. I play in the winter too. And we always play in the morning. We're finished by noon. So there's a half day left, plus the weekends. And there's a garden to take care of. My part of it, which is sort of manual labor-- My wife does all the smart stuff like the veggies and the flowers.

GARDNER

You move rocks.

LEE

I move rocks. And I repair fences. I dig holes and so forth. So people ask, "What do you do?" The answer is-- Well, I've told you I just finished the much revised and enlarged A History of Far Eastern Art, fifth edition, and I've written some articles. I'm working on an article now for a festschrift in honor of Alex [Alexander C.] Soper on a very interesting but very difficult subject. It's not going to be terribly long, but it takes time. And I help the Ackland Museum; I teach every year in the spring. So I have a lot to occupy my time. And then less than three years ago, I got a phone call from the National Gallery [of Art] from [J.] Carter Brown saying they were in desperate straits, that John [M.] Rosenfield, who's a professor at Harvard, had decided he couldn't continue in his capacity as guest curator for the East Asian section of a major exhibition that was going to be held on the five hundredth anniversary of Columbus in 1492. It was called Circa 1492, and they wanted to show what was going on around 1492 in the places, as they put it, that Columbus came from, where he got to, and where he thought he was going. Well, I allowed at the very beginning that I thought that the intellectual justification of the exhibition was a bit on the thin side, but they persuaded me by saying what they would do. It would also provide a nice series of trips to the Orient to talk to my colleagues in Taiwan and to try to, for the first time-- The thing that really intrigued me the most about this, because this had the full backing of the United States government--it was the National Gallery--was to try and get the People's Republic of China, museums there and the museums on Taipei, to exhibit together in one venue. Never been done before. They wouldn't do it, they never would. I had previously worked with Howard Rogers on an exhibition, [Masterworks] of Ming and Ch'ing painting from the Forbidden City, which

circulated around the country in the last two years. I wrote the introductory essay for the catalog, and I had just recently been in touch, therefore, with my colleagues in Shanghai and in Beijing. And I knew the people on Taiwan from previous occasions. I'd been a participant in the two symposia that were held in Taipei, one in nineteen sixty something and one in '72 or '73. So I said, "Okay. I'll do it." Well, it was a real job. For a while I despaired. It was a real job, and writing the catalog entries and the essays for the catalog also took me a lot of time and energy. Now, I can't write beyond eleven thirty. I just can't. So I was up most every night to eleven thirty or so. But, by golly, we succeeded. We had a tough time with the Japanese, because there were conflicts involving Cleveland, especially on their seventy-fifth anniversary exhibition of Japanese art. I was not one hundred percent happy with the Japanese selection and performance. We first got Beijing to help. At first they were very much against it, but I had a couple of contacts in the ministry, and the people who were obstreperous at the [National] Palace Museum were basically people who were reactionary types after the unpleasantness. Anyhow, they said they would do it, and not only would they do it, but they would for the first time. I was able to get material from Shanghai and Nanching and a provincial museum to come with the Palace Museum material for the exhibition. It was very important, too, because we could get from Beijing conservative and academy and court paintings of the period of the fifteenth century. We picked the period from 1450 to 1550 as being the limits. We were able to get those conservative painters which are poorly represented in America or in Europe and in marvelous examples and in a kind of scale and size that you don't see, but which were common in imperial paintings in China. So this was a real eye-opener for everybody, including the scholars.

**1.30. TAPE NUMBER: XIV, SIDE TWO
JULY 16, 1992**

LEE

China, Korea, Japan, and India. India was difficult. I asked Cary Welch if he'd curate that particular section. There wasn't all that much happening in India at that particular time except the Muslims were running around breaking things up. But we persisted, and after we finished negotiations in Beijing, we went to Taipei. We told Taipei that the PRC [People's Republic of China] was going to

send wonderful stuff from these different museums in China and wouldn't it be wonderful if they could participate too. They said they wanted to. I couldn't stop them; they would have given me the whole place. Because they wanted to, of course, try to compete with and outdo their colleagues in the PRC. So we calmed them down, but we got just what we wanted from there. The show was installed, as usual, on a very lavish and expensive basis by the museum designer [Gaylord Ravenal], who has his degree from the University of North Carolina. It was beautifully installed. And the installation, especially of the major official academic and professional paintings from Beijing--large-scale pictures--was just an eye-opener. It was wonderful and it received very favorable attention from a lot of people. The exhibition as a whole, despite-- I still think the intellectual rationalization of the show, the justification of the show, was not one hundred percent. But they had the Woman with the Ermine by Leonardo [da Vinci] from Krakow. They had the Lisbon altarpiece [The Temptation of Saint Anthony] by Hieronymus Bosch, which I've never seen. Also, I'd never seen the Leonardo. They had some Gothic tapestries from cathedrals in Spain that nobody had seen. It was just a feast for the eye. It was terrific. My own feeling was that instead of trying to justify it intellectually, it should have been simply accepted as a feast for the eye. Of course, the only reason it was possible to do the Far Eastern section and the other things too was because it was a national, federal, governmental effort. That made a lot of things possible. So at the end, despite the size of the catalog, the weight of the catalog and all that, I felt it was well worth the rather frantic effort involved in meeting the deadlines and that. I was brought into the thing rather late in order to take John Rosenfield's place, and it was a horrendous effort. But it was worth it and it all came out all right.

GARDNER

Okay. Now we get on, and I think this will be my last area to pursue. If there is anything you've left out, you can think about it. I'm interested in having you talk about your own collecting: if there's a philosophy behind it, what sorts of things have you collected, and so on.

LEE

Well, first of all, you have to settle the problem of conflict of interest. It's not right for a professional-- I'm not talking now about trustees, but it applies to

trustees too. I think that there can be conflicts of interest in the collecting of material that's of particular interest in the museum if a trustee steps in and takes something for himself because he has knowledge of it because of his museum connection. For a professional, it's particularly important that you have a clear understanding of what you're up to. At the beginning, we didn't have any money. We had a couple of reproductions when we first set up our apartment in Washington after we were married in '38. We had a reproduction of El Greco's View of Toledo. We had a reproduction of Seurat's Grand jatte that is in the Art Institute of Chicago. We had several reproductions of Winslow Homer watercolors. I don't think we had any original works of art when we first-- We didn't have a penny to rub together. Then when I finally finished my Ph.D. and I got a job, our first child, Katharine, came in '41, which was three years after we were married. We bought a modern watercolor or something by a local artist in Cleveland, Bill Sommers, but we still had the El Greco reproduction and so forth. And then during the war, we still didn't have any money. When I was a student, I was in New York and I think I told you I saw a Paul Klee for \$90 that is now in the Museum of Modern Art, a Rouault watercolor which was \$100 and is now in the Museum of Modern Art. I didn't have \$10 to spare. Some people say, "Oh, well, you could always borrow" and so forth. But that ain't my style. I don't like to owe anybody money. And I don't like to go beyond what I should be doing with regards to my family, my family's welfare. But we went to Japan, of course, and things were very, very cheap and I started. I think the first thing I bought in Japan was that fragment of the Buddha image of the twelfth century up there. Wood. It's a fragment but it's got some style to it, and I think it cost something like \$15 or \$20, something like that. I was being paid what I considered a handsome salary by the government, with an "assimilated" rank of major, and we had a little extra money and I bought a few things. Then I was very much interested in Tz'u-chou ware. I started to collect Tz'u-chou. At the height of our collection, I think we had twenty-two or twenty-three pieces. I bought them from perfectly legitimate dealers in Osaka, Kyoto, and Tokyo. On two occasions, there were pieces I bought that I was told by friends really ought to be in the National Museum, they'd like to have them. No, one the National Museum wanted, and one the Yamato Bunka-kan in Nara, [Yukio] Yashiro's museum, wanted. He wanted it. In each case I let them have it at the price I paid for it so there would be no question of my depleting the Japanese

cultural heritage. We bought a couple of small painting fragments, one of which is still here. I had it mounted. I bought others for the Seattle Art Museum. But that was the beginning of collecting, and it basically was simply a target of opportunity, being in Japan, having a little extra money, and also being unconnected with the museum but with responsibilities to the occupation and to the Japanese themselves. Then when we went back to Seattle, we had a family and I had to pay off a mortgage. We had to buy a house. I gave some of the Tz'u-chou ware to the Seattle Art Museum and took tax deductions. I sold a few pieces that Dick [Richard] Fuller wanted very much--a few pieces--and I let him have them at a reasonable price. And that helped in paying off the house business. Then, when I moved to Cleveland, I was very careful. I didn't buy any oriental art because I felt that was-- I was chief curator before I became director. I've always been interested in all kinds of art: European, even African art--I bought the first pieces of African art for the Seattle Art Museum--and also the art of the South Pacific. I've always been interested in these different things. I became interested in conservative, little-known painters, principally French and English, because that's when I had a little time in the evening or on Saturday to look around at some of the dealers. And also in old master drawings. But when I found a really good old master drawing that was, you know, a bargain, it went to the museum at that price. I found a superb Federico Barocci drawing in a bookstore in Milan, which I picked up. It's the final drawing study for the Aeneas Carrying Anchises from Troy. One of his great pictures. And I picked it up I think for \$300. It's now one of the stars of the museum collection. Yes, it was \$300. And then, for example, in London I saw a little panel painting which I thought was marvelous, but I couldn't quite put my finger on it. But it was, I think, \$800. And I bought that under hectic circumstances and took it home. Then we worked on it and it turned out it was indeed a very good painting. It was by Hans Holbein [the elder] and was the emblem of Erasmus, the Terminus in a round format. And we got the biggest expert on Holbein. He said it was Holbein--a man from the British Museum--and he published it in our bulletin. We gave that to the museum in memory of Milton Fox, who had died just before. And I want to state that I took as a tax deduction \$800, although I could have taken a tax deduction of over \$100,000 without any problem. But I think I know what's really right and what's really wrong in these matters. And that's how I dealt with that. But, you know, you go around in the evening to little dealers or on

the weekends. That big painting in there that you noticed, the Falls of Tivoli [by Robert Freebairn], that was a hundred bucks from Appleby. Today I think it's a modest, museum-quality picture. But back then, you know, we had Noah [L.] Butkin buying somewhat the same kinds of pictures, and he's given them to the museum. There was no real conflict of interest. One thing our curators all agree on, Bill Wixom and Henry Hawley-- We say quite frankly, "We're suspicious of curators or professors who say they can't collect or won't collect because it's in conflict with their profession." I think people who are based on books and photographs don't collect for probably a very good reason: they're not interested in original works of art. I think a curator and a museum director, who should be an art expert--a curatorial type as well-- I think it's unnatural if they don't collect. The main thing is, if they do collect, the first rule of the game is that anything they have is available to the museum at cost price and, two, that they don't collect things that are in direct competition with the purchasing program of that museum. In the old days, some of the museum directors who were wealthy men in their own right collected impressionist, postimpressionist for decoration in their homes and so on, and nobody thought anything about it. In recent years, you've had this sort of what I call "pseudomorality," where you have the idea that you should live like a monk in a cell and contemplate your books and photographs and that's quite enough, thank you. But I think it's natural--it's sort of like breathing--that you want to have original works of art around you. When we first started we had reproductions. The idea of having a reproduction now, it doesn't appeal at all. I'd like to have things that show the things I love. The Indian style and small fragments of Indian sculpture-- That stela over there of Shiva and Parvati from north central India around 900 A.D. is unsalable to a museum because the head of the principal figure is gone. But it's very good quality. It cost almost nothing and it's a pleasure to me. We recently had--it was on our chest there-- a fragment of Egyptian art, sculpture, of the chin and eye parts of a portrait of Akhenaton, the famous so-called heretic king, one of the last kings of the eighteenth dynasty, which had been in the Amherst collection. Lord Amherst had picked up a lot of fragments from [Tel-el-] Amarna, and there it was. It was left to me by a friend of mine fifteen years ago. It was there, and I didn't know what I was going to do with it. I just loved it, but I knew that the Metropolitan Museum had--I've seen in their study gallery--a lot of fragments from Amarna from the Amherst collection. I looked at those things every now

and then when I was in New York, and I think some looked as if they might belong. So a couple of weeks ago when we went to New York together, Ruth and I went to the Met and talked to the curator [Dorothy Arnold]. She was very much interested. They got tables in the study gallery and we started matching. By golly, we found one match. Perfect match. And there are probably others, because a major part of the Amherst group of fragments from Amarna is in the British Museum. Mrs. Arnold is going to go to London soon and she's going to work on this, and I'll bet you they're going to find others. Well, we've given that thing to the Metropolitan because that's where the fragment is. They've got a great Egyptian department. They can pursue the thing, and perhaps they'll be able to get a major portion of a very large and significant royal portrait. We've given things to the Ackland, Chinese and Japanese painting. We've given Cleveland small bronzes and plaquettes. I just gave them the three last good ones we have this year. So where things belong in a museum and where they are a quality that's for the museum, we've tried to see that there's been no interference. In the case of a secondary painter, nobody's heard of the names of these people, most of them, and some of them are not museum pictures. There are one or two I think are good enough. But they also represent, in a sense, family-- What's the word I want to make it sound less mercenary? They're a family asset, family art. We've given lots of material to the children, including furniture and some pictures. I think that it's a kind of natural human kind of thing to do, and I, for one, would think it should be encouraged among professionals and curators. My role models, so-called, people like [William R.] Valentiner-- He exposed me to a very nice collection of German expressionist paintings--the people he knew. He had some older things, Rembrandt drawings, a small torso which is close to Michelangelo, in marble. He collected. These are the things that are a part of our life. They're part of our living and breathing. And we enjoy it. We've had a wonderful life. When we went to China--Ruth's been three times; I've been five--we went to the official government shops where they have all the things marked with wax seals. They can be exported, no problem. And you find things. I mean, what I've found are quite a few nice fan paintings, these landscape stones, the so-called Ta-li marble stones. I've become interested in and somewhat knowledgeable about Tibetan and Nepalese art in the last ten years. And we picked up a couple of nice tankas from Spink's in London. It's just fun and it's the thing to do and it also-- And this is the hard reasoning

about it in one of its aspects-- You know, everybody says you should have a nest egg and you should provide for the future--all those wonderful old homilies. Well, anytime that I have to choose between a work of art and a stock certificate or a portrait-of- Andrew-Jackson bill or you name it, I think works of art are far more interesting. You can hang them. They give you pleasure. And when push comes to shove, if you have to--you have a need to do something for a house, therefore a major expenditure--that's your bank account. It's available. We could afford to have bought this house from the proceeds of the sale of our house in Cleveland, but we couldn't afford to fix it up. We'd be living in a garage. So I think any good Stoic or any good Confucian would find this a not unsympathetic argument. And that's been it. We've enjoyed every minute of it. Ruth has found some material. She found that large, wonderful burl there in Suchou. I told her they'd never get it to this country in one piece. She said they would, and they did. We love pots. We bought modern Japanese pottery instead of older stuff. We have not gone in for older things on the shelves there. And furniture-- You know, it kills me to go out and spend the kind of money they required back when we were getting furniture for a modern work, let's say a Mies van der Rohe chair or a Marcel Breuer chair. Well, first of all, I don't want to sit in them day in, day out. But also they cost more than good old pieces of furniture. And especially when we were getting furniture, we'd look for Empire material, because nobody wanted it. We thought it was wonderful and we thought it had a certain kind of architectural character that we liked. We bought very nice pieces of Empire furniture which we are using now and continue to use, and the kids all like it. It cost much less than buying modern furniture. So I think collecting is a habit but it's also a desire. Some people have it and some people don't. And some have it but use it for collecting other things: bottle caps or some people collect stock certificates. But we like works of art and so we collect them.

GARDNER

Well, that's the end of my list. Do you have anything you'd like to add to this twenty hours-plus of tape that we've collected?

LEE

No, my brain is numb by now.

GARDNER

I think that's probably the best line to end on.

LEE

Undoubtedly, we will think of something in the middle of the night or in the middle of next week. But if something really urgent occurs within the next few days or weeks, if you think of something or I think of something, we ought to let each other know what it is, and maybe we can work out some way to get it put in even if it's written out and then verbalized.

GARDNER

Okay. Well, I'm sure you'll think of more. You've had a full life.

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