



Smithsonian
Archives of American Art

Oral history interview with Thomas Adrian
Fransioli, 1981 April 21

Funding for the digital preservation of this interview was provided by a grant
from the Save America's Treasures Program of the National Park Service.

Contact Information

Reference Department
Archives of American Art
Smithsonian Institution
Washington, D.C. 20560
www.aaa.si.edu/askus

Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with Thomas Adrian Fransioli on April 21, 1981. It took place in Wenham, MA, and was conducted by Robert F. Brown for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. This transcript has been lightly edited for readability by the Archives of American Art. The reader should bear in mind that they are reading a transcript of spoken, rather than written, prose.

Interview

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: Hello, all right. Twenty-first of April, we should say.

ROBERT BROWN: 1981.

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: Yeah.

ROBERT BROWN: Interview with Thomas Fransioli in Wenham, Massachusetts and Robert Brown, the interviewer. You were born in—

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: Seattle.

ROBERT BROWN: —Seattle, Washington, 1906.

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: Seattle, Washington, September 15, 1906. And—

ROBERT BROWN: Were your family from there or they've [inaudible.]

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: No, they were—my mother's family were all Waltham and New England. My grandfather was born—my grandfather, Harwood Young, was born in Groton and he went into the Civil War as a very young man and then he outfitted a wagon train to go across the prairies and that was destroyed by Indians. He tried to find General Custer and by the time he'd found General Custer the whole thing had been burned up. So he came back and he became a banker and so on and was in Waltham. And then he went out to Seattle in 1889, uh, as a part of Stone and Webster, I believe, and he laid out the street railways out there and sort of the financing of that and so on because the—

ROBERT BROWN: Not the engineering but the—

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: No, the finance—well, he was sort of keeping an eye on the whole business. And actually, the reason that my father, who came from Brooklyn, came out to Seattle to be part of a wholesale grain business with his brother Paul Fransioli, my father and a man we called Uncle Bake, who was really Cecil Bacon, who interestingly enough was, um, a relation of the Bacon who was the architect of the Lincoln Memorial. Well, the Bacons lived within sight and a stone's throw of us, um, but my father and Uncle Bake, as bachelors, shared quarters and they were riding on the streetcar and they'd gotten transfers. And my grandfather's signature was on the transfers and Uncle Bake said to my father, "I understand that Mr. Young's got some very attractive daughters. We ought to get to know them." And that was the way my father got to know my mother. And so [laughs] they were married from that house that I showed you a picture of in Beacon Hill.

ROBERT BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Which your grandfather had named [inaudible]—

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: Yes. And my grandfather named it Beacon Hill after Beacon Hill here. And indeed, there was a little article in the Seattle newspaper a while ago saying as much, because they now have a historical society out there and they have one of these transfers in the historical society. So, needless to say, I remember nothing about the first part of live—uh, until I was about six or seven. I simply have no memory of it at all.

ROBERT BROWN: But your mother, of course, had grown up then in, in Seattle.

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: They—she told me that when they went out there in 1890 she and her sisters cried for three years, much to the—with homesickness for Waltham, you see. My grandfather must have nearly gone out of his mind with these weeping, weeping daughters. But my mother had some quite good friends, one of them, who she kept up with, was Kathy Fullerton, who became Katherine Fullerton Gerould, a very good writer. And her husband was a professor at Princeton. Kathy Gerould, I think, taught at Bryn Mawr for a while and she was sort of a family institution to us as how wonderful the east is. And, uh—

ROBERT BROWN: Your mother would see her or keep corresponding with her?

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: Keep corresponding. And, and Mrs. Gerould came out a couple of times. You see, everybody out in the west like that were in a state of utter confusion about what was going to happen next and they didn't want to lose touch with the people four days away, you see. It was—

ROBERT BROWN: Why, why were they in confusion?

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: Well, because it was so different from living in the east. I mean, instead of being brought up in a place where the pioneering had been done, they were the pioneers. They were the people who had to do—and it was a wild place. I mean, it was—uh, hoodlums tried to break up the wedding reception of my mother. I remember that it was in the paper that she went out and said something to them and they all went away. But it was a pretty rough spot, you see. It was a takeoff point for the Gold Rush in Alaska. And so we had real skid rows out there. There were parts of the city that young people were forbidden to go into ever at all. And then my grandfather Young and my aunt Edith did a remarkable thing. They motored from Seattle to Boston in 1911 and grandpa had a handyman chauffeur named Francis and a Winton car. And Francis did the driving and away they went. And I have my aunt's diary of that, which unfortunately isn't very interesting. She, she had a prosaic way of putting things down. [Laughs.] She was a dear person but it was very prosaic.

ROBERT BROWN: Now, your mother had gone east for schooling, hadn't she [inaudible]?

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: Well, my mother came back to the, to the school—fine arts school when it was in the red brick building next to Trinity Church where the Copley Plaza now is. And we always had a very nice colored photograph in a gold frame of that hanging in the living room.

ROBERT BROWN: Was your grandfather encouraging? He'd like her to be a painter or was this merely a—

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: I don't think so.

ROBERT BROWN: —a ladylike accomplishment?

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: It was something for her to do. Uh, his brother was quite a good painter and lived in—he was Harry, I think. And he lived in Boston and he was having an exhibit of pictures in Portland, Maine. I can't remember what year this was. And the ship that he was coming back on with the pictures went down and almost—it was a well-known marine disaster and Uncle Harry and an awful lot of his pictures went down with it. So, uh, the scrapbook, I regret to say, that such things, newspaper articles about such things were in, has disappeared. I—it's—I don't know where it is.

ROBERT BROWN: Was, was your mother at the Museum of Fine Arts School for a year or two or—?

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: Uh, a couple of years, yes. She was there that—Benson was one of her teachers. The etcher.

ROBERT BROWN: This was, uh, would have been fairly early in his teaching, wouldn't it?

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: I would presume so, yes.

ROBERT BROWN: It was 1898 or [198]9?

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: Well, she was there in 1897 and 1898 and she—they had some great friends named the Burbanks who were also Waltham people. Jesse and Alice Burbank. Jesse taught jewelry design and manufacture at the Rhode Island School of Design and Alice was a kindergarten teacher, which is what most people of that kind did in those days. So we moved from the house on Harvard Avenue where I was born to a house on Federal Avenue where I grew up.

ROBERT BROWN: You mean in Seattle?

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: In Seattle. And the system of education in Seattle, if you went to public schools, which I did, was that there were about five high schools in different parts of the city and each of those high schools was fed by various grammar schools. And, uh, my school was called the Lowell School. It was just four blocks down Federal Avenue, which was in a perfectly straight line with a slight kink at the end. And I went to that. Uh, first we went to a little kindergarten that a perfectly charming neighbor named Mrs. Compton had and then we went on to—or I went on to school. My sister went to private schools. Little girls mostly went to private schools and little boys went to public schools.

ROBERT BROWN: But, but the public school was quite demanding? So—

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: It was very, very good. We got a real clitch [ph] of New England school marms out there and at that time I think they were awfully good schools. They did make some mistakes in—for instance,

they skipped me a couple of grades because I—they thought I spoke English so prettily. And, you know, you got people in those schools who scarcely knew how to speak the proper English and were real ruffians. I mean, they might be anybody—their mother might have been a camp cook and their father might have, um, been a logger or something like that. And so these women had an awful lot to do to teach these kids. And some of them were very, very naughty and bad I remember. And they had to be disciplined and were disciplined. This was before the days of the present day laissez-faire, you see. So away we went and I thoroughly enjoyed being in school and—

ROBERT BROWN: What did you particularly like?

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: Uh, I particularly liked reading. I read and I read and I read. And, uh, I was a rather timid child and we come to a most terrible thing. And that was that my father hadn't the vaguest conception of how to handle a child of my particular kind, that is, timid and rather nervous. Very—what I really loved was nature and the out-of-doors. And I was quite frightened of other little boys except for a few who were friends of ours. So my father made the terrible mistake of sending me once a week to have boxing lessons, which is, in my memory, nothing but a misery. I mean, I remember taking a deep breath and saying, "Now, I've got to go down there," to this place called Austin & Saltz [ph] and, uh, learn how to box, none of which turned out to be practical at all because I never did learn. I was too, too, too scared of it.

ROBERT BROWN: Well, was your father, um—what was he like? Was he—?

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: Well, my father was, he was a very small person. He was just five feet tall. He was a very good tennis player. Excellent tennis player. He and my mother were among the people who started the Seattle tennis club. But he was very strict and had no give and no particular imagination and I think that he was absolutely determined to have his son be everything he wasn't. I don't think my father was ever really received as a friend by many men in Seattle. I think that they were suspicious of his name, which was Italian, you see, and he did have friends. My mother and father belonged to the Seattle Golf Club, which is the original and good club and my father—they belonged to the tennis club. But my father never belonged, for instance, to the Rainier Club, which was the men's club, as opposed to the University Club, which was the most difficult club for anyone to get into in Seattle and still is, I believe. But I think he wanted me to be all these different things that I was not going to be.

ROBERT BROWN: And those were times when club and cliques were very important.

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: Yes. Meant a tremendous amount, you see, because business was very—a lot of business was conducted from, uh, who you saw at the club and what you said to him and all that.

ROBERT BROWN: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm [affirmative]. But your father continued in the grain business?

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: He did continue in the grain business and then, uh—but the thing was that—for instance, I loved dancing school. Now, I shouldn't have liked dancing school, you see, but I liked it very much indeed. Friday afternoons. And it was divided entirely according to years. That there never was anybody in your class who was not exactly the same age that you were. For instance, my sister went to a completely different one because she was two years older than I was. And in the summer we went down to a place called Three Tree Point, which was where those pictures were taken. Our grandpa built himself a house there and I think he built one for my mother and one for my aunt. And it was not a fashionable place to go, from the point of view of summering. The, the stylish place was over on Bainbridge Island. But this was a place that you got to by car and then my father commuted by boat. And once a year we made our exodus to Three Tree Point. All three families, the Morrisons, who was—

ROBERT BROWN: [Inaudible.]

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: —Betty, Betty Fuller's mother and father and my mother and father and grandpa and Aunt E and we had all the bedding packed in huge canvas bags. It couldn't be left in the houses because it would have been so damp you wouldn't have been able to ever use it again. And down we went and it almost always poured with rain when we were doing this trip. And now it would take you perhaps 20 minutes to do it and then it took at least two hours, you see. And then we never—we didn't budge all summer.

ROBERT BROWN: What would you do? Boating?

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: Uh, oh, fishing.

ROBERT BROWN: Was it [inaudible] intense, where there weren't lessons and [inaudible]?

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: Oh, no. No, no. There was no summer life at all. There was no organized summer life whatsoever.

ROBERT BROWN: Because you were there pretty nearly alone, your family.

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: Well, we weren't entirely alone. Uh, there were some people who we were scarcely allowed to speak to up the beach, named Morris. I never found out what was the matter with them but apparently there was something absolutely dreadfully wrong with them. And then there were—this is, I think, rather amusing. There were some people named Brown who lived down towards the wharf from us and they had a daughter named Elizabeth Brown, who we thought was a very odd kind of person and my mother didn't savor the Browns particularly. So we didn't see much of her. But in 1973 when I was out there I decided to go down to Three Tree Point and see what it was like. And I rang a doorbell to—and some—a woman came out and I said, "Do you know if there are any old-timers who live here?" And she said, "Well, there is a Mrs. Ayr [ph], who was Elizabeth Brown. So I went to their house and knocked on the door and to my great surprise a very reasonable facsimile of Ethel Merman came and answered the door. And that was Elizabeth Brown. Well, she couldn't have been more entertaining or nicer. And she said, "You know, I never—my parents never wanted me to play with you and your sister," she said. And I said, "Well, I think that's desperately funny because my parents never wanted us to play with you." And that was the way it was, you see. It was all laid out just like that. So what we did, we hunted for agates on the beach. We went for wildflowers on the south side. Uh, we trawled for fish. Occasionally we went out to places where there was sole on the bottom and fished for sole and did this and did that. That's all we did. My mother said she was so bored she nearly died. But we weren't, of course, bored in the least. And we went to bed very early. My parents were afraid that my sister and I would both grow up to be midgets and so this was one reason for this extremely placid life.

ROBERT BROWN: Oh, you were to rest and to grow [inaudible.]

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: Yeah. Because my mother and father were both just five feet, you see. That's quite short. And so they jammed us full of all kinds of invigorating breakfast foods and, uh, we led this very placid life when we were at that stage. Then—yes.

ROBERT BROWN: Your grandfather was sort of the boss of the camp? You said your mother was born [inaudible].

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: Well, my grandfather—my grandfather was a wonderful man. Uh, he had marvelous boats. He had a very nice launch with green velvet seats, an open launch, and then he had a wonderful old town varnished canoe and a very fine varnished rowboat and then a couple of other boats. And in his boathouse, it was the kind of thing where there was a—the tide came up into it, you see, so that you could—at high tide you could row or paddle in and then you could lift the boat up onto one of the landings on either side. And, and so we did go on, on fish—on expeditions in his launch with Francis at the helm, his chauffeur. And I remember once we went around the south side to go clamming on some beaches there when the tide was out and suddenly the adults began to cry, "Oh, the Indians, the Indians are here." And we looked up and here were these immensely tall Indians. I mean, at least 15 or 20 feet high spotted out across the wet sand. You see, it was the reflections of the Indians that made them look so tall. But I thought for years that all American Indians were very, very tall because this was the first time I'd seen any Indian.

ROBERT BROWN: Oh, really?

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: Yeah.

ROBERT BROWN: The—

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: So, so, so the—

ROBERT BROWN: And you had to leave when the Indians came or—

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: No, no. We didn't have to.

ROBERT BROWN: They just remarked on that?

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: Yes, that's right. No, no, we went clamming. So then, we stopped going there and we went over to a more peopled place in the summer called Bainbridge Island, although during the first war we went up to Lake Crescent and stayed in a hotel, a wonderful place called Ovington's. It was an inn and to get there you took an overnight steamer to Port Angeles and then you took a Stanley steamer up a corduroy [ph] road for 14 miles and then you were met by Mr. Ovington's launch and you went down the lake to his place and that was that. There were no—they had their own generator for electric light. Of course, there was no telephone at all. And they, they had a tennis court and they had cabins down on the water and it was a perfectly lovely place.

ROBERT BROWN: Were—well, during the summers you were allowed to indulge your interest in nature, weren't

you?

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: Yeah, yeah. We—

ROBERT BROWN: You were a hiker and a climber?

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: Oh, we climbed up into the, to the meadows where the—after the snow had melted. The high upland meadows that were covered with lilies and all sorts of wildflowers. It was great fun. And then I got to the point of going to high school and by this time I realized—I think I'd figured out that I was no athlete. I was not too bad at playing tennis. And so in high school I minded my Ps and Qs and enjoyed things and made a few friends and then my mother and father began having a little bit of a difficult time and, uh, so the environment at home wasn't all that happy, I would say, around 1921 and '22. And so, in 1922 my mother took my sister abroad and my father and I went and lived in a boarding house. I think we rented the house. And we went and lived in a boarding house, which I liked very much. And I then did things like—oh, I was the cashier in the lunchroom on top of the school, you know, and I was the treasurer of my class in its senior year. God knows how that happened. Of all the unlikely people. But I suppose they thought they had to make me something. And then I had—began having a tremendous success with people. Um, I had a very good friend named Bud Marion [ph] who is now one of the most conspicuously successful lawyers in Seattle. His name is Lucien Marion. And we had an awful lot of fun and he and a fellow named Ted Parker and I were in a musical play that was put on and we brought down the house by some sort of a dance we did. And this was the first time that I realized, you know, that if you did something and did it well, it was fun because everyone else enjoyed it and you got praised for doing it and so on.

ROBERT BROWN: Before that you had really not?

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: No. Well, I think, though, that one of the troubles was that at this point I began to please people, that very dangerous thing that young people find out, of how to please people. And that is the point at which all parents of children should watch their children and see that they don't do it too easily and too much because it can get to be built in, you see, and then you want to paint pleasing pictures when you grow up rather than to paint pictures that perhaps are not so pleasing immediately to other people but more of yourself. And I think that that was where, uh, I became two different things. One was conventional and serving the conventions and then the other was the occasional rebellion against the conventional, you see. And not serving them at all. And it made a split really. So in any event my mother came back from abroad in 1923, which was the year I graduated from high school, and she was horrified at where my father and I were living and she said we must immediately move over into the Sorrento Hotel, which we did, which was a very nice place. And still is, I may say.

ROBERT BROWN: Were, were you, um—you were happy with living there rather than in your house?

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: Well, I don't think, uh, uh, it—

ROBERT BROWN: You were too [inaudible.]

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: —it mattered to me because my whole life was involved with the high school. You see, we gave little dances and you went to little dances and they—a little band composed of a banjo and a saxophone and possibly a piano played "Whispering" and things like that. And, uh, everybody pushed somebody around the floor and if—everybody had to give one, you see, pretty much. I mean, about eight different people, we would say, would give these. Well, I could see that my mother was rather distressed that I'd gotten so terribly in with my high school group and one day or one evening in the Sorrento Hotel the telephone rang and I could tell pretty well by my mother's manner that she was very, very pleased to be speaking to whoever it was that—and she said, "Oh, yes, I'm sure he'd love to come." And that was my first invitation to what you might call a social thing in Seattle, you see, as opposed to an—these high school things that are not social. So I went to a party at the Kerry's [ph] and it just couldn't have been nicer. I mean, I took to it like a duck takes to water because there were all these nice girls and boys. And we began a thing then called—which we called our group and it became a very solid thing indeed and various—well, we all then—the girls had been mostly to a school, a finishing school in California and none of them had been in the dancing class except perhaps one or two or three that I went to because most of the girls went off to California. And so suddenly this whole business of a kind of a social life started.

ROBERT BROWN: This was all in your, more or less your last year?

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: No, it was the very end of my last year of high school. And then we decided—then I was going to go to the University of Washington.

ROBERT BROWN: Did you have any particular interest? For example, had you done anything to speak of [inaudible]?

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: Well, I'll tell you, when I discovered, um, that there was another world was at the Seattle Public Library. I came across two books. One of them was a big book of letters, you know, decorative letters and letters of all kinds through the ages and so on. And I looked at these and they were a marvel to me. I mean, I just couldn't believe it. And I used to go back again and again and again and look at these and then another thing was that in that spring of the year that—before we got back into our own house, we moved from the Sorrento Hotel. We rented a house at the Highlands, which is the very grand place to live in Seattle. We rented a house belonging to an English couple named Trafford-Hughston [ph] and in it was one volume of that thing called *An English Home*, you know, pictures of very grand English houses. And I was just absolutely bowled over. I hadn't known there were such things, you see. But I'd begun to be very, very keen on good architecture. There was one, there's one really lovely house, within, oh, a hundred yards of the house I was born in that was architected by Charles Platt and it probably is still the most lovely house in Seattle because Platt was a master, there's no question about it, and there was a picture by Maxfield Parrish in the morning room and there were big designs by Twotman [ph]. Now, the people who owned that, although their daughters were friends of my sisters, the mother and father were not friends of my mother and father. My mother and father didn't move in that circle. These were really rich people. And I think Mr. Merrill [ph] was part of a lumber concern that started in Maine and then moved out to Saginaw, Michigan and then moved to the West Coast. And so the Blodells [ph] and the Merrills [ph] were all part—and the Rings were all part of a thing and they were all very well-off and most of the fathers were college graduates and this was a different, uh—they all belonged to the same clubs but they weren't part of the same circle. So I only was in the Merrills house a very few times but—

ROBERT BROWN: This was quite an important experience if you look back?

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: Well, it was because here was, um, here was a—the world of immense taste, you see, and this lovely house. I did go to the coming out party of one of the girls because—in that house but I felt very awkward because I was a little bit too young to be there.

ROBERT BROWN: Was—a taste, you think? You were aware—very aware of such things [inaudible]?

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: Apparently I was because one of the—one of the girls in this little new group that we formed was named Janet Henry, who has been a friend of ours all our lives. She died about three years ago. And her grandfather, old Mr. Henry, lived across the street from us in a vast great house that had an art gallery on it. And he had pictures around there on velvet walls. It was a real private art gallery. And he had a picture called *The Blue Girl* and he would say, "I don't see why this isn't just as good as *The Blue Boy*." Well, the reason it wasn't was that it wasn't painted by Gainsborough, but he had some pretty good pictures there. Now I think they're in the Henry Gallery at the University of Washington. You see, Mr. Henry gave—the Henrys gave the money for the Henry Library at the University of Washington. And—

ROBERT BROWN: But you think at that time, say when you were 16 or 17, that these things were making impressions on you?

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: They were making very definite impressions.

ROBERT BROWN: Were, were you having coursework in high school in art?

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: No, my mother—it was through my mother. She—I remember little things she said. She said, "You can always tell what kind of people live in a house by what kind of pictures they have on the walls." And there were some things that she scorned and other things that she didn't. And, uh, they were terribly careful about language. Uh, my mother also was quite a reader. Now, it sounds uncanny but it was she who introduced me to the words of Ronald Firbank. And that is very odd because that's—it should have been the other way around, you see. And—

ROBERT BROWN: Because he was mostly a poet?

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: Ronald Firbank—

ROBERT BROWN: [Inaudible.]

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: No, no. He, he was a novelist.

ROBERT BROWN: A novelist.

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: But the most—

ROBERT BROWN: Spoke to young people though?

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: Well, he was the most chichi. I don't think he spoke to anybody except for the most chichi Bloomsbury Set people. But in any event, she did a good deal of that. Another great influence on me

was—were my children's books and particularly a book of Grimm's fairy tales with illustrations by Noel Pocock. And he worked in a neo-Bruegel style. And that, of course, accounts for my passion for Bruegel later on and indeed my working in, to a certain extent, the style that I work in, which is probably derived from these various things, you see. That and architecture. So in any event, uh—

ROBERT BROWN: When the time came to leave high school did you know just what you wanted to be?

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: No, I didn't and I saw—at the university—you see, out there then, there were fraternities and people were rushed for fraternities, it was called. And in the summer of 1923 I was the most rushed person who was going to go to the university. It was just—if anyone wanted to get really stuck up and conceited, it would have been right then, you see, because, I mean, I just had a very, very good time. House parties given by alumni and so on and all that. And then—so I joined a fraternity, the Alpha Delta Phi, under great pressure from a man named Buster Burnett [ph], who was a beau of my sister's. And [laughs] Buster ended up by owning a considerable part of the island of Maui but the poor man died before Maui became what it now is. But, uh, Buster was a great influence on my life. He was a ranger one summer up at Mount Rainier and I went up and stayed in a ranger's cabin with Buster and we plunged around and did this and that. Uh, but these children's books were a huge influence on me, and the illustrations in them. And, uh, then I went—then I saw a fellow named Ted Parker who I'd known at high school, and I said, "What are you going to, to do?" Well, he said, "I'm going to study architecture." And it had never occurred to me that you could study architecture, and so I decided to study architecture too at the school, in control of which was an architect named Carl Frelinghuysen Gould, who was an easterner who had moved out there. And he was a very good architect, in a sort of a forward way. A tremendous snob and his wife Dorothy was a great snob, too. But, uh—

ROBERT BROWN: Was it difficult for such people then?

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: Uh, no, no, no, no. They were, they were part—

ROBERT BROWN: [Inaudible.]

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: —of the, of the, of—

ROBERT BROWN: Eastern establishment?

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: They were part of the little group, you see, and so—but he was a good architect because I went out to look at some of the University of Washington buildings that he did, and they're quite innovative in a way. And then I had lunch over at a place called the Country Club, which was the most stylish summer place to go to. I had lunch there about seven years ago in one of his houses and it was a very nice house.

ROBERT BROWN: But were they, uh, anything reminiscent of the early Frank Lloyd Wright or were they—

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: Just off. They were more, more like, uh, the end of art nouveau, the liberty style. They were very free summer living. Sometimes the walls weren't finished and the studs showed but it—they usually were done with a sense of proportion and whatnot that was very pleasant.

ROBERT BROWN: But not, not particularly imitative of past styles?

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: No, no. There was a man in Seattle who had worked with Wright who did two house—he did the Kerry's house out at the Highlands in which my friend Glenn Kerry Trimble [ph] still lives. And he did another house just across the street from my cousin's house where I stayed in 1973. But in any event, away we went studying architecture.

ROBERT BROWN: At the University of Washington.

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: At—of Washington. And the—

ROBERT BROWN: Did you like it because [inaudible]?

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: Well, I began having a very hard time because I was finding that it was very hard for me to live in the world at the pace that was set. It was terribly difficult. And I began to drink at that early age and—because—and that gave me Dutch courage, you see. And nobody took me and shook me and said, "You don't have to compete." I think it was the competition, the competition, the competition. It—some people can take it and some people cannot.

ROBERT BROWN: And the competition in the architecture school—

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: No, the competition in everything.

ROBERT BROWN: —but also the fraternity?

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: In everything. In everything. Um, so that I began to have a rather difficult time. But we had some friends who were, who we loved as a family. They were family friends. The Ned Adams [ph] and they were friends of my mother's and father's, and Mr. Adams was one-half Hawaiian. His father, who was a missionary from Castine, Maine, I think they came from, had married, they always said, a princess, a Hawaiian princess. Well, she well might have been because Ned Adams was a very handsome man. So my generation of them were one-quarter Hawaiian and their son Jack Russell Adams, and that's a Castine name, you see, the Russell house and the Adams house are both in Castine, yeah. He was a great friend of mine and he and I used to go off on long camping trips or long working trips. He had a motorcycle and a sidecar. And we'd go and pick fruit in the Oregon valleys along the Willamette River.

ROBERT BROWN: This was during school year?

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: No, it was in the summer. And Jack had an aunt, an Aunt Nan who had a walnut ranch and we used to go down and base with her and pitch a tent there and then go round and just make enough money to support ourselves picking fruit for other people and doing this and that. Well, Jack had some cousins named the Tuckers who lived in Portland. Terribly nice people. And his cousin Ernie Tucker had been to the University of Pennsylvania to study architecture. And we used to see quite a lot of the Tuckers and it kept up, too. I mean, some of these things have only just been lopped off by death in the last few years because some of the children of that family have come out and stayed with us. Elizabeth and I were more or less a mother and father to Ennis Tucker's [ph] niece, Sally Malarkey [ph] when she came out. She used to live in our house and so on. So these were quite firm ties. But in any event, I told my mother and father that I thought I ought to go to the University of Pennsylvania.

ROBERT BROWN: [Laughs.] And what'd they say about that?

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: Well, they said they thought it might not be a bad idea.

ROBERT BROWN: Because they thought you were not doing well at the University of Washington?

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: Well, I think they thought possibly there would be less confusion if I wasn't there with them. Because my father and I simply did not get along by this time. I mean, it was very, very abrasive and very, very difficult because he didn't understand anything. I couldn't possibly talk to him about anything. And it, it was all ending in a heap and not a very pretty heap either. So away I went in a new suit. I remember what it looked like. Dreadful suit. And dreadful necktie. And so I—you know, I'd never been on a train to go anywhere except one summer when my father made me go work on a wheat ranch in eastern Oregon and I took a train over to Pendleton and that was a ghastly summer. I'll never forget it. I think—I can't remember what age I was. Probably 15 or 16. No, it was after that because by that time I had a great crush on Janet Henry and I hadn't met her until 1923 when I was 17. So it must have been that summer.

ROBERT BROWN: So you had to take a train trip to [inaudible] Philadelphia?

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: And so I took the train—so I took a train in 1925 to Chicago and Philadelphia. And began, started out in the architectural school.

ROBERT BROWN: Because you started at the, uh, foundation, the bottom or—but you already had some?

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: No, I think I had a year of credit. I think I had a year of credit and I didn't know where to stay, where to live. I didn't—but I know what it was. It was a fellow named Charles Lee [ph] from Tacoma was there and he lived in Mrs. Romanelli's [ph] boarding house on Walnut Street. So I moved in to Mrs. Romanelli's boarding house on Walnut Street, which was just down the street really from the university. And in it were also a man from Pasadena named Bill McKay and a man from Hartford named Charles Hooker Tolcutt [ph] and both of them had graduated from Yale and had then come down to study architecture at Pennsylvania. So this was the beginning of my knowing any easterners at all, you see, uh, except for ones that were in the family.

ROBERT BROWN: Was that, uh, an important thing for you then or did they—

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: Oh, very.

ROBERT BROWN: —take a little bit of—

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: Oh, it was very important.

ROBERT BROWN: —adjustment?

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: They were terribly nice people.

ROBERT BROWN: [inaudible.]

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: Hook Tolcutt. He's still a friend. I mean, we—

ROBERT BROWN: These were both slightly older men.

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Three years older.

ROBERT BROWN: [inaudible], as well.

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: Didn't make any difference.

ROBERT BROWN: Did you know by then what you wanted to—or did you have choices in the curriculum at the School of Architecture?

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: Yes, you did but it was well laid out. Uh, the thing that we all wanted the most was design, you see. The thing we all wanted the least was mathematics. The thing that was a crashing bore was descriptive geometry and so on. And then I had another very good friend. Uh, I had lots of friends at the University of Pennsylvania but one of them was a man named Carl Feiss and, uh—do you know him?

ROBERT BROWN: I know of him.

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: Yeah. Well, he was a great friend of mine and along about—the first year I went back to Seattle in the summer and I had a job with an architect named Edwin Ivy, who was building very fine neo houses. But, you know, neo-Spanish, neo-Georgian—

ROBERT BROWN: No, I know.

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: —neo this, neo that. But very good ones. A nice man. And so then I went back and sometime along in there—this was getting to be about 1928, I guess—I couldn't afford to go back to Seattle for Christmas. And Carl asked me to come to Cleveland to spend Christmas with them, which I did. And his mother and father were just—couldn't have been nicer and they were the—uh, I hope it won't be taken amiss when I say that they were the kind of haute Jewifery [ph] of Cleveland, you see.

ROBERT BROWN: German Jews.

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: German Jews. And, uh, their house was absolutely enchanting. They had a winter garden and they had—it was a new way of living to me. It was very probably Berlin, you know, very, very closed in. You didn't go out very much. People came in. They had a wonderful cook, they had wonderful wines. Uh, and we met—I met Mr. Rorimer, who was Louis Rorimer, the father of Jim Rorimer. And then I went to Mr. Rorimer's mother's and father's house, which was a sort of a little *petit trianon*, which was quite engaging.

ROBERT BROWN: And this was in Cleveland?

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: In Cleveland. And I've just been reading a darn good book called *The Memories of an American Impressionist* by Abel G. Warshawsky published by Kent State. I read a review of it in the *New Yorker* and I got it. And lo and behold, Warshawsky, who was quite a good painter, born in, I think in 1882, lived in Paris from 1908 to 1938. In any event, it was—he was from Cleveland. He was one of nine Polish Jewish children. And Louis Rorimer was the person who staked him to his first trip abroad. And then later on, I looked in the index, which I always do of a book like that to see who's mentioned and so on. And there was the name of Mr. Feiss. And I looked and saw that he left 5000 ordinary books to Kent State library and then he left his collection of 450 really grand books to Kent State, too. And I remember those in their house. They were naturally in two big bookcases that had locked doors with grills across them.

ROBERT BROWN: So this was your first introduction to a really learned wealthy family or a family that were [inaudible]?

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: It certainly was. They were the nicest people and they—well, um, they were kind and, as you say, learned. Mrs. Feiss was a Wellesley graduate. We did bits of Shakespeare plays on the stair landing, which went across the hall like that. And altogether had quite a good time. And I—and when you went out you went out in a Packard limousine with an arched door on the back, you know. And it snowed and snowed and snowed but you were never cold and you were never out in the snow at all. You looked at the snow from the winter garden, which had a black marble pool in it with a little fountain.

ROBERT BROWN: [Laughs.]

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: And it was quite impressive to me. I'd never seen this sort of life before.

ROBERT BROWN: Must have been [inaudible] when you got back to your student boarding house. It was—

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: Well, it was quite something.

ROBERT BROWN: [Inaudible.]

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: Well, then I decided to move out of the boarding house. It got a bit thick for me. They began to live it up. And they lived it up a bit too much. And so I moved into the dormitories. I got a very nice room in the dormitories. And Carl did a little mural on the walls of the room and I think I lived there for a couple of years. I've tried to get it all straight in my mind. In the meantime I'd made friends with a fellow named Charlie Voorhies [ph] who came from Medford, OR. And so when we went out for a winter vacation I went down to Medford and stayed with the Voorhies. Now, this would have been before the Feisses [ph]. And the Voorhies were educated to the hilt. And although they lived on a slight mesa in a white, in a big white house overlooking their pear orchards, you dressed for dinner when you were staying with them. And, uh, it was all very, very erudite and so on. There were about five such families who lived in Medford and one of them was the Carpenters. And so, uh, we went over to the Carpenters and other people bruted [ph] it about that the Carpenters were related to the Bowes-Lyons in England. So in 1930 I was staying for a weekend with Geoffrey Bowes-Lyons in England and I said the word "Carpenter" and they said, "Our cousins in Medford." So it was quite true.

ROBERT BROWN: [Laughs.]

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: It was that Mr. Carpenter who gave the money for the Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts at Harvard.

ROBERT BROWN: At Harvard. Hmm.

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: And I saw Charlie Voorhies after he had done that and I said, "Charlie, you know, I knew the Carpenters were well-to-do but I didn't know they were that rich." Well, he said, "They had a lot of early IBM stock and it was all just right there like that." Because you know, Mr. Carpenter called up Mr. Cuzy [ph] when he was in San Francisco and said, "I want to have lunch with you," and at the end of lunch he said, "Well, I'll give you the first \$2,500,000 now," and Mr. Cuzy was absolutely flabbergasted. So we heard at that time in, in Cambridge. Well, to go back—

ROBERT BROWN: [Inaudible.]

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: —I went down to the Voorhies and that was an educated household, too. And it was Oregon at its very best. It was—the whole thing was before it's gotten hurt and spoiled. A ghost town that was near there called Jacksonville has now become a Shakespeare festival. But then in 1926 it was nothing excepting a double row of cast iron fronts and the daughter of a Swiss photographer who lived in a Victorian cottage with the most enchanting garden. And we went there and she showed us all the pictures of the early days that her father had taken. So now we go back to the University of Pennsylvania and—

ROBERT BROWN: Did you do quite well in the architecture?

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: Well, I did very well in the first, uh, design thing that we did. I got the highest grade for it that you could get.

ROBERT BROWN: And what did design consist of? Was it a very programmed course?

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: Well, they would say, uh, a wealthy landowner through whose acres runs a gorge with a stream wishes to construct a bridge over the gorge and then they'd give you the dimensions of how far it was from one side to the other. And then you did a précis of what you were going to do. It was called a skis-a-skis [ph], meaning a sketch. And then you had to kind of stick to that.

ROBERT BROWN: So it was a Beaux-Arts curriculum?

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: Yeah. So I did a bridge and I got a very high grade. It caused quite a lot of excitement. So we went on like that—

ROBERT BROWN: What would the styles have been? Would you have [inaudible] Renaissance or [inaudible]?

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: I did a bridge, it was Palladian. I did a bridge with an arch and then I—

ROBERT BROWN: It was to be definitely styled rather than simply structural?

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: No, not necessarily.

ROBERT BROWN: But you did Palladian.

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: But I did this Palladian bridge. And, but with a thing in the middle. Not a long Palladian bridge like the one at Wilton or the one at Stowe. But by this time I was busily glutting myself with the architecture of Europe in the books in the school library, which were excellent. But sometimes I wonder what would have happened if I'd just gone over to the Bauhaus and coped with language, you know.

ROBERT BROWN: Could have been—

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: Well, that I would—I didn't speak a word of any European language.

ROBERT BROWN: No.

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: But I—that I'd—if I'd gone somewhere that was a bit more progressive. You see, Mr. Cray [ph] was the person who was running—

ROBERT BROWN: Paul Cray?

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: Paul Cray. And a very nice man but everything was classical or classical derivative. So away we went. We struggled along. And then I got a letter from my family saying they could no longer send me any money. The Depression was approaching. And Seattle felt it rather early because the investment thing then wasn't quite what it was now or else they had bad investments. But I had to drop out of college for a spring term, as I remember it. And I got a job with an interior decorator in Walnut Street. She was a lady decorator. And I went out and measured furniture for slipcovers. And—

ROBERT BROWN: Did you enjoy that sort of thing at all?

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: Well, I enjoyed seeing the houses and the people. But I—and I was passionate about interior decorating, which I still am. But, uh, the circumstances were a big confusing. Now, I'm trying to think when I met the Thompsons [ph] because they were a great influence in my life and still are. Uh, I walked into a class in the history of architecture in 1926 and saw a perfectly lovely pair of young ladies sitting there and there was a vacant seat next to one of them. So I probably sat down in it. And we became friends. And it turned out that this was Eleanor Thompson from Wilmington and Gertrude Olmstead from Harrisburg. Gertrude had been to Foxcroft and Eleanor had been to Farmington. And they were both studying landscape architecture. And so we all became friends. And then, Eleanor's family asked me down to Wilmington for a weekend and they were the Henry B. Thompsons and they were old Wilmington and old American politics. And the household was large, uh, very pleasant. There was Jake the butler, Brownlow [ph] the footman—both blacks—Louisa the cook who couldn't read or write, also black, but was a wonderful cook. Mary Haley [ph], a chambermaid. Uh, maybe another chambermaid and—

ROBERT BROWN: So you really liked—

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: A couple of people outside and it was very homelike, yet it was way beyond me. It was just way beyond me. Uh, and they—

ROBERT BROWN: Did anything come of this friendship?

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: It certainly did. I mean, I've just, uh, painted a picture about as big as that and sent it out to Eleanor, who is now Mrs. James Douglas. And they winter in Santa Barbara and they live in Lake Forest in a house that they just had Ike Colburn build for them because the old house was—Jim Douglas was the secretary of the Air Force with Eisenhower, the same time that Tom Gates was the secretary of defense. And I—and last winter they wrote to me and said, "We want to buy two of your pictures." So I sent them two big ones. Then they wrote again and said, "We want a small one." So I sent them a small one, which I painted for them, a view of Mount Desert. Uh, Elea—

ROBERT BROWN: Excuse me.

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: Well, uh, so something did come of this. I mean, we've stayed—

ROBERT BROWN: Long time.

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: —we've stayed friends. But this, the Wilmington thing was way beyond me. Uh, they hunted. I hate horses, in a way, except I like them to look at. But horses and I are not—

ROBERT BROWN: But this—was this why you had to drop out of school for a while?

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: Uh, so I did and so, uh, Mrs. Thompson was terribly nice and she got me a job of

doing a summerhouse down at Rehoboth Beach for Mrs. Samuel Bancroft.

ROBERT BROWN: Oh, another Wilmington family?

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: Well, are they not—they had one of the preeminent collections of pre-Raphaelite paintings, in the world really, in their house. Apparently Mr. Bancroft was just crazy about the pre-Raphaelites. Well, Mrs. Bancroft scared me to death but we went ahead and we—and I—we built a house in Rehoboth, which is probably still standing there, with Mr. Pointer [ph] as the contractor. And I remember by this time, I'd bought for \$50, I think, a beaten-up old Chevrolet coupe that belonged to a friend of mine named Buzz Williams. And I used to go back and forth to Rehoboth to see how the house was getting along.

ROBERT BROWN: Were you fairly confident as you did this?

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: Confident. Yes, I was confident of how I wanted it to look. I wanted it to have a Japanese roof or what I thought of as a Japanese roof so that the roof timbers came down in three different levels, you see.

[END OF TRACK.]

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: What now?

ROBERT BROWN: That's fine.

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: Yeah.

ROBERT BROWN: Side two. Yeah.

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: Okay. Well, uh, then I had summer jobs. I worked for Charles Klauder one summer. He was the architect for Princeton.

ROBERT BROWN: Oh, yeah.

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: Big—

ROBERT BROWN: And did you work—you mean as a designer or a draftsman?

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: A draftsman.

ROBERT BROWN: His office was in, uh—

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: Philadelphia.

ROBERT BROWN: —Philadelphia.

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: And Mr. Thompson was more or less Mr. Princeton. And so, uh, I hated working for Klauder. It was a dreary, dreary experience.

ROBERT BROWN: Why was that?

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: Well, because all I did was, uh, copy out Gothic finials and whatnot. You know, it was very boring. But I lived in Rittenhouse Square in one room at the top of a building that summer and worked for him. And then the next year I worked for a man named Ives who was the architect for a winter tour [ph]. And so I commuted down to Wilmington and did that. And then I began to be interested in antiques and I began to buy and sell a few antiques and did not too badly at it. I mean Philadelphia was just crawling with, sort of, semi-good antique shops and no one at that time really knew very much what things were worth and so—

ROBERT BROWN: And so you would buy for dealers or—

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: I would buy and then I would sell. And—

ROBERT BROWN: All out of this one room on Rittenhouse Square? [Laughs.]

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: Well, yes. It was pretty simple to do. And so then—but I didn't live there in the winter as I remember it. And then, uh, Hook Tolcutt graduated from—and went away and he had lived with Marian and Susie Ridgeway [ph] up on Chestnut Street, two maiden ladies who were friends of his father's. And so I moved into his—their house, in his quarters in that house, and it was much more comfortable and much more possible.

ROBERT BROWN: Were you by then back in the architecture school?

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: I was still in the architectural school because I was so bad in mathematics that I had to be there an extra year. I graduated in everything else but I had to tutor all one summer. And even then I paid the man \$30 an hour to tutor me in mathematics so that I'd get integral calculus through my head, which I eventually did and I graduated in 1930. By this time, I had moved way into the world of antiques because I met Charles Cornelius, who was the person who was the first curator of the American wing at the Metropolitan Museum. And I told him about the goodies to be found in Philadelphia and he soon found people who would buy them, you see. In fact, a couple of chairs that I bought at that time are now in the Metropolitan Museum. [Laughs.]

ROBERT BROWN: And how would you go about it? Going to, uh, houses or estate auctions?

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: No, no. No, no. I'd go see them in antique shops.

ROBERT BROWN: I see.

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: I mean, there, there would be these—

ROBERT BROWN: [Inaudible] direct them to the museum?

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: Yeah. But, um, pretty extraordinary. The people who would have an antique shop wouldn't know what they had. I established one rule and that was that if the person you were buying from was a dealer, uh, you could use your knowledge against his. If you were buying from, let us say, a dear little old lady who wished to sell a family possession, you could not use your knowledge against hers. You had to tell her that it was worth much more than she thought it was, because otherwise you were skinning people, you see, and, uh—

ROBERT BROWN: And that would rebound and boomerang.

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: Well, yeah. And it's a comfortable procedure because if anyone's such an idiot as a dealer as to not to know what he has, uh, then it's just too bad. But, on the other hand, if someone has a family treasure and they wish to sell it and they don't know what it is, then if you do, you ought to tell them.

ROBERT BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. And that worked very well.

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: It works very well. Yes.

ROBERT BROWN: Did you continue to do this for a while?

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: Oh, I did. Indeed. And so I collected a bit of cash, you see. And then at the end of college, I sort of bounded around. I can't remember quite what I did at this point. And then that summer three men asked me to be the fourth man on a sailing trip from Gibraltar to the Balearic Islands. One of them was Charlie Cornelius. One was Adam Path who was the—who owned Durlacher Galleries in New York and the other was a man named Don Newhall who was—had not quite made it as a painter. I think he was rather well-to-do. In any event, we went over on a steamer and we picked up this little boat in Gibraltar Harbor and we sailed on down to the Balearics and that was the first time I'd been abroad. And, of course, it was wildly exciting.

ROBERT BROWN: Were you able to stop [inaudible] a lot of the towns and cities?

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: Oh, did we not. We did indeed and it was just something you couldn't believe. Uh, so, so romantic and so extraordinary. I mean just amazing because it—then, the south coast of Spain was deserted. There was nothing there. But the whole world was in a Depression at that point, you see. So then the following winter, I rented a couple of rooms in New York and I worked for Dick Dana [ph] as a draftsman at one point. He was an architect. But there was no architecture. Then I had an old friend named Phil Amidown [ph] whose mother was a great friend of my mother's. Marjorie Amidown. And he and I conceived of the idea of—he had really conceived the idea—of putting up a whole lot of swell houses on the East River on a piece of land more or less at the water's edge. So we worked up this great design and made—

ROBERT BROWN: He was an architect, too?

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: No, he wasn't. He was an architect manqué. And, uh, he was an odd person. He was quite rich. He inherited, I think, a large part of Jacksonville, Florida from someone in his family. And he was quite well off. So we worked this thing up and then it got a little beyond us, and Phil said, "I think we ought to take it to a bigger architect," because I had no license at this point or anything. And so we went to John Russell Pope with it, no less, and [laughs]—

ROBERT BROWN: And he was based in New York at that time?

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: John Russell Pope? Oh, my God, yes. He was the great New York architect, you know. I mean, the one. Uh, and so we went there and Otto Eggers was his great designer, under Mr. Pope. Mr. Pope, you know, was the architect with the National Gallery in Washington.

ROBERT BROWN: But that was to come a bit later.

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: That was later. So that was that. And then nothing came of it. I don't think Douglas Elliman wanted to finance it. He said it wasn't practical; it was going to be too expensive.

ROBERT BROWN: Was he one of the great real estate developers living at—

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: He is the, was the great one and still is one of the great ones. So then in 1931, I went to a house party in Virginia and I met my wife. And so we were married in 1932 and she lived in Virginia. I thought she—I didn't know she was really a New Yorker when I met her because she lived in Virginia. And her first husband had been killed in a motor accident. They had no children and she lived in a house called Edge Hill, which was near Warrenton. And so for about a year we saw each other and she said, "You know, I've got a lot of family in New York." So, indeed, it turned out to be that she had a great deal of family in New York who had all lived there forever. And so, we got married and we lived in Virginia. Then I took out an architectural license. I went over to Blacksburg, Virginia, where you took the examination. And I got my license. And then I heard—then nothing happened and the Historical American Buildings Survey, which was gotten up to help indigent architects by some New Yorkers—I think Dick Dana and Bottomly [ph] and so on started that—wanted people to head up various sections and so I wrote to them and I got to head up the part for northern Virginia. So then I got a squad sent to me, which turned out to be a very nice little fellow named Billy Bumford [ph] from Richmond. Very, very southern. Very grand in lineage. His mother was a Taylor [ph] from Mount Erie. And so we went ahead and we measured various buildings around the neighborhood houses and so on. And then I heard that, uh—

ROBERT BROWN: Was that work that interested you or was that simply—

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: Well, it was to—it was to be doing something, for goodness sake.

ROBERT BROWN: Sure. There was nothing else [inaudible.]

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: Oh, it was dreadful. It was a dreadful time. So then I heard that some people named Doeller, uh, that—D-O-E-L-L-E-R, the wife of whom was a Latower [ph], of the same Latower as is Gabe, that was her uncle who gave the Latower thing.

ROBERT BROWN: [inaudible.]

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: That their old house, which they had bought, the old Marshall house, a big brick house, had burned down. And they were looking for architects for the new house. So I called her up and said, "Could I submit a plan and some designs?" And about three other people were doing this. It was an informal competition, you might say. And so I banged out some designs. And, by gosh, they called up and said that they wanted me to be the architect of this house. And it, uh—

ROBERT BROWN: How did you conceive the house to be or what [inaudible]?

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: Well, I'll tell you that there's a house called Bacon's Castle in Surrey County in Virginia which I'd always loved. It's one of the early real Jacobian houses in America. And so I'm—I used two of Bacon's castles, each of them, oh, 25-by-80 feet with a unit in between and then I made two curved wings with a pavilion at the end of each one. So from pavilion to pavilion was 220 feet. It was a sizable proposition. And they—Lou had told me—the Doeller's were great friends of the Duchess of Windsor and—I mean, to give you a brief on how they moved. And Lou wanted a flying staircase that didn't touch the walls anywhere at all, a curved staircase. So I—so I think I made a drawing of what it would look like and I think that's one thing that got me this job. So then I, they said they wanted Edwin Conquist [ph] to be the contractor, thank goodness, because he was an awfully nice fellow and an extremely sophisticated contractor from Richmond. So we went ahead and got the house built. It came out in *Town and Country*. And so, four years, five years ago, Lou called up and she said, "We want to move up off the first floor. We want to move to the second floor." And so to help me in this job I got hold of Otis Post's office in New York. His father was George B. Post, who was the architect for the old Vanderbilt House and also for the Rhode Island State Capitol and so on. And Otis was—Otis's wife was a first cousin of my mother-in-law's, of Elizabeth's mother. And so Otis's office did the construction parts of it, see, and I did all the design parts. It made me feel safer.

ROBERT BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Well, they did the engineering.

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: The engineering—

ROBERT BROWN: —[inaudible.]

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: —which was rather tricky. And Edwin did the building, which was just great.

ROBERT BROWN: Edwin Conquist?

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: Yes. And he'd married Virginia Fairfax. They were old Virginia folks, see. Very—

ROBERT BROWN: [Inaudible]—

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: What?

ROBERT BROWN: This counted for quite a lot down there [inaudible]?

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: Oh, very—well, it still does.

ROBERT BROWN: Although the Doellers were outsiders, weren't they?

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: Well, they were, yes, but—

ROBERT BROWN: It was a good deal of money and hard times [inaudible.]

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: They were very, very well off. And then they bought—they went abroad and they bought various things. They bought a very curious Adam Rooney [ph], which we installed in the living room. Very strange, very early Adam, of scaled palm trees carved in wood and then great plaster palm fronds going like that. And we got all that in and they bought wrought iron railings and we put those on the stairs and they bought box blocks [ph] from the Princess Royal's house and we put them around on the doors and we put a marble hall, marble floor in the hall. It was very, very swell. And they—a Chippendale, Chinese Chippendale room with lovely wallpaper. And four years ago, by gosh, we did a whole upstairs for them. Raised the roof and put in a bedroom that was, gosh, 20-by-30, something like that, a big room. And then they both died, poor, poor dears. And—

ROBERT BROWN: But this was your first and rather large splash, wasn't it?

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: It was a large splash but it was too unusual. I mean, it was too exotic. It scared people. Yeah. Scared, scared people.

ROBERT BROWN: On what grounds?

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: Well, it was, it—

ROBERT BROWN: English Georgian?

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: —so expensive. No, it wasn't English Georgian. It was Jacobian. It, it, it—

ROBERT BROWN: Inside. The Adam Rooney [inaudible.]

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: Oh, yes. In—

ROBERT BROWN: [Inaudible.]

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: Well, inside it was all very handsome. The ceilings are 12-feet high and—

ROBERT BROWN: But it was too extravagant for them.

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: Oh, the average person, yes. I tried and I got a couple of other little jobs there but not enough people were building, see. I got two or three. I did something for Ken Jenkins [ph] and I did something for Dorothy Nyhart [ph] and, and I tried to get something to do for some people named Hinckley [ph] but they didn't do it. And then it began to be difficult. Um, then our child was born.

ROBERT BROWN: And this was in the mid-'30s.

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: No, this was '32, '33. And our—no, our child had been born in '33. The Doeller's house was built in '34 and '35. And then the Depression really began to nip, you see, and we found that we couldn't operate our 250 acres and our house and a child and a nurse and so on.

ROBERT BROWN: How were you maintaining that even—

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: Well, um, Elizabeth—

ROBERT BROWN: From your commissions [inaudible]?

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: —had some money.

ROBERT BROWN: Yeah.

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: And so we were, we made out. But when I stopped making money this way, then we could not make out. And so we decided to move to New York and I would, so to speak, get a job, which we did. And we moved to New York and lived at 122 East 82 and I went to Otto Eggers at Eggers & Higgins and said I want a job as a designer and draftsman. And he said, "I just need someone. Mr. Pope has died. We're building the National Gallery and we want someone to design the gallery rooms." And, and he said, "You would be able to do it." And so for a few years I worked on those.

ROBERT BROWN: And you'd known Eggers from your [inaudible]—

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: From the time that Phil Amidown [ph] and I went there with that Georgian thing, you see.

ROBERT BROWN: What was Eggers like, Otto Eggers?

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: Eggers was a frostbitten man. He didn't like the gentry. And he was scared to death of museum people and things like that, you see. He was very frightened of David Finley, who—Finley was then the head of the National Gallery. Who—you know, Mr. Finley had been Mr. Mellon's secretary and then he was made—and he was an awfully nice little fellow. A Virginian. Uh, and Otto Eggers was, I think, must have been scared of him. I hope I'm not saying a lot of things that I can be sued for or something. But it was all rather funny and entertaining. For instance, once—but then Eggers wouldn't give me an inch. He was awfully brusque and I didn't particularly like him really. I, I—

ROBERT BROWN: Once you were in the office [inaudible.]

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: Yeah, but he said, "Fransioli," he said, "We've got to go over to Mr.—" oh, golly, what is their name in Philadelphia? The one who left so many pictures.

ROBERT BROWN: [Inaudible.]

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: No, no, no. A statue. He lived at a place called Linwood. And there's a great picture of him now by Sir John Lavery in the, uh—

ROBERT BROWN: Widener?

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: Widener. Yeah. That was it. Widener. "We've got to go over to the Widener House because Mr. Widener is giving the National Gallery a whole lot of things. We've got to go over and see them because we've got to know how to install them." So he, he took me with him, I think, as a buffer because John Walker and David Finley—John Walker was coming up from the National Gallery end of it. So we went there and we saw the great *David* of Donatello and we saw pictures and then we got down to things like the books and the *objects d'art*, the vases and so on. And in the ballroom—Mr. [inaudible] was showing us around. And in the ball—Mr. Widener, I mean. And in the ballroom there was a great side table with a marble top, you know, and gilded legs. Very fancy. And on it was a set of five superb Chinese vases with—it was what you'd call a *garniture de cheminée*, you know, three matched and—

ROBERT BROWN: And two smaller [inaudible.]

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: Two, two matched and the three that matched had tops on them. And we were wondering whether we had to put mirrors behind them so people could see what their backs looked like. So I went around. I went over and I turned one around so we could see whether the backs were as fancy as the front. Whereupon John Walker shuddered and said, "I would no sooner have dared to touch one of those vases." And Mr. Widener said, "Mr. Fransioli, don't you worry," he said. "When I was giving a coming out party for my granddaughter a young man was wearing the lid of one of those pots tied on his head with a ribbon as a hat during the last part of the dance." So I thought that was just about as tactful as anyone could possibly be. And from then on I have just, of course, thought Mr. Widener was a very great fellow. Uh, he, by the way, had gotten two of those, I think, in Paris and two in New York and, incredibly enough, another one in San Francisco and they were obviously a matched set of five. So they are now in the National Gallery. So there I was. And then I went to a party at—oh, then I got very interested in pictures, you see, because we made little models of the gallery rooms.

ROBERT BROWN: What, what did you have down in Washington? Nothing more than the structure, the bare bones, and you [inaudible]?

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: Well, the building was being built all the time. I mean, it was—the beautiful pink marble was being laid on.

ROBERT BROWN: But you and the Eggers firm were to in—put casings inside, so to speak?

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: Well, they were the architects of the whole building, you see.

ROBERT BROWN: But, I mean, your particular job, yeah.

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: Job was, was the—yes, the—

ROBERT BROWN: The trim.

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: Yes. Everything.

ROBERT BROWN: The [inaudible.]

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: The wood. Everything, everything, everything. And we decided to do the rooms in a vaguely—a style vaguely reminiscent of the pictures. And there were things like that, you see. And then we had to decide whether—if we put moldings on the walls, were they stuck with this arrangement forever? So we devised a way of screwing the moldings on. Oh, do you want to go to the bathroom?

[Audio break.]

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: —of rooms around the two great halls and the garden courts. Now, since then, of course, the outer rooms have all been done to take the collections of modern pictures and so on.

ROBERT BROWN: So the—in a way, in the beginning, the great—uh, the porphyry column, the rotunda—

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: Oh, that. That.

ROBERT BROWN: —[inaudible] much the dominant feature.

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: Oh, yes. That was there. The—

ROBERT BROWN: Since you didn't have so broad a group of—series of [inaudible.]

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: Well, there were just—off that rotunda there were just the two long halls with their arched ceilings, the two garden courts, and one depth of gallery rooms going around the whole thing. And that was it. And I remember going—we went—Elizabeth and I went down to the opening and it was very exciting, of course. And there were some things so hot off the griddle that they hadn't even got labels for them. There was one little Rosolino bust of a child, which had been being mended in New York and it came from Duveen's and it just had a little handmade label on it. So then—

ROBERT BROWN: You had, of course, to—with Mr. Mellon's collection, too, did you have to go look carefully at his collection?

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: Oh, they sent us all—

ROBERT BROWN: [Inaudible.]

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: —all about it. They sent us all the data on that. I mean, they sent us reduced little pictures so we put—

ROBERT BROWN: That you could fit into your models.

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: That's right.

ROBERT BROWN: Did that system work quite well?

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: It seemed to. Uh, it's not as fun. The people who were paying for it—you see, you could get down and squint into a room and really sort of imagine what it would be like to be in it. And this is a very convincing thing to do.

ROBERT BROWN: What was the lighting to be? Was it skylights or—

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: Skylights. And, and very well done. They have—Eggers and Higgins had a perfectly wonderful—uh, I don't know what you'd call him. He was their troubleshooter. And he was a—like an Army top sergeant. He was one of the toughest, most hardboiled men I'd ever seen. And he understood beautiful buildings, see. He knew how to get it done. And he tolerated no nonsense from anybody. And if the lighting wasn't right, if this, that, or the other wasn't right, why, he cursed and swore and pulled people apart until it was right. So—

ROBERT BROWN: Was he himself an architect?

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: I don't know.

ROBERT BROWN: [Inaudible.]

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: I don't know at all. But he just, he was the perfect person for this job, see.

ROBERT BROWN: Was there a—now, the models were convincing to the client.

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: Yeah.

ROBERT BROWN: Once they were full scale, was there a difference? Was there a change between [inaudible] and model?

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: Well, the difference of peeking into a room and being in the room. So that's the difference. But otherwise—no, they worked. It worked. But, of course, Eggers, um, had the most marvelous sense of scale. Eggers himself was a genius, I think, as was Mr. Pope. And so that—this building is a knockout because they both of them were great designers. There's only one place to me that the thing fails and I don't know that it fails all that much. And that is where the arches at the end of the halls as you look towards the central dome are interfered with by the line of the cornice going around in the hall. But that is—I was looking at a picture of it the other day because Eleanor Douglas had sent me that great Abrams book of all the pictures in the National Gallery. You know, it's a great, big, huge book and it didn't look so badly. And I think it's—I think that the idea of the courts so people don't get lost, you can always—if you see one of those courts you know if you go back there you'll be on axis again and you can get either to the men's room or out the front door to your car or whatever you want. So then the war came along.

ROBERT BROWN: The opening was just on the eve of the war, wasn't it?

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: Yes, it was. And so the war came along and I went into the Army as a private, which was a great mistake.

ROBERT BROWN: Did you volunteer? Were you drafted?

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: Well, I had a little trouble getting into the Army and so I went in as a private. And I remember in the Grand Central building where you went for your physical examination, I remember—and you walked around, you know, carrying a pair of socks or something or a pair of shoes with not a stitch on. Just in a line—and the line went round and round in a maze. And I remember coming head on to Lincoln Kerstein [ph], who was also carrying a pair of shoes. But in this time in New York, I may say, when we lived in New York we then had—we had a charming little penthouse at 65 East 96th. It had been a janitor's apartment but it had been nicely remade into a two-bedroom, one-bathroom, very small dining room, living room with a little fireplace, and a kitchen. And acres of terrace outside and the most lovely, lovely view in every direction. And so there we were and Tom went to Saint Bernard's school right around the corner, where Elizabeth's family had always been. In fact, Mr. Jenkins, who ran the school, had been a tutor for her cousin. But I had some friends there named Askew [ph], Kirk Askew and Constance, his wife. Uh, Kirk and Julian Levy I think at one time were partners. And it was all that—it was—I would say the New York Bloomsbury Set really. And the Askews [ph] lived in a very nice brownstone house in the East Sixties and they had Saturday evenings. Uh, and if they asked you for dinner once a season, and then you turned up at around 9:45 the rest of the time in a white tie and women in evening clothes and then you stayed until 1:00 or 2:00 in the morning and there you heard everybody roaring at everybody else. Henry-Russell Hitchcock loud and clear and booming away. And that incredible woman, Esther Strayche [ph]. When they both got together you could have heard them all the way down to the Grand Central Station. And it was a high-powered goings-on, you see. And it got in my blood. I know I was very, very keen on the whole business and this furthered my interest in painting. So I had gone to—at the end of the Eggers and Higgins thing I went to the Art Students League. I mustn't leave that out. So one winter, and studied.

ROBERT BROWN: Uh, painting or just drawing?

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: Painting. No, painting.

ROBERT BROWN: [Inaudible] drawing?

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: Painting and drawing.

ROBERT BROWN: Who did you study painting with?

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: Oh, with Brackman and Josh Billings [ph] and, uh—

ROBERT BROWN: Were they both good teachers?

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: Uh, Josh is so charming that you'd believe—you know, I mean, if he said this is the way to do it, you'd do it that way. Brachman, I think, is going to come back sometime as a—you know, he died not very long ago. But I think his stuff is going to come way back sometime because he was a terribly solid painter. And—

ROBERT BROWN: Was he a helpful teacher? Was he—

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: Yes, he was very nice. Nice little man.

ROBERT BROWN: But did you take to the—to painting right away?

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: Yes, I did. And I took to it. I'd had a lot of training in watercolor at the architectural school, you see. But I took to it and—so there I was doing that and then I went into the Army and then I went out to St. Louis where I was in basic training and I rented a little house in St. Louis and Elizabeth and Tom, who was then 10 years old, came out. And then I went down to Fort Worth and I painted some decorations in an officer's club there and there I saw some people who said, "You really ought to be in OCS," and I said, "I know I should. Can you get me in? I'm a little old for it." And so they said, "We can." This was a general. And I met a lot of people in Fort Worth. You know, you always met people. People passed you on. We met a lot of people in St. Louis. The Melloncratz [ph] were great friends of some old friends of Elizabeth's and so they sent her on to the Melloncratz and that was like opening the door of St. Louis. And then people there sent me on to people in Fort Worth and all that. So in any event, I got into OCS, by the skin of my teeth because at Jefferson Barracks they tried to block it. And so I had to sort of sneak out and send a telegram to the general saying, "They say they don't like influence here so I'm not apparently going to OCS." But this general was in a command over Jefferson Barrack's command. So I got there and I got through it and went—was put into photographic interpretation.

ROBERT BROWN: And was that reasonably interesting to you?

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: Very. Quite fascinating. I went to the school in Orlando. And you couldn't talk about it then. You, if you—they had little training planes with little cubbyholes that you sat in and there was a radar scope and you identified what was on the ground underneath you and all that. So that was quite interesting. Then I—you went around trying to find out what unit you were finally going to be with, which meant usually taking trains from one place to the other and finding out that that unit wasn't the one you were supposed to be with. And eventually I found the one I was supposed to be with and we started out to get to know each other and we went out to Oklahoma. It was called the Ninth Photographic Technical Unit. And we went to Oklahoma to toughen up and lived out in the country. Uh, at that time I made one of the most fortunate moves of my Army career because I decided that as everyone was playing baseball I would play baseball. And I didn't know beans about playing baseball. So I was, of course, made into an outfielder and so when—at a very important moment in the game someone hit a fly over to me and I reached up and caught it and held on to it. And that made me the president of the officers club because they said, "Now, you're never to play baseball again." These were a bunch of sandlot kids, you know, some of them. They were all much younger than I was. And they were from Brooklyn and here and there and they knew how to play baseball. They said, "No, you've done it. That's that." So then we got on a train and eased over to Seattle and then we got on a boat and went out to Guam where I was for about six or seven months.

ROBERT BROWN: And were you, uh—did you go up in airplanes then to [inaudible]?

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: No, no. You did—

ROBERT BROWN: You were training or you were—

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: No, no. You interpreted photographs taken either by our Army Air Force, or by the Navy. And what we were doing was taking pictures of Japan and trying to find out what was going on in Japan. And I remember I did a full-scale report on what kind and weight of ammunition it would take to blow up the revetments on a Japanese runway. And I had the pleasure, the first time I went to Japan, of walking out, getting out of the plane that I went in and standing face-to-face with one of those revetments, which we had not had to bomb. And finding out that it was exactly the way I thought it was. So there we were in Guam. While there, after

the war was over—it stopped, you see, when we did drop those two bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Uh, we had nothing to do. We were derelict. And so I started—I was the orientation officer, among other things, and I started a course in the history of architecture for anyone who wished to come, and got very large pieces of brown paper, and I said, "We're going to begin historically—we're going to end up by your thinking about your own houses," because I said, "You'll all want to have a house to live in when you come home." And so I got large pieces of brown paper and some pastels and I went ahead and drew pictures. A few people came. And then one day a fellow named Sergeant Gago [ph] walked in, a great, tall, Spanish-descended fellow from California and said, "Would I design him a house?" which I did. Then he said, "My wife is also very tall so the ceilings must be quite high." So I designed him a house and I said, "How are you ever going to build it? It will cost an awful lot." And he said, "Oh, we're all builders, my father and my brothers and everyone." So somewhere in California there is a house designed by me. I also spent a lot of time trying to teach an illiterate child who was a corporal on laundry duty to read and write. He came from Bethesda, Maryland. And he'd passed all the Army tests and so on but he still couldn't read and write. Well, I never succeeded in doing it. But I had him morning after morning for months and I abided by the rules laid out and had flashcards and so on. Boy—

ROBERT BROWN: Was this a pretty trying and boring time for you?

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: No. Uh, it was a waiting time. And then on New Year's Eve of 1945, '46, I seized the opportunity and got orders cut for me to join an engineering unit in the Philippines where there would be something for me to do. I'd already hooked a ride up to see Hiroshima, which I saw. Uh—

ROBERT BROWN: What was your reaction?

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: Well, I went up to Tokyo. This was in September. And so I went to some headquarters. I can't see how I had such good luck and said what, what was the chance of seeing—I was just a first lieutenant. No rank at all. Uh, Hiroshima they said, "There's a trip with a lot of brass on it going down tomorrow. You can join it." So I did. And, of course, it was horrifying. We stopped in Osaka and ate our lunch on the ground and then we flew over Hiroshima. Then I ran into a—we—you stayed then in a sort of a knocked up Japanese office building and I remember that it was quite cold and that I was so—and you slept on little canvas cots. And I was so cold at night that I decided to go down, see if I could find something to put over me. And I went down to the basement of this office building and found a piece of very dirty old green carpeting, which I shook out and carried upstairs and laid over myself, and I was a bit warmer. Then suddenly I was waked up the next morning by a man named Dick Chambers [ph], who was a painter, who I'd known. He had been with our unit and then had gone to a painting unit instead that Ogden Pleisner [ph] had organized. And he said to me, "You should come to the painting." Oh, he said to—he saw me in Tokyo and he said, "Did you ever get a message from Ogden Pleisner?" And I said, "No." And he said, "Well, then, it never caught up with you," because he said, "I told them you ought to be in that unit." And I said, "What are you doing here in Tokyo?" And he said, "I'm painting pictures of what the atomic bombing must have been like." So I said, "How can you possibly tell?" Well, he said, "There's a family named Porchikoff [ph] who are Russians. The father is a languages teacher and they lived in Hiroshima and they were just on the edge and they just weren't singed," and he said, "The Army is making recordings of everything they have to say about the bombing."

So we went up to the Russian church on a Sunday morning and we met these people and walked back into Tokyo with them. And I talked to Ms. Porchikoff, who spoke perfect English, and she told me all about what it had been like. And so then I went to the Philippines and there I joined a unit—we were trying to rebuild Fort McKinley. And then, I went to Tokyo again on permanent assignment and was in a little—on a little housing board in MacArthur's headquarters and there I had a jeep and a driver and I could go into any standing structure in Tokyo and interview anybody, of which I very busily did. And because it was in MacArthur's headquarters, we were asked to dinner parties given by the Japanese who had not been popped into jail and so it was all very interesting and like that. And then in June of that year, it finally was time for me to get out of the Army and so I got out. I went over to a little place you had to wait—it was the West Point of Japan—until your boat came. And there, interestingly enough, were two Japanese, a Japanese named Mary and a Japanese named Henry, who had both studied painting in Paris. And they were there to entertain our people by doing portraits of them and try to keep people from going nuts while they were waiting for the boat, you see. And they painted rather nicely. And they showed me some pictures. It was done by a boy who was, well, insane, I presume, or immensely, immensely retarded. And he did them in little dabs of confetti and they were quite marvelous things and so I wanted very much to have the Museum of Modern Art get one, you see, have one. And they said, "No, the Japanese government wouldn't allow these things to go out of Japan," and so that was that. But it was quite interesting. So then I got on a boat and came home and in the meantime I had bought a—we had bought a house on Spark Street in Cambridge because I didn't want to go abroad and have Elizabeth in a rented house. It was too uncertain. So we saw this very nice house, number 72 Spark Street, and bought it and it gave her something—a lot to do to get our things into it and to have a real house again. And I'd made some drawings so the contractor could make a few changes in it.

ROBERT BROWN: Had you decided to come to the Boston area to live?

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: Well, it seemed the best thing to do because Tom by that time was in the Shady Hills School.

ROBERT BROWN: Oh. You—even from New York, you'd moved up?

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: No. No, no. Uh, Elizabeth had asked Bessie Melloncratz [ph] what she thought she ought to do when I went overseas and she said, "I don't think I want to stay in St. Louis even though it's so nice and I don't really want to go back to New York by myself." And Bessie said, "Why don't you go to Cambridge and put Tom in the Shady Hills School?" I think she knew of it through what, I don't know, possibly because her husband's family had given some things to Harvard and so on. So Betty rented a house on Acacia Street and then I said to her before I went away, "I don't think we should leave you just in a rented house." And so we bought this house at a very modest price.

ROBERT BROWN: So you were then for the next few years based in Cambridge?

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: Cambridge. Uh, and it was a lovely house. Couldn't have been a—this was our big period, you see. Absolute knockout the house was. And Elizabeth had absolutely knockout furniture to put in it and so on. Uh, for instance, she has a picture of—one part of her family were the Murray's of Murray Hill in New York and the two pictures of the Murrays by Trumbull are in the Metropolitan. But she had the picture, the double picture of the Murray girls, also by Trumbull, but we didn't know it was by Trumbull until Cocky Coon [ph] said, "That picture looks to me as though it might have been painted by Trumbull. Do you mind if I tell Tubby Sizer [ph] about it?" And we said, "No, if you want to, go ahead." And Sizer appeared and said, "I hear you think you have a Trumbull." And Betty said to him, "I think nothing of the sort. I know I have a picture of my great, great aunts, the Murray girls." So he came in and looked at it. He said, "My God, the missing Trumbull." And they had the sketch for it. It belonged to a Mrs. English in New Haven. But they didn't know this picture existed. So we had all that sort of thing, you see.

ROBERT BROWN: And were you—when you came back, did you begin painting steadily?

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: Well, then I began painting in Castine. Old Mrs. Watson died and we bought her house for \$4000 as a summer house. And right on the water. Nice house. And I began painting and then I painted, and I was bewitched by Beacon Hill and I painted and I showed some pictures in some sort of a group show and got a very good newspaper notice on these and then Margaret Brown called me up and Charlie Childs called me up and said, "Would I show my pictures with them?" So I went to Agnes Mongon [ph], who we knew, and I said, "Which one would you choose?" And she said, "They're both—it's terribly hard to make a choice." She said, "I'll tell you that you might have a more exciting time at Margaret Brown's." So, uh—

ROBERT BROWN: What do you think she meant by that?

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: I don't know. Margaret—did you ever know Margaret?

ROBERT BROWN: No.

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: Well, she was an—she was an extraordinary person. So I went to Margaret Brown and I had a show there and every picture in it was sold.

ROBERT BROWN: What sort of pictures were those?

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: Well, they were the one that the Museum of Fine Arts has of Beacon Hill. They were all, almost all pictures of Boston. Uh, and they were—well, they were in this style, of that little—I just finished that little picture up there.

ROBERT BROWN: Well, these—they were paintings then of buildings, of cityscapes?

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: Oh, cities. They were cityscapes. They were Boston. And so we were quite busy and Margaret went ahead and sold pictures and it seemed to be working, you see. It seemed to work out. And then, *Collier's*—oh, then a lot of them were published in the *Christian Science Monitor* and so then *Collier's* magazine wanted me to do a lot of covers for them. And so I needed the money. And so I said, "All right, we'll do them." This was in 1950. And by that time Tom was going to the Hotchkiss School and things were beginning to be a bit expensive and I couldn't turn that down. But it didn't work. I did them, I think, eight or nine. But they always wanted to change everything. And things weren't bright enough and things weren't this or that and possibly I wasn't a good enough painter. I don't know. But I think about seven of them were published. Two of them now hang on the grand stairway of the Kuhn's [ph] home. But I did, uh—let's see. I did New York and I did Cleveland and I did San Francisco and I did Philadelphia and I did St. Louis and I don't know what else. Speaking of the St. Louis one, it was presented to the mayor of St. Louis and then the last time the Melloncratz were in Boston we had dinner with them and Ted Melloncratz said, "You know, I wanted to use that picture of yours for

the Yale Club." Uh, and so I borrowed it from the mayor and he said, "I got a local painter to paint out all the American flags in it and make them Yale flags." [Laughs.]

ROBERT BROWN: Oh, that's great. Did that bother you to hear that?

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: Well, I was so amused by it because it was such a positive gesture on his part, you see.

ROBERT BROWN: [Laughs.]

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: So then that was the way it went along and—

ROBERT BROWN: Well, you were getting—would you travel to these cities?

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: Yes, we did. Elizabeth and I, we got a new car.

ROBERT BROWN: And you would work these, uh, cityscapes up from sketches in many cases.

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: Sure. Well, I did.

ROBERT BROWN: Very careful study.

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: Yeah. I went out and drew the things. I mean, here—this is the sort of thing I did. This is a typical sketch by me.

ROBERT BROWN: [Inaudible.] They're very detailed sketches. They're not—

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: Well, they are. I mean, how else are you going to do it?

ROBERT BROWN: Sure.

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: I mean, this is—I start out with a field drawing like that, you see. With everything in and everything labeled. I just go sit and draw. And then I take that and I decide how to make a picture out of it. And so something like that comes out.

ROBERT BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Which—with the marked shading and highlighting freely.

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: That's right, yeah. Well, it composes.

ROBERT BROWN: And then you're ready to work—

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: And then I paint—then I did a gouache of this, which someone bought. But then I decided, as I've had a terrible inertia about painting lately because I've got—my wife is so ill and I've got so many things to do, I decided that I would—oh, when the Douglass's [ph] asked me to paint a little picture for them and I found out how simple it is to paint a little picture, you know. There it is, right. Cozy little object that you can pick up and put down and all that. So I decided that I would do a part of that picture and that's it. Then I've—another view which is from Rocky Neck, which involves the same buildings in a completely different arrangement, and I'm going to do that as a companion to this little picture.

ROBERT BROWN: And for a good while, your paintings of cities were fairly large, weren't they?

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: Yes, they were. And then I had—for a few years I suddenly embarked on what you might call a most mistaken modern phase. I decided to paint the things in—well, what—I don't know what to call them. Abstractions? This, that, or the other. And I think I spent about five years doing that and one of them ended up in the Chase Manhattan Bank in New York. Mrs. Regalhaut [ph] took me on for a while. But we didn't—

ROBERT BROWN: That was a dealer in Boston?

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: Yeah. We didn't have—is it Regalhaut? Yes, I guess that was it. We didn't have all that much of a success but then our son decided—our son was set to be the head of the first National Bank of Boston in London and we decided to go over and spend our winters there because he's our only child and his children are our only grandchildren. And so it was perfectly impossible to paint these huge, big pictures over there. And this broke me off from it and I returned then to—I began doing small views of London and so on. And—well, for instance, right there it's a small view of Taormina. And this was when the volcano erupted in 1971.

ROBERT BROWN: Mount Etna?

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: Yeah.

ROBERT BROWN: [Inaudible.]

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: Yeah, yeah. Uh—

ROBERT BROWN: What do you think it is about cities that you like to paint? What is it that—you think it goes back—to pure architectural?

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: Architectural, architectural.

ROBERT BROWN: The variety of buildings?

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: Well, I've always loved Canaletto's paintings, you see. And then it was something that I could do. I mean, it was something I knew how to do. That's where the architecture came in. And cities, after all, have fascinated people for thousands of years. I mean—the countryside has too, but cities are equally fascinating. And if you see what Canaletto did with London, for instance. Do you know his London pictures? Well, they're an absolutely marvelous thing. And there, there is London. Uh, that's—and then I did—have done quite a few portraits of houses, you see.

ROBERT BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. You became fairly well known then by the '50s, didn't you?

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: Yeah.

ROBERT BROWN: You were being shown at Carnegie?

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: Oh, yes.

ROBERT BROWN: The International, the Metropolitan?

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: Yes, yes, yes. Well, this was Margaret, you see. Margaret was very good about all that. She was a good dealer and it was Margaret who stimulated all that.

ROBERT BROWN: Did you get quite of, shall we say, feedback from other artists, from patrons and—

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: Well, I think so. I mean, for instance, old Mr. Clarence Dillon [ph] saw something that was published in a newspaper and wanted me to paint a picture of his house in New Jersey, which I did. And we—when we were in Paris—you see, Billy—Billy's first cousin, Cully Miller [ph] married Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney's daughter, Flora Miller, so that her first cousin's daughter, Flora Irving, is now the head of the Whitney Museum in New York and a charming creature she is, too. But we were staying with Cully and Flora Miller in Paris after our child's wedding in Sweden. And there were two people there. When we went to see Herbert Haseltine's studio, which was right down the street, there were two people there. And three years later I got a telegram from Hope Sound [ph] saying "Would I come to Memphis and paint a picture for these people?" And they had seen a picture of mine in some show somewhere, you see, and so I did go to Memphis and paint a picture of their house there for them.

ROBERT BROWN: Who was this?

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: Uh, Hugo and Maggie Dixon [ph]. Uh, he was a cotton broker, part of McFadden Brothers. There were no children. He's English, she southern, an American from the South. Memphis. And a most exquisite house. And I walked into their library and there was a Renoir and there was a Pissarro and there were a couple of Sir Joshuas in the hall and so on. And I found out that their great interest was buying pictures from Wildenstein in New York and setting up the Memphis Art Museum with the proper backlog of possibly not the very grandest Old Masters but representative pictures. That and the hospital in Memphis were the Dixons two great things. And I think they did a bang-up job on both of them.

ROBERT BROWN: When you do a—paint a house, is it a portrait? A likeness?

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: Yes, it is. And it's terribly hard to do. You know, Felix Kelly does that sort of thing beautifully. I don't know if you know his work but he does it superbly. And it's hard to do just as painting a portrait of a person, I suppose is hard to do, because you might get the—leave a vest button open when the person always buttons it, according to his mother or his wife.

ROBERT BROWN: What would be comparable in a house portrait?

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: Oh, I don't know. We never have the shades up in that room or we never have them down in that room or something like that. But then, you know, I did a picture of the British embassy. This was the, sort of, culmination of painting pictures of houses. We met Sir Peter Ramsbotham, who was the then-ambassador at Dillon Ripley's [ph] mother-in-law, Eleanor Livingston's [ph], who lived near us in Connecticut.

And I had painted a big picture of Eleanor's house. So I've got a little teeny picture of it. I'll show you a little sketch I made. But—and she had it hanging in the dining room. It was quite a big picture, like that. And so Sir Peter saw this and he said, "Why don't you come down and paint a picture of the embassy." And so I did. And that was very exciting because by this time I had no dealer. I was with Kennedy for a while in New York and then I was with Milch [ph]. Did you see, by the way, that Harold Milch died the other day? It was in the paper. And so I went down in April and made drawings of the embassy.

ROBERT BROWN: This was in the '70s, wasn't it?

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: No, this was in '75. Yes, it was in the '70s. And then I painted the picture at home and then I sent it down to them. Then they gave a great garden party. Dillon found a very snappy old-fashioned easel in the Smithsonian and lent it to them for the occasion and they had the picture propped up where everybody—all 2000 people who came in could see it.

ROBERT BROWN: [Laughs.]

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: But, you know, there wasn't one rebound from that. And this thing had to be cleared through Queen Elizabeth's clerk of the works or whatever before I could be allowed to do it. And she legally owns this picture. But I can't, of course, stay in the collection of Queen Elizabeth the Second. But it still hangs in the embassy, although Peter Ramsbotham was then governor of Bermuda. And we just had a Christmas card from them this year and they've—he's retired now and they're living happily in England.

ROBERT BROWN: Do you think—expect you will continue painting these, at least these rather smaller scale?

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: I want to get a—I want to get about, oh, four or six of them and then I'm going to take them into the Voses [ph] and say, "What do you think?" Because I like them very much. They're awfully nice. And they know me a little bit and I should think they might show them if I had—but you can't show just one or two pictures. You've got to show at least six.

ROBERT BROWN: You have to be able to make a bit of a showing, don't you [inaudible]?

THOMAS ADRIAN FRANSIOLI: Yeah. Well, and besides, now—not having had a dealer for a long time, not many people know about me, you see. I'm absolutely the older generation in my 75th year, so that they'd say, "Well, who's that?" I was surprised when people bought these pictures of Gloucester but they were two people who live in Gloucester and the way it was pointed to me by that nice man who died who was the head of the Peabody Institute in Salem, Ennis Dodge [ph].

[END OF INTERVIEW.]