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Oral history interview with John Coolidge, 1989 March 7-29

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.

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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with John Coolidge on March 7-29, 1989. The interview took place in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and was conducted by Robert F. Brown for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

The Archives of American Art has reviewed the transcript and has made corrections and emendations. 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

ROBERT F. BROWN: This is an interview with Professor John Coolidge, in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and this is March 7, 1989. I thought we'd perhaps begin at the beginning, and ask you early recollections.

JOHN COOLIDGE: I was born in Cambridge, Mass—well, let's put it—on December 16, 1913, in Cambridge, Mass, where my father was a professor of mathematics at Harvard. I went to local schools, Buckingham and Shady Hill, and then—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Those were—

JOHN COOLIDGE: Cambridge schools.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You went with a lot of people you already knew? It was a sort of—

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —very local thing to do?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Local, private schools, the thing that—to do. Yes, very much so. Many children of other professors, for example. Then, in 1926, '27, or thereabout, my father had a year sabbatical, and took all of his children who were not in college to Europe, where he was a visiting professor, for the first semester, in Rome, and lectured in Italian on mathematics at the University of Rome, and the second semester, went to the Sorbonne and lectured on mathematics in French, at the Sorbonne. He sent my sisters to local lycées, but did not think this appropriate for me. [00:02:11] So I had a year as a boarder in a secondary school south of London, in East Grinstead. This was a fascinating experience in many ways. There was so much unemployment in England, even then, that the small school—and I think there were only something like half a dozen masters—was able to attract men of exceptional ability. I can remember a retired major from the Indian Army who taught arithmetic, a rising young composer who taught music, and I came in contact with a level of instruction that was infinitely superior to anything I had known in what was supposedly rather good private schools in Cambridge. I was among the oldest boys in the school. The school did not have an American system of classes. They had classes which were based entirely on one's knowledge of the subject, so that, knowing no Latin, I was put in a fairly elementary course. [00:04:14] Shockingly ignorant of Latin by their standards. On the other hand, I knew more mathematics than any other student in the school, and this proved stimulating, because since the teacher who taught the most advanced class would often have a student studying mathematics for at least two years in succession, and he therefore had to change his class every year, though it was nominally [ph] teaching advanced mathematics. The other thing that was quaint was that they certainly had never had another American in the school, and they had had very little personal contact with Americans. Their image of Americans was that they were either red Indians or millionaires. Clearly, I fell into neither category. [Laughs.] This was a subject of constant inquiry from them. But it was a very informing [ph] and very welcome situation. [00:06:01]

ROBERT F. BROWN: That was just for one year, though?

JOHN COOLIDGE: That was just for one year.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did you join your parents? Did you travel a bit with them at all?

Vacations?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Christmas vacation was lengthy, and at the age of 12, the headmaster put me on a train in London. I had to make my way from there on to the ferry, and off the ferry and take myself through French customs, and get on the right train in Cherbourg, as I remember, which took me to Rome, speaking only a primitive amount of French, that one had learned in junior high, at most, in America. I remember when my daughter was 12. I wouldn't have thought of giving her an assignment like this, but my parents took it completely in their stride, and nothing, nothing happened that was difficult. What would have happened if I had missed the train, or got on the wrong train and ended up in Brussels, I can't imagine.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Your parents expected their children to be fairly self-reliant?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Indeed. Yes, entirely.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Were they quite demanding of you as parents?

JOHN COOLIDGE: I've only had that experience [laughs] so I can't speak.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Back in Cambridge, I mean, were they quite—[00:08:01]

JOHN COOLIDGE: I think fairly, yes. The shock was going to Groton.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Which you did on your—

JOHN COOLIDGE: Which I did on my return. Whereas I had had a marvelous time in England—it seemed like almost a kind of vacation—Groton was just work, just ordinary, dreary schoolwork. It emerged that it was very much the wrong school for me to have gone to. I had a thoroughly miserable time in Groton, and have all kinds of criticisms of the school. I think I would have—after the exceptional year in England, I would have disliked any American school, but there were things about Groton that were extremely unsatisfactory.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did you have the same intensive relation with your teachers as you had in England?

JOHN COOLIDGE: No. This was perfectly standard American boarding school stuff. In retrospect, two things struck me. It was supposedly the richest educational institution in the world, in terms of the amount of income received from endowment and fund drives and tuition, per student. [00:10:08] So that, in that sense, they were the richest educational institution, supposedly, and while it may not have been true, literally, it must have been very close to literally true. The faculty salaries were miserable, and when I left and thought back about it, and talked to close friends, as a freshman year, there was only one master of—at Groton who seemed to me worthy of the opportunities of that job. The rector was more interested in his faculty being Christian gentlemen than having any intellectual initiative. Indeed, the intellectual initiative on the part of the faculty was quietly, and largely unconsciously, discouraged.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Hmm. With all that money, were there elements of hedonism there at all? I mean, in the way you—

JOHN COOLIDGE: No. The property was terribly—this was in the late '20s, but the property was beautifully maintained. While it wasn't particularly up-to-date, after I left, they remodeled and added two buildings. Nonetheless, they had always built expensive and first-rate buildings. [00:12:03] They'd gotten a little out-of-date. The rector retired—I think he was 80 when he retired, but I may be wrong. Certainly he was in his 70s when I was studying there. That wasn't the kind of thing that he was spending money on. It was a marvelous escape to come to Harvard and make a whole batch of new friends. I retained no friends—only one friend from Groton. Curiously, a boy that I had first met in second grade, at a Cambridge private school, and has continued a close friend all my life. But otherwise, I met a new group of students, who were, at least in one respect—the only thing that—well, I did, know Latin, because Groton pounded that into you. I also knew math, uh, and did not pursue it in college, because my father was teaching math in college. It seemed to me a mistake to take courses with a colleague of his. So though I got highest honors on the college board in mathematics, that was the end of my mathematics. Uh, in the humanities and social sciences, I had been woefully, uh—my education had been woefully old-fashioned.

[00:14:13] The excitement freshman year was to become aware of the 20th century, an awareness that I acquired from friends who had studied. I can remember two friends, one from Choate and one from Avon Old Farms, who were thoroughly familiar with 20th-century poetry, and with 20th-century art, and all these things I learned in an extraordinarily exciting freshman year. As a result of this, I had the extreme good fortune, as a sophomore, to take a course, small course, perhaps 20 students, in contemporary literature, which was taught by T.S. Eliot, who, my sophomore year, was at Harvard as a Norton Professor. The—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Was he quite a fine teacher?

JOHN COOLIDGE: No. Uh, he—first place, the Norton Professorship was given, I don't know when, but I think in the '90s, by George Baker, who—enormously rich man, and endowed a professorship with the provision that the professor should be paid as high a salary as any professor in the university. [00:16:16] The result of that ultimately came to be that, instead of being an annual professorship, it now takes place every two or three years, to fall within the terms of the endowment. It was still an annual professorship when I got it, and I imagine that T.S. Eliot, as a poet and an editor at Faber, was happy to return to this country—he returned frequently, but for a year here, to see what it was really like, at what most have been, for him, a quite handsome salary. Much of the work was done by a senior graduate student in English, who'd give the lectures, and of course would grade the papers. Eliot was interesting for his critical judgment. One—in order to get into the course, I—every—all of us had to have an interview with him, and I remember that he asked me what poetry I had read, and I mentioned Gilbert Murray. I'd read a translation of a Greek play by Gilbert Murray, into poetry. He sniffed and said, “Swinburne [ph] [inaudible] of water.” [00:18:00] That kind of comment would come up. The most striking—and this was 1931—was perhaps in his—I think it was perhaps his last lecture. He talked about younger poets, and this was the first time that I heard Auden and Spender's name mentioned, in 1931. By 1931, they had published very little indeed. A second outcome of this combination of a very traditional, not to say old-fashioned, education at Harvard—at Groton—and then the excitement of discovering the 20th century when I came to Harvard was an interest in contemporary art, with the result that my—late in my junior year, I was asked by two graduating seniors, Perry Rathbone and Otto Wittmann, to succeed them as the directors of the Harvard Institute of Contemporary Art. I did take this over, and I believe we put on one exhibition. The organization was financed by gifts, annual gifts, from people who were interested, so we sent out, on the—perhaps this can be checked, but we'll say October of the year, our annual appeal. [00:20:08] I remember, if I am not mistaken, the appeal was mailed on Friday, and the next morning, Roosevelt closed the banks. The result was that the New England Society for Contemporary Art went out of existence there, and then [laughs] we got practically no—well, getting these appeals on Monday, when the banks were closed, you didn't get many checks in return.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Had you been involved with them before you were made—

JOHN COOLIDGE: No, only as, only as, only as a person who went to their shows.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And were those shows increasingly interesting to you?

JOHN COOLIDGE: They were interesting to me. I can remember a show on Sacco and Vanzetti by—oh, Lord.

ROBERT F. BROWN: It wouldn't be Shahn, would it?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yes, by Ben Shahn. That had later repercussions, but that's the only show that I can remember, and of course the great period of that society had passed before I got to Cambridge, but of this, a little more later. My studies in Harvard were practically entirely architectural history. I had no contact, that I can remember, with the School of Design, or, as it was then called, the Architectural School. [00:22:00] It was perfect—I had escaped one problem that devils many undergraduates. I had known since the age of nine I was going to be an architect, so it was the question of what I was going to do when I was a graduate grade [ph]. It was perfectly simple. I was going to architectural school. In fact, for a person with my interests, there was only one architectural school to go to, and that was Columbia, because Columbia had a new, young dean, Joseph Hudnut, who had decided to make the architectural school the first 20th-century, or the first international-style, architectural school in America, and whose ambition was to make it a worthy counterpart in its field to what the Museum of Modern Art was achieving in its field. There was a wonderful, marvelous librarian

at the Architectural School. It was the architectural librarian, a middle-aged woman, who was known throughout the profession for her friendliness. I told her, in the spring of my senior year, that I was going to the Columbia Architectural School, and why. I remember she looked a little surprised, and she said, “You know, I don't think you should make too hasty a decision.” [00:24:06] It was, however, May of that year before I learned that Joseph Hudnut was leaving Columbia, and was to be the next dean [laughs] of the Harvard Architectural School.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But you were on route to Columbia, as it were? You were already—

JOHN COOLIDGE: But I had spent all of my 21 years in Cambridge, and actually had, as an undergraduate, thought of transferring to the University of Chicago then, at the heyday of its Great Books program, and had been talked out of that by a marvelous Harvard professor, James Munn, who said, “Wait a year or two. You'll lose time by this transfer. Leave when you graduate.” So this, I was doing. I got married just before graduation. My wife had lived all her life in Brookline, and to New York we very happily went. The Columbia Architectural School was in a very difficult situation. They had a makeshift dean, who did a very good job. He was acting dean, and then became the dean, but the loss of Hudnut had left them really not knowing where they—how they were going to pursue the path that he had laid out, and yet, at the same time, not wishing to go back to a traditional Beaux-Arts type of education. [00:26:03] It was a year that, I suspect, was rather a blank [ph] from the university's point of view. However, as a beginner, one didn't notice this. I had excellent teaching in design. But I can remember, at the opening lecture in a course on drawing, the teacher stated to us, very blankly, “You realize that only one out of three of you is going to end up as an architect.” And I looked around [laughs] little did I know that I was going to be one of the three that didn't return, because the first thing I discovered when studying there was that I was no architect. My brother-in-law, Walter Whitehill, who knew everything, when he heard that I wasn't going to be an architect and had decided that I was an architectural historian, urged me to look into the possibility of going to the Institute of Fine Arts and New York University. In 1936, in the spring of '36, when I went down to see the institute, it was a—it occupied a small ground-floor apartment. I think it must have been a one-bedroom apartment, that one small bedroom being used by Walter Cook as his office. [00:28:14] The living room had a long table-height bench all along one wall. There were perhaps five—perhaps six—there were half a dozen upright chairs against this bench. The upright chair and the section of bench in front of him was the professor's office, the only office that an extraordinary group of German refugee scholars had. Walter Cook and a secretary occupied the bedroom, and the collection of slides literally was kept in the bathtub, and on a few shelves around the wall.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did this daunt you when you—

JOHN COOLIDGE: This didn't daunt me in the least. It was perfectly, obviously a—it brought back shades of the school in England, and it was small, and it was intimate, and it was enthusiastic, and indeed, that school and NYU were by far the two best academic institutions, or most effective, or most inspiring, academic institutions I knew.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You've mentioned, in a recent letter, that the teaching at Harvard, you felt, was sort of textbook-like. [00:30:06] You didn't get a breadth of what these men—your professors at Harvard's real personal research interests were, in contrast to NYU.

JOHN COOLIDGE: That's right. It's perhaps a good moment to compare the NYU with what I had known at Harvard. Harvard was, with Princeton, the outstanding—or had been, with Princeton—the outstanding American department of the history of art. The two were different in bent, but virtually identical in method. They were close, humanly, and they founded—they had a magazine that they created between them, *Art Studies*, and they were —played a major role in the founding of the College Art Association. *Art Studies* eventually became *The Art Bulletin*. I think they both ran—they founded *The Art Bulletin*, and then *Art Studies* was dropped. The Harvard Art Department consisted of a group of four or five senior professors, who had been appointed by President Eliot as very young men, after the retirement in, I believe, 1899, of Charles Eliot Norton. [00:32:22] He'd given this—he had replaced Charles Eliot Norton with two or three young men, of which the senior was George Chase, who was a rising young classical archeologist. By the time I got there, 30 years later, he was a very senior professor, still teaching classical archeology, but perhaps my sophomore year, he became dean of the faculty. Only slightly younger than he was Chandler Post and Arthur Pope. Post, like his colleagues in Princeton, had an encyclopedic knowledge of the history of art. He had not forgotten anything that he had ever read, professionally,

and he regarded it as his responsibility to have a high-level textbook knowledge of the entire history of art. His personal specialty was Spanish painting, in which he was a leading authority. [00:34:06] He was writing the, I believe, first history of Spanish painting that was entirely comprehensive. It was in—God knows what—its seventh volume already. I think often a volume would be in two sections each, a solid book, so that it was probably more than seven volumes that he had—it was seven books, perhaps, but more like ten volumes which he had already published. The undergraduate education had some pretense of breadth of knowledge. Not much. Witness the fact that I had learned almost entirely architectural history. The graduate school was encyclopedic, and the oral exam for the PhD, you were expected to know everything about everything. The one examination question which I remember hearing about was a characteristic one from John Lapost [ph], who said, "Will you name the popes from Martin V to the present day?" When the student had done that, he said, "Now tell us who painted"—or who made—"their portraits." [00:36:04] In classes that I took, though undergraduate, he would sometimes stop and say, "What would you say if I asked you this question on a general examination?" This question perhaps being the iconographic meaning of a scene from the life of a saint. When one didn't know that, it was a sort of indication, if you stuck around, that was the kind of thing that you would have to know. The other side of the department of fine arts stemmed from the informal, but exacting, teaching of—no, wait. Well, the name is going to come to me in a moment. I'm not going to worry about it. A remarkable collector and painter, who had developed a theory of the history of Western painting, based on the palette that artists used, and had an astonishing knowledge of the history of the craft of painting. His most gifted pupil was Arthur Pope. Arthur Pope, a contemporary of John Lapost, then taught courses in the practice of art, but based on a study of techniques. [00:38:18] I can remember one of the exercises. It was a course with, so to say, studio hours that were the counterpart, expressed counterpart, of laboratory work, of laboratory work in the sciences. In these things, I can remember making, laboriously, a copy of a reproduction of a drawing by Rembrandt. I think the drawing might well be hung on the wall. You had a photograph, and you could copy it on the basis of the photograph, and then compare it with the original. One also learned to produce triangles which represented all possible variations, in terms of lightness and darkness, or in terms of dullness or brightness, of all the principal—what's it called?—the prime colors, and the intermediate colors. You learned how a color solid worked. This was the kind of thing that was—there were two compulsory courses, one a general history of art, the first half through Constantine, taught by Chase; the second half taught by Harold Edgell. You had to take the 1C and 1D, which was the historical survey, and 1A and 1B, which was a survey of the technique of art. [00:40:07]

ROBERT F. BROWN: Would you say that—was Pope's course quite effective, in your course?

JOHN COOLIDGE: It took me two years to get a D in that course. It was very effective. It taught me the kind of thing I—[laughs] I've never wanted to be a painter. Well, I've tried my hand. I had—afterwards, but I soon learned that—I think I went abroad my summer, my freshman year, and tried making sketches, and watercolor sketches, of buildings. No. [They laugh.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: You don't fault his teaching? It was just—

JOHN COOLIDGE: No. It was just not for me. He was very close to the most boring lecturer I've ever heard, and in that case, very—a rival of a marvelous man, the dominant figure of the Princeton art department, Charles R. Morey. They were in the same league, boring in lectures, but Morey's [laughs] intellect interested me, whereas Post's didn't. Those were the two main directions of the Harvard art department. In addition, you had the figure of Harold Edgell, who was a brilliant and ambitious man. He got Harvard's—he was granted the first PhD that Harvard gave in the history of art. His field was Italian—Sienese painting of 14th and 15th centuries. [00:42:04] Then, by the time I was there, he had become dean of the Architectural School. With Fiske Kimball, he wrote a one-volume history of architecture. He was a—his course in—his section in the history of art was—well, he would discuss, perhaps, six buildings in a lecture, or six major architects, and you saw one building in five minutes, and one artist in five minutes. Even though one was—as a freshman, I became dimly aware of the meaning of the word—of the concept superficiality, a word that I had never heard until that moment.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You mean it was just a procession, unending?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Oh, yes. Very—I can't remember the beau meaux [ph] that he produced,

but he was famous for his beau meaux. He wrote a book called *American Architecture of Today* that was largely the work of that marvelous librarian that I mentioned, but the breeziness of it was his own contribution. He was a trustee of the Museum of Fine Arts. Harvard had three—at that point, elected three trustees, appointed three trustees. [00:44:04] He was one of the three, and objected strongly to the presence of the curator of painting, who had been daring enough to buy a Matisse some 20 years after Mrs. Gardner had put on exhibition the first Matisse that was ever shown in an American museum. He left my senior year to become director of the Boston Museum, and of course proceeded to fire the curator in question, who eventually ended up as director of the National Gallery in London. The faculty, the senior faculty, were busy leaders of the profession, and students had almost no contact with them. Sorry, interjection. The exceptional figure among the seniors was—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Wait. I have—

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ROBERT F. BROWN: —in your figure was—

JOHN COOLIDGE: —was Kingsley Porter. Kingsley Porter was a—was blessed with a private income. He taught only half the year. Was a Medievalist, and was a man of enormous originality in his field, in a way that none—no Harvard professor in the history of art had been. He probably transformed the history of Romanesque sculpture by introducing the concept that, because of pilgrimages, artists moved from place to place along pilgrimage routes. I was fortunate enough to take a course with him, the same year I took my T.S. Eliot course. Fortunate because, that June, before he had marked our papers, he simply disappeared. The professors, as a group, were busy leaders of their profession, and undergraduates had almost no contact with them. They would answer a question or speak to you politely after class, but they were wholly removed. One knew the junior faculty, a junior faculty which—and this is, of course, not for publicat—I don't know. [00:02:07] We'll have to talk about publication. Which, because of jealousies between the senior faculty, were never —or were rarely—the most brilliant in their generation. They were the acceptable young men. This is—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Who wouldn't threaten the elders?

JOHN COOLIDGE: That's right. Here's something that I don't know where it goes on, but I'm putting it in now. I think it goes in about my freshman year. The late '20s—yes, that's right. It goes in just after I had talked about what I had learned my freshman year. The late '20s were an extraordinary period at Harvard, because there was a remarkable group of young people, undergraduates and graduate students here, including Alfred Barr, Russell Hitchcock, Philip Johnson, John McAndrew—I can build out this list later—and the artist Sandy Calder, who really brought 20th-century art. First, as undergraduates, they had their own magazine, the *Hound & Horn*, to—Lincoln Kirstein is another member of this group—to this country, and who indeed, in the course of their lives, established the American view of 20th-century art. [00:04:12] They had left by the time I was here, and what remained was the New England Society for Contemporary Art, which they founded. All right, now back to where I was. One would point out that though, of this group of brilliant young men, Henry-Russell Hitchcock had a most junior teaching appointment at Harvard, he was not—he flunked his PhD exam and was not kept on. Alfred Barr started his work for a PhD, but didn't finish it until he was in his middle 50s, leaving to go and teach at Wellesley, and then moving on to found the Museum of Modern Art. In other words, even the brilliant people who were ready at hand were not retained at Harvard. You had more conventional types who became the professors, the junior faculty, here. It is perhaps indicative of the general atmosphere that then, as now, all Harvard seniors have to write a thesis in their field. [00:06:05] They choose the subject and write it. I wanted—the subject has to be approved. The subject I chose for my senior thesis was the evolution of the design of the automobile, which the faculty did not approve, and I ended up writing on Gothic churches in New England and New York.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Was that a disappointment?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Oh, sure.

ROBERT F. BROWN: It was the second choice?

JOHN COOLIDGE: The second choice, yeah. Okay, back to NYU, which would be based on the

—obviously, the modern art thing all goes together at the beginning, then this talk of the senior Harvard professors. The NYU professors were youngish, in their 40s, 40 to 55, by and large. Young men who had made reputations for themselves, but really, with the exception of Panofsky, got their first major positions when they came to this country. They were people of natural breadth. They had traveled—they had, in European fashion, studied at a number of European universities in the continental European—in the German fashion, I think it is, really—had studied in a number of universities. [00:08:11] They were widely traveled, and they came to this country with enormous curiosity. Those who moved directly to NYU, which had always been good, though little-recognized, tiny, swiftly became a major place, so that their professorships had great prestige. Nonetheless, they eagerly moved outside this range of thing. I can remember Karl Lehmann, who was the classical archeologist at NYU, deliberately taught a—one year, deliberately taught a night school class on ancient art, simply because he wanted to know what kind of people came to night school classes in New York. This he learned very quickly, when, after one evening lecture, a young, middle-aged couple came up and said that they would be interested in archeology, and he allowed this—the only way for people like them was to go and get involved with a dig. [00:10:09] The upshot was, if not that year, then no later than the next, that they financed the first dig at Samothrace. They went there, and they were the initial angels for that project.

ROBERT F. BROWN: So night school paid? [Laughs.]

JOHN COOLIDGE: Night school paid. The other side of the thing was that, since they were immigrants, they had no—virtually no responsibilities to the American profession. They were too recent for them to be asked to edit any of the professional journals, or to take a prominent part in the meetings of professional groups. They had, quite simply, much more time, and they were delighted to meet the students, socially, simply to get a different perspective on American life. One of the most successful dinner parties that we ever had was when we invited Russell Hitchcock, who had—who helped me enormously with my—who, though he was teaching at Wesleyan, helped me enormously with my senior thesis, and had become a personal friend. We introduced Russell Hitchcock to Karl Lehmann. [00:12:04] He was literally one of the first—he was certainly the first young American architectural historian that they had met, and he represented a different kind of American from the kind of people that they had known here, who tended to be the more conventional younger Americans.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And Russell Hitchcock was not, at that time?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Oh, no. He never was, but he was particularly unconventional as a young man. [They laugh.] Well, so that one got to know these people really quite well. Now, because of their encyclopedic sense of responsibility, one never had any awareness of the research projects in which the Harvard faculty were engaged. The Harvard faculty thought in terms of general books, so that their research was a long process. It had gone on for years, and they would then produce their 10th volume on Spanish painting. The New York scholars were interested in scholarly articles, in individual discovery. [00:14:02] If they wrote textbooks, and many of them never did—Panofsky, for instance—they wrote them late in life. What they were doing, at that point, was reorienting the profession through a series of small-scale discoveries. You became aware that scholarly research could be just a little idea that you had, and which was worked up to publication. The graduate students at NYU were so conscious of this that the second or third year I was there, they founded their own magazine, and of course were, at the same time, publishing things in the American scholarly journals. The whole concept of intellectual life was different, and was infinitely more exciting, at NYU. Somewhere, there was an article by Panofsky on this difference. He said that American art history—that American art historians were—the traditional American art historians had viewed their field as a continent, in which they were expected to know the whole continent, and in a general way, European art historians viewed their field as a kind of archipelago, in which you knew, intimately, every bay and rock, and a vague idea of how it cooked on to the rest of the country, but no responsibility for the thing at large. [00:16:26]

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did you get warnings about going to NYU from people here?

JOHN COOLIDGE: No.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Nothing like that?

JOHN COOLIDGE: By 1936, it hadn't emerged enough. It took a person like Walter White,

who was very international for his age, to be aware of this. I think they did know them as individuals. They had no feel for it as an institution. Now, when I went there, NYU was an exciting place from the student's point of view, and still is, because you were dealing with students of all ages, often very expert. A dealer would take a course there. A dealer who decided that, you know, he might want to move into another field, and a way of learning it would be to come there and just bone up on Italian paintings or whatever. You got the traditional woman whose children are grown and doesn't know how to spend her time, and goes back to it. [00:18:00] NYU were desperate to finance itself, and refused as few as possible of these people. The result was that, as a student, you were taking courses with people of great human experience, and who weren't bemused by the professors. They might find them brilliant as art historians, but were not overwhelmed by them as people, whereas here, since your whole future depended on this, you really had to adore them. This range of interest in human interest there—but you had—I can't remember the numbers, but it may have been a hundred such people. There were only six to a dozen what were called, quote, serious students, unquote, and these were the people who the faculty cared about. And time—that grew in the years I was there. You asked if there were worries. A question that I asked was, of Walter Cook, "How long will it take me to get a PhD?" He said, "About five years." Well, I was wise enough to know that that was unlikely minimum. The Harvard minimum was two years, but nobody got it—I think very rarely. [00:20:04] I think only Ben Rowland got one in two years, something like that, but Harvard was four to five. Actually, it took me nine, over a period of 13 years, which included the war.

ROBERT F. BROWN: World War II.

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yeah. Speaking of the—back to the Harvard general examination. One of the most brilliant and adroit Harvard graduate students was Benjamin Rowland, and Rowland, as a graduate student, made a point of discovering every issue on which the faculty had divergent opinions. When he was asked a question in the general examination, he brought the answer, his answer, around to that divergence, and the faculty spent the time arguing with one another about what he'd said. [They laugh.] Which was one reason they gave up the system and put in the written examination, eventually. Well, this, therefore, became a very much more exciting kind of introduction to art history.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And these men were each very approachable, I gather—

JOHN COOLIDGE: Oh, yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —by the serious students?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Oh, very—the serious students. And in fact, one didn't realize at the time, it must have been a two-way street, that the faculty would say, "Gee, I've got the most wonderful student," and the others would look in on him, as it were, and would get to know him. [00:22:09] As students over those many years, there was only one enormous bore, and that was Walter Cook, but it was—the faculty said to the serious students, "Now, you really ought to take a course with Walter Cook." There under—it was perfectly clear why they had to support the dean in the way that the chairman—he was working for them. Their way of working for him was to make us take these courses.

ROBERT F. BROWN: He was from the old-fashioned, American, encyclopedic—

JOHN COOLIDGE: That's right.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —textbook.

JOHN COOLIDGE: Again, on Spanish art, was just a bore even on that field. Like some of the others, I left my—I can't remember how many courses you took, but it was—you could take as many as four. I never—there was a theoretical limit of eight half-courses, four at any one time. Though I did well in my courses, I could never manage eight in any one year. The most I could do was seven. You didn't have to take four. You could take three or whatever. So that out of 16 half-courses, if you were only taking—should we say, averaging six, it was a good three years before you got your courses done. [00:24:02] Well, I had put off my necessary Walter Cook course until the first semester of my last year, and I started it, and 10 days into it, Walter Cook was injured in an automobile accident, crossing the street or something like that. He was out for the semester. I remember—and this, again, was the sort of thing that you could do at NYU—thinking, now, what am I going to do about this? I went to see the most senior and most admired graduate student, who was Millard Meiss. I laid the thing before

him, and I said, "Look, I'm almost done. Next semester, I want to take this course, that course, and the other course, for the following reasons. Do I have to give up one of those in order to complete a course with Walter Cook?" You couldn't really ask the faculty that. That would be ticklish. And so he said, "No. You've shown that—you made the effort. It wasn't your fault that Walter Cook was not—that will count [ph]." But the ability to talk to a man who was still a graduate student, but 10 years older than you, and who had 10 years more experience and that kind of thing, was wonderful. Though he was in your category. I mean, you talked as members of the same category. [00:26:00]

ROBERT F. BROWN: You had, then, quite a few courses with this fairly small faculty.

JOHN COOLIDGE: That's right. The greatest teacher there, and one of the two greatest teachers I knew, was Karl Lehmann. He, indeed, asked me to go on the first expedition to Samothrace.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What was his method? Can you describe it briefly?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Well, he was a brilliant lecturer. His great gift as a teacher, what made him outstanding, was that he had a way of giving you problems that were either unsolved or in dispute, but which you could—on which you could reach a conclusion. In which you became the expert, the publishable—you had the answer to this thing, and it wasn't always publishable, but it was always—you had the feeling that if he got in the company of the two experts who disagreed on this, he would bring up what you had observed, that this was something new. You never felt—Panofsky, the question was always answered either—or he knew the answer right away. Once you had done a little of the background work, you saw the answer. Karl Lehmann didn't. Either didn't do this, or didn't. [00:28:00] Had a different gift in choosing things. He encouraged creativity the most. I would have been a classical archeologist, but for two things. One summer, I guess partly to learn Italian, we went to Rome, having studied, intensively, classical archeology for a couple of years. I never once went to the Forum. I just fell in love with the Roman Baroque churches [inaudible] [they laugh] had to be works of art for me. The other thing was that I didn't know any Greek, and I didn't know any German. I thought to myself, that's just one more foreign language that you've actually got to be on top of.

[Audio Break.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: March 17, 1989. I thought we'd pick up with where we've been in the narrative.

JOHN COOLIDGE: Uh, the impression of art history as creativity was so strong that I realized, after a year or so, that I should do something, or attempt to do something, creative on my own. I think I'm going to interrupt and come back to this. My senior year, I had made the acquaintance of Russell Hitchcock, who was of invaluable help to me in preparing my thesis on Gothic Revival churches. [00:30:11] When we moved to Rome, we saw a great deal of him, and he introduced us to the whole Museum of Modern Art crowd.

ROBERT F. BROWN: In Rome?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Sorry, when we moved to New York. Yes. One person that I casually met when visiting a dealer with Russell one Saturday afternoon was John McAndrew, who was then teaching the history of architecture at Vassar. To my astonishment, the spring of that year, I was asked to give some lectures on modern architecture at Vassar. I think we better say several. It was two or three. I don't remember. John—this was, of course, John's territory, but in the middle of the academic year, they had received some money to rebuild, or remodel, the art department and the museum, and John had taken on the responsibility for this, and had to abandon, at least for that semester, his teaching of modern architecture. [00:32:08] I was called in, I suspect as one of several people, to replace him. Even more surprising, I was asked to be a teaching assistant at Vassar, starting the following September, and I did this for two years.

ROBERT F. BROWN: This was about 1937?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yes, this was '37 and '38. Coming—

[Audio Break.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: —Vassar.

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yes. My job was basically being a section man in their general introductory course. The second year I was there, however, I taught, jointly with a professor from the classics department, a course on Roman art. Vassar was, in the end, in the late MacCracken years, was at an extraordinary stage. The general impression that one got was that the faculty, or many members of the faculty, in many departments, were expected to be thoroughly at home in the intellectual life of New York. [00:34:19] You had the liveliest people in New York intellectual life coming up there as visiting lecturers and professors. I did not know it at the time, but in the—about 1933, a faculty member at Vassar arranged to take a group of students to Soviet Russia. It was that kind of imaginative endeavor that seemed to characterize the institution as a whole. It was particularly close to the world of New York theater, and to the world of New York art. Indeed, Alfred Barr—I'm not sure whether Alfred Barr had ever taught there, but Henry-Russell Hitchcock certainly had, and that lively New York group—or, rather, the Vassar faculty was in close touch with that New York group, which conspicuously included the now-not-quite-so-young men who had been at Harvard in the late '20s, people like Eddie Warburg and Lincoln Kirstein. [00:36:12]

ROBERT F. BROWN: And these were all men you were beginning to get to know?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yes, and Vassar was very much in the middle of this. It was typical of Vassar that, through Russell Hitchcock, who knew John McAndrew, who, after all, left Vassar to succeed Philip Johnson as curator of architecture at the Museum of Modern Art, that I was taken up into this swim. To flip it around, the department was headed by one Oliver S. Tonks, who was elderly, or seemed elderly to me. I suppose he may have been 60. He had been one of the first serious American art historians, trained at Princeton, and was an entirely accepted member of the senior faculty at Vassar. He was an entrenched member of the senior group, and also, astonishingly, and one realized this after he retired, was a very effective academic administrator. [00:38:04] In the sharpest possible contrast to him was Agnes Rindge, later Claflin, who was entirely a member of the Museum of Modern Art crowd, who represented identity and vitality, and who Tonks fully tolerated. He realized she was bringing a life to the department that he couldn't, and then a variety of excellent teachers of various categories.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did it include a studio program at that time?

JOHN COOLIDGE: It had a studio program, by a Harvard-trained artist, whose name now escapes me. Uh. But it was characteristic that the year when I began coming two days a week as a teaching assistant was the year that the Vassar art department hired the most brilliant of the younger German art historian—refugee art historians who had not found a distinguished place, and that was Richard Krautheimer, who was then teaching at Louisville. He, shortly—well, in a year or two, became a visiting lecturer at New York University, and I saw him. [00:40:14] He guided my thesis in that capacity, and eventually joined New York University on a permanent basis. So that in this department of a half dozen people, you had one of the most brilliant—certainly the most brilliant of the younger German refugees, and Agnes Mongan and the modern 20th-century group, and able people. It was an extraordinary organization, and the greatest good fortune I was involved with it.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did you take to teaching? This was just about your first teaching.

JOHN COOLIDGE: This was my first teaching. I taught a section of some 20 students, at nine o'clock on Monday morning, and I referred to it—the girls were, of course, all very social, and had spent the weekend in New York. I referred to it, publicly to them, as the Alka-Seltzer hour, which was [laughs] a fairly accurate description.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You, too, had to commute, though. You were living—

JOHN COOLIDGE: I was living in New York. I commuted up and spent the night in Vassar, and taught for two days, and then went down and back again. But to return to what I was saying about creativity in New York, I realized that I would wish to get started as quickly as possible in doing something creative on my own. [00:42:17] Since I—since nice things had been said about my senior thesis, I decided that I would do some kind of study of American architecture at NYU, even though there was nobody teaching American art. Do you want to shift over things?

[END OF TRACK AAA_coolid89_1of11_SideB.]

JOHN COOLIDGE: —in American art, as of the moment, working at NYU, going further, being the idea of finding a subject to work on. This, in view of the fact that at NYU there was a thesis required for the M.A., and so, by my second year there—no, even earlier than that—I realized I would have to be producing a serious paper of some sort. Paulina—Polly had never been abroad until we were married. We went the first year, but this was obviously not something that we could afford to do every year, and we already had a three-month-old daughter by the second summer. My brother, who was teaching English at Hotchkiss, had been granted a leave of absence, and was spending it—teaching English at Hotchkiss. I said that?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JOHN COOLIDGE: Spending it getting—as a candidate for a PhD at Trinity College, Dublin. He had a quote, camp, unquote, a summer place, on some property that was owned at Squam Lake. [00:02:07] And so we spent the summer of '36 or ['3]7, I don't remember just which, there. I had made the acquaintance—a close friend of mine at Harvard was a graduate student in economics, named Robert Keen Lamb. I realized, after my work on the Gothic Revival, that the study of individual revivals was not the profitable way to get into the guts of American 19th-century architecture. It had occurred to me that maybe one would approach it through the study of a community, and in conversation with Bob Lamb, he said, "Why don't you take an industrial town?" mentioning, specifically, Fall River or New Bedford. That seemed like a good idea. [00:03:58] But the camp at Squam Lake was only something like an hour and a half's drive, under the road conditions of the '30s, from Manchester, New Hampshire. So, as we settled in, in early summer, I started wondering about making a study of Manchester, New Hampshire, and soon came to realize that if one were to take this area, the place to work on was the granddaddy of all these industrial towns, Lowell. The result of this was that I spent the summer working on Lowell, partly borrowing published material from the Harvard Library and reading it in Squam, partly seizing the car for the day and spending it either in Manchester or in Lowell, looking at actual buildings, running down documents, and with the result that by the spring of 1939, I turned into the faculty at NYU a study of architecture and society in Lowell, Mass, between 1820 and 1865, as my undergraduate thesis.

ROBERT F. BROWN: This was a pretty new area, certainly in American art, but in general. [00:06:04] The history of city planning and the like.

JOHN COOLIDGE: And industrial cities, too.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Particularly. So you had no mentor except your classmate, your friend Bob Lamb?

JOHN COOLIDGE: No, he wasn't a classmate. He was older than I. But he was purely—our ways—I remained very fond of Bob Lamb until his premature death, but we no longer saw each other. He simply suggested this, and then I took it from there. Polly read the thesis, or bits of it, when it was finished, and said that I had ceased to write English, that I wrote a bad imitation of German refugee English. But at this point, there was a project of the Institute of Fine Arts publishing monographs through the Columbia University Press, and my manuscript was accepted to be the first—I guess it was the only one of that series. I spent a good deal of time, in the next year or so, turning the German refugee lingo into English. [Laughs.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: Do you suppose you were under the spell of their way of putting things and reading—

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yes. Sentence construction. You know, the verb at the end. All kinds of things. I can't remember what it was like, but I remember I was appalled at—

ROBERT F. BROWN: At one point, it was the pioneering nature of your own work, right? [00:08:00] The survey you did? And of course, worked as the primary material.

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What would you look to there? There were German studies of city planning then, and some, perhaps, in England.

JOHN COOLIDGE: Well, another person with whom I was in touch, and who was very nice, though not closely involved, was Lewis Mumford. There were plenty of city—there were

plenty of histories of Lowell. There were plenty of histories of cities. But the idea of fitting it in—fitting the architecture deeply into the history, and what made Lowell different, was that, of course, it had a particular social structure. I mean, it was a mill town, and the mill workers were young women, farm girls, and so forth and so on. It had a particular social structure that had been somewhat studied, but not—the normal histories of Lowell were based on local pride, and tended to show that Lowell was an industrial city, just like any industrial city, to emphasize its Americanness. What people like Bob Lamb spotted was that this was a very unusual type of American city, the beginning of the single-industry town, and with a whacky and individual social thing, so that you were doing not only a combination of architecture and history, but architecture and a particular social setup in history. [00:10:20]

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did you work at all, or discuss this at all, with Henry-Russell Hitchcock?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Oh, yes, all the time. Russell was—we couldn't afford a guest bedroom, but he was visiting us all the time, and we spent many, many weekends with him at Wesleyan, and went—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Where he was teaching at that point.

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yes, and indeed that's the first time my name was ever in public print, was an acknowledgement. That's Hitchcock's book on Richardson, which I read in manuscript and criticized the way he wrote it. He didn't appreciate it. [They laugh.] He neither appreciated, nor paid any attention. He became very close friend, which he remained for many, many years, really until he went to New York. When he no longer came to Boston, we saw him less frequently.

ROBERT F. BROWN: At that time, was he enthusiastic? Was he difficult? Was he all of those things?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Well, yes, he was all of those things. But above all, he was a man of extraordinary warmth and friendliness. [00:12:00] You certainly found that he was including you in things in the natural kind of way that it was quite extraordinary that you got in at the ground floor. He was doing something he thought would interest us. He'd take us along. It would turn out to be, in a certain sense, quite privileged things, that you would be alone, and this was simply his nature. He didn't—he was a young friend, and—"It would interest John and Polly. Well, let's—I'll take them." No, he was absolutely wonderful. Basic to the work on Lowell, I should mention—I don't know whether I did. Did I talk about Talbot Hamlin in connection to Columbia?

ROBERT F. BROWN: [Inaudible.] He was the Columbia [inaudible]?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yes. The year I was at—this is, as it were, a paragraph to be popped back. I don't know what form these come out in, but—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Free-form.

JOHN COOLIDGE: The year I was studying architecture at Columbia, I took a seminar with Talbot Hamlin, which was on American architecture. I can't remember now what it was on. All I can remember is that we had to give reports, and that one of the students was a young, 30ish, Italian architect, who had gotten some kind of fellowship to come to this country. [00:14:12] He gave a report, which lasted for an hour and a half, on what he called "pew-blic buildings." My face broke into a smile, and I got the most intimate, stern look from Talbot Hamlin. I forced myself to keep a straight face after that. [They laugh.] Hamlin became a dear friend, and a constant help in the library. But more than that, he—we are very fond of his then, and final, third and final, wife. Wonderful person. What with kids in their late teens or early 20s, and I suppose two expensive alimonies, the Hamlins lived modestly. I'm sure we went to the apartment, but, like, only once. They got together a group of friends, and arranged, roughly every month, for us to meet at a restaurant and go to a play, this being Dutch. [00:16:06] But the Hamlins—Jessica Hamlin's contribution was to do all the work. We would discuss at dinner what we were going to not that evening, but a month later or whatever, and then have a second choice, and Jessica would reserve the seats, find out a suitable local restaurant. So we saw the Hamlins, and I thought this was very imaginative and wonderful way of people entertaining their friends, when they were not in a financial position to do it the way they wished.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did this continue during your—

JOHN COOLIDGE: And this continued in my earlier years at NYU, and I continued to see Talbot, though, again, less and less as years went on, until his death.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Was he, in any sense, a mentor, would you say?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Basically not, for two reasons. That I was, of course, completely sold on the German point of view, German technique of art history, and this is—I mean, the book about Lowell was not only written in Germanic English, but reflected a German point of view, which was completely at variance with his traditional, basically archeological, view. [00:18:11] Then, after writing Lowell, by '39, I moved out of American art, into European art, so that I had little occasion to go up there to use the library. Whenever you wanted a rare book, you'd go up there, but 42nd Street or the Met had an awful lot of these things, so that I didn't use it as much.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Can I ask a little bit more about some of the other younger people at the time? You talked a little about Hitchcock. Alfred Barr was a bit older than you, but not much, was he?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yes, we knew Alfred and Margo. They were never intimate friends, but we knew them well. Dined back and forth, that kind of thing, first name. I was put, and I don't—it was the sort of thing that was being done. They had a lot of advisory committees in the Museum of Modern Art, and I was put on one of those. I can remember, this is how I met Lincoln Kirstein, who was also on that advisory committee. Must have been, probably, for John McAndrews, or Philip's museum, architectural department. I don't remember. Philip was—we knew well. [00:20:02] There was a world that was built around the Kirk Askews. Kirk Askew was the Hitchcock/Barr generation, 10 years older than we, and was an art dealer. What his background was, I don't know, but it was middle-class, sophisticated, well-educated. I am almost certain he went to Harvard. I never looked him up. He was a dealer. He either was the American representative, or he bought out the English firm of Durlacher, which was a small but grand old English firm, and he was Durlacher in New York. It had ceased to exist in London, or did very soon after we got to know him. He dealt with Old Master paintings. I can remember one of those things that seems fantastic today, but was splendid, but not in the least unusual in those times, that he had an exhibition of Tintoretto, with something like seven to twelve full-scale Tintoretto oil paintings. [00:22:17] Some that were new, some that he owned and weren't on the market, others that he borrowed from the Met and the Boston Museum, you name it. He had a series of Old Master paintings going through there. Was it Ruben [ph] who is doing it now? He was an Old Master dealer, a small Old Master dealer, and they had a salon on Saturday evenings. There, one met—they were, again, universally cultivated. I remember meeting the Sitwells at their house. That's the sort of people you would run into. Later on, you'd run into refugee painters, like Léger, who would be in this country. The whole—it was a broader world than the Barr/Hitchcock/McAndrew world, which was passionately contemporary art. They were interested in all of culture, and a very wonderful—we were very privileged to be included in the group there. [00:24:05]

ROBERT F. BROWN: Askew handled contemporary, or new contemporary work, as well as Old Master paintings?

JOHN COOLIDGE: He knew it, but didn't handle it, but on the other hand, was a very acute critic of it, and would say what he thought about Tongi [ph] as compared to Dali, or something like that. Very cultivated, educated man, as was she. Their daughter, Pamela Askew, was younger than I, but was the central figure in the Vassar—eventually became the central figure in the Vassar art department, until she retired a few years ago. That world continued in a certain way.

ROBERT F. BROWN: This was partly through—you've spoken several times now of John McAndrew. Did you get to know him down in New York, or had you known him here?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yes, I knew him down in New York. He was entirely New York, and was astonishing when he came. Moved to Wellesley, and we—he seemed so devoted to New York, and we had a sort of Cambridge view of Wellesley as—almost like Groton, as a little place out in the country. [They laugh.] Higher standards, if you wish, but not a place that a New Yorker would come to. With John McAndrew, John McAndrew's great passion, modern architecture, which he had practiced, was, as it were, his profession, but his vast hobby was Mexican Colonial. [00:26:18] Could you—

[Audio Break.]

JOHN COOLIDGE: He should have written *the* book on it, which has still not been written, but he produced, as you know, this book on the 16th-century churches. One year, about 1940, we went to—we drove to Mexico and joined up with John McAndrew and Margam Barr [ph], and two just-graduated seniors, who John had taught at Vassar, and had a marvelous trip around Mexico, seeing Mexican Baroque as nobody else saw it. John was a great traveler. He and Agnes Rindge went all through Spain together. He knew Spain intimately. But again, we knew these people very well.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You said, then, after doing your MA essay on Lowell, thereafter you did work in European art. What led to that decision?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Well, because, obviously—well, something very interesting that, uh, I don't understand, and only, years later, became conscious of this. [00:28:10] This is not—I'm—I was involved in a fact without being aware of it, and the fact is this, that every important historian of American architecture is—has been—an expert on European architecture, and you would not think of having Russell Hitchcock. Oh, yes, he was an expert on American architecture, because it's so obviously somewhere between 30 and 50 percent of what he was, in the same way Fiske Kimball's Rococo is as significant as his American Colonial. And that has—well, lunched a couple of days ago with Jim O'Gorman, whose thesis was on 15th-century Florentine libraries, and is now—and that goes right on to Paul Turner, whose thesis was on Le Corbusier, I think, and has now, of course, worked on American planning. And that, having established that I was acceptable as a potential scholar, by the thesis which was in an area that I had worked on, then it became absurd not to take advantage of the superb teachers around me, and not work in European art. [00:30:20] I had been doing that all along. I began with Karl Lehmann on particularly Roman art, and then later on with Walter Friedlander on Baroque art, and at the same time, Krautheimer. This was—you were in—that was the intellectual world. It wasn't particularly the social world we were in. It was the intellectual world one was in. One then wanted to see what you could do in this area. Partly, of course, one of the things that was the first shock, NYU was—everybody was quadrilingual, in professional terms. You had been there a few months, and you realized that all your senior American scholars expected—knew they were expected to be quadrilingual, and so you, by force, became so. And that meant—the best way to learn the language is to spend time abroad, and you were looking at the things you'd been reading about, and this became a perfectly normal thing. It could have moved in any direction. I think it was because of the strength of NYU in the Renaissance and Baroque area, that it moved to that. [00:32:10] I'd always, ever since Cluny, been passionately—and longer, as a child, was passionately interested in Medieval art. But there was no, and still is, no volume of teaching of Medieval art at a high level. If you're going to do something in which you are alone, then American was much better for me, than if you were going to do something when where other people, then move into something that was to do with the Renaissance and Baroque.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And you did, then, do that for—

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yeah. Again, a term paper was on the Villa Giulia building that I'd first learned about in a course that I took as an undergraduate here. Walter Friedlander expected a paper, so I wrote on the Villa Giulia, and that was, in fact, published in *The Art Bulletin*, the same year that Lowell came out in Columbia University Press.

ROBERT F. BROWN: In the early '40s?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yeah, something like that. Then there was, at this time, the graduate students at NYU started their own magazine, *Marcias* [ph], and I eventually wrote two articles for *Marcias*, connected with Vignola.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did the students—did you found this magazine, perhaps, as a further outlet, to test your ideas, or to put in occasional smaller pieces than you would put into, say, *The Art Bulletin*, or one of the major—[00:34:09]

JOHN COOLIDGE: I was not—I may have been on the first editorial board. I don't remember. I wasn't—well, to flip back—I don't mean to forget this question. Uh, because I got paid by Vassar, and some of the pay went to—we had a, shall we say, third-floor apartment, and Vassar was a pile of blue books, and so some of the pay went to rent a room in an apartment above us. Well, then Vassar—and I've always admired them in this—indicated that after two

years, for my own good, I could—I wasn't going to learn anything more by correcting or giving them—I should go back to full-time studying, but this meant a loss of income. I decided that what I would like to do would be to spend a full year working with Panofsky. But that time, I had completed all my course requirements, and so we—he arranged that I should get an appointment, without pay, at the Institute For Advanced Study, and we moved to Princeton. [00:36:05]

ROBERT F. BROWN: Why did you wish to be with Panofsky?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Well, because he was the most—he had the biggest reputation of any of the people at NYU, but since he lived in Princeton, one couldn't—you know, he'd be there one day a week. You couldn't really work with him very well. He dealt virtually entirely with—I mean, he didn't get in—put it this way. He didn't get in sculpture or architecture, except the little finger of his left hand, and I wanted to find out what he was all about, and this was the reason to do that. It seemed the best way, was to devote myself to working with him. A very wonderful experience it was. But it was the combination of his being the most talked about, the best-known, of these people, but also, in a certain sense, the least normally accessible to me. I'm not an iconographer in the least. That doesn't interest me in the world of art. I didn't want to have been there and not to have studied it well. So we then moved to Princeton, and after a few months, it was clear—I'd finished my courses. [00:38:07] I didn't have to go up there three or four days a week. I could do it with two days a week. He was—I don't know. Shall we say three or four by then, and it was a just infinitely better place—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Rather than the city?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Rather than the city. We just loved it. So we moved to Princeton. Now, that affected me in the sense that I was much less a member of the NYU graduate student body, and a project like founding *Marcias*, I was not involved in. I was never—they had a very effective graduate student club. I was never an officer of that, for that sort of thing. Well, this kind of thing that—one thing, I was older than the more socially active—I had been—it was the people who had come, say, two years after I had, who were starting these things. I got to the point where I was only around a day or so a week, and gotten to the point of thinking about my doctoral dissertation, and less about teaching and so forth.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Can you describe your relationship with Panofsky?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yes. Let me go back, however, on *Marcias*. No, I won't. I'll bring this up in another connection. [00:40:01] Relationship with Panofsky. A man of—well, he was a man of no mis-friendliness. Great social grace. Made every effort, on our behalf, coming into this community. He was not a man who had many—and many may be an exaggeration—it may be any—intimate friends, so that one got to know him rapidly, up to a certain point, but never really beyond that point. He had enormous respect for his own time, and therefore for yours, and I would see him once a week, or once every two weeks. We would discuss a problem that he had assigned to me, and I would report on it. In contrast to Karl Lehmann, whom I think I spoke to you about, who's a teacher, he, he would mention a problem to you that had, as it were, occurred to him as something to be looked into, and it hadn't been looked into. You would work at it, and you'd come back with this. He either had figured it all out beforehand, before looking it up, or he immediately grasped what you said, but he knew the answers, so that I never found a way of building on my relationship with him. [00:42:20] I never could pick up something that I was doing and carrying it on. It was like an undergraduate's term paper for a senior professor. It fitted in, and it was bringing you along, but it wasn't adding to the history of art in any way.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did that become disheartening, would you say?

JOHN COOLIDGE: No. I mean, you—not really, because there was all the rest of life and of art history, but you realized that this was an area you could only go so far in, and that this was—well, all right, then it was ultimately my limitation, and you—I said it. I'm, I'm not an iconography. You sort of realized you were not an iconographer, and you—that's that. You're other things. So that, on the other hand—oh, you'd make a remark to him, or bring up something, and he would bring it back, and to your honor, publicly, in certain ways. You sometimes made contributions without being aware that you made a contribution. The sort of man would say, "As a young student said to me"—"As one of my students said to me, only last week," not mentioning names. It was you who had done so, and you hadn't realized that you had contributed. [00:44:04]

ROBERT F. BROWN: That was very nice.

JOHN COOLIDGE: Which—oh, yes, he was the soul of niceness.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Was he doing—were you in a seminar with him, or was it simply a tutorial?

JOHN COOLIDGE: It was a tutorial arrangement. He gave a seminar in Princeton that spring, and I—he suggested that I join that, which I did. I can't remember what that was on. Went perfectly well, but the only thing that was memorable about this was having joined from one seminar. In one semester, I'm on their fundraising list. Have been ever since. [They laugh.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: That was about the spring of 1940 or so, was it?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yes, it was—yes, it was about the spring of '40. We went there in the fall of '39, and this was the spring of '40. Also met there, who was also studying there, a person who became a very close friend, though not for quite a while, and that was Millard Meiss, who was at the institute, too.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And he was fully a student of—still doing coursework and all?

JOHN COOLIDGE: No, he was not doing coursework, but he was—I don't know whether he'd—he might have been writing the last year of his dissertation, but I think he was probably in the first year of his—early years of his teaching. Yes, almost certain, the early years of his teaching at Columbia. The person that became a real friend was Panofsky's assistant, Hans Swiczinsky [ph], who remained a friend for the rest of his life, more or less. [00:46:07]

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ROBERT F. BROWN: —Princeton must have been quite different from—certainly from being in the city, but at the Institute for Advanced Study, how would you generally characterize that?

JOHN COOLIDGE: The institute was a series of primadonnas. It had no corporate life. There were maybe weekly, maybe monthly, teas. You would sometimes go there. You'd enter into conversation with Einstein and things like that. But it had no corporate life. We knew it, above all, through Panofsky, but my father was a professor of mathematics here. One, or possibly two, of the most brilliant juniors in the Harvard department had been when they—Institute for Advanced Study started with mathematics, and they were among the original people there, and I had known them when they were, shall we say, assistant professors, and they will remember this, but were very nice to us when we came. So that we knew, had a slight contact, as indeed a close friend of father's was the chairman of the mathematics department at Princeton, and the dean of the graduate school. These people were—people in Princeton were just wonderfully friendly to us. But the institute as such didn't exist. [00:02:02] Hans Swiczinsky lived across the street, and we saw them all the time. We had an attic room—nice room, but an attic room—which was a mess, and we decided to fix it up and turn it into the bedroom—a bedroom—and this to be the guestroom. We started at the roof, and worked all the way down. I remember yellow walls. We got down to the floor, which was to be red. We asked Hans Swiczinsky, casually, Saturday, maybe, or Friday, "Do you like painting?" He said, "How do you mean painting? I love painting." So we said, "Well, won't you come over and help us paint the floor?" [Laughs.] He completely—wasn't until he got there and saw that by liking painting [they laugh] and he paint the damnedest mess. He slopped it all over the yellow walls.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Very messy?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Oh, we were so sorry we'd ever thought to ask him. It was a completely friendly thing to do, and characteristic. Took us a week to recover from what he did painting.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But he became a close friend at the beginning of that time?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Oh, yes, right.

ROBERT F. BROWN: He had basic training in Europe then. Had he grown up—his father then coming to the—

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yes, he was entirely European-trained, and in the late '20s, Sacks [ph], I

guess, or Sacks and Forbes, or Sacks and Forbes and Porter—I don't know who—got some money from, shall we say, the Carnegie, and they brought over, for two years—we'll say in '27 and '28—each year, they brought over a young German who had just gotten his PhD, and Hans Swiczinksy came to this country first then. [00:04:22] We didn't know him then, but it was a curious aspect. He knew, he knew America in ways. He knew Kingsley Porter. You had certain kinds of experience in common that you didn't expect. This was a dozen years earlier. But it made him very sympathetic to us and everything. His first wife, his then-wife, Mia, lovely person. We felt wretchedly when that marriage broke up. But they became—but then, uh, there were—the younger faculty at Princeton were very friendly. I'm not quite sure what Rens Lee—I think Rens Lee was simply spending a sabbatical in Princeton, something like that, and we got to know him. We got to know Donald Egbert, who was on the faculty, and even got to know Morey, who was the grand old man of the Princeton department, well. In fact, Morey offered to me the kind of teaching assistantship I had at Vassar, and it was so much less good a job than the Vassar one.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Why would that have been? Was it less creative than Vassar? [00:06:02]

JOHN COOLIDGE: When I went to Vassar cold, with the greatest difficulty I found one person who was teaching a—you had sections of the lecture courses—who let me sit in on a section. They said, "Do it any way you want. You know. Do what you want with the thing." Well, I just did—had no idea, but I found one person who did this. Princeton, the sections were absolutely laid out for you, and you had no freedom at all, and very old-fashioned in many areas. I just—after having—I don't know. I don't think—I'm not saying one did it well at Vassar, but one—you did it your own way, and to go to Princeton and be put into a straitjacket, wouldn't think of it. In addition to which, if it didn't make any sense to stay on at Vassar, it didn't make any sense to take on Princeton. But the thing that emerged from this—this is a conceited thing to say, but I think it's true. I have known well every major American art historian, oh, down to the people who are now in their 40s. [00:08:03] I don't know all the younger generation now. But of the whole darn shooting match, the—and Polly and I both agree on this—the person of the greatest stature, the biggest figure, was Morey, in Princeton. Dreadful lecturer. He had—stature is the one thing that describes him. Sort of largeness of point of view and generosity, and an extraordinary diversity of experience. When he got through in Princeton—Princeton paid very low salaries, partly because there was no New Jersey income tax. That meant you got very low pensions, and Morey was quite pressed when he got through, when he retired, and he was given a job as sort of cultural councilman in the American Embassy in Rome. Well, much of his work, most of his work, had been done in Rome, and he knew the personnel of the Vatican inside out, and called cardinals by their first name, and things of this sort. Eventually, the ambassador called him in and said, "You know, it's really a little difficult for a junior member of the embassy staff to have a personal relationship with the Italian state." [00:10:19] [Laughs.] And Morey learned, I'm sure, to adjust himself to that. But he was there, and he was an international figure, and they all had known him for years and respected him.

ROBERT F. BROWN: He was practically upstaging the—

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yeah, he was upstaging the ambassador, absentmindedly, as it were. X would come into the ambassador's party and say, "How do you do?" and then go talk to Morey. [Laughs.] That kind of thing. But another side of him—and all these things, you would only get to—was that he once, at one point, needed a new car, and got something, a bright yellow touring car, something absolutely wild for a Princeton professor to have. There was this side of him of enjoying the snappiest—the only word I can think of—the thing that would call attention, that everybody would notice, and that sort of thing. And all this within the framework of a man of great warmth and great wisdom, and also great toughness. Princeton, a very curious place in ways that I don't understand, but one of them was that they didn't have any regular sabbatical system. For a university of its eminence and its wealth, not to have that—scandalous. [00:12:01] Princeton—this being the fact, Morey went to see the president, and he named himself and four other prominent members. Said, "We have each received an offer to go to a full professorship at another institution, and I think some, at least, of us, perhaps all of us, will accept, unless you can guarantee that our department—that the members of our department has a sabbatical every seven years." Well, that went through, but didn't make him popular with the faculty at-large. [Laughs.] He was—he had that kind—when I say stature, that's a certain kind of stature within a university. Not to raise an argument, but just to lay it on the line. [Laughs.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: You say he was wise. You must have had enough direct contact with him to have concluded his wisdom and his breadth. You mentioned—

JOHN COOLIDGE: Oh, yes. And, you know, just we were living in a—rented a house after, what, six weeks, maybe more than that, two months, but say into—well into November or something. At a cocktail party Kent [ph] [inaudible] up to us and said, "How do you like your house?" and we discussed it with him. Said, "Well, I lived there once." Then we got discussing the problem of the furnace, and how often you stoked it, and what happened to it in rainstorms. You know, this—one sensed a person who had gone through every human experience that you had, and was prepared—and was aware, this is the young man who lives in that old house with the furnace. [00:14:03] I wonder how he's doing. It was this. Of course, he had been visiting lecturer at NYU, and I had taken a course with him, which was misery. He's an abominable—

ROBERT F. BROWN: But to work in a tutorial way with him might have been quite different?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Oh, yes, much. He had produced an extraordinary department and had an extraordinary record of students, but everybody left his field. He never—he taught the discipline, he taught the humanities. He didn't teach early Christian art in any way that was contagious. Only the dullest people who stayed on in it, which was something mysterious about him. Just one—again, one keeps tossing out these things that you don't expect. He wrote perfectly beautiful English. Pick up an essay by whatever it says, it's just beautifully written. This was phrase of the man. Classic story. There was—Princeton was a great place for, oh, regular parties of a certain kind. We never got—I never happened to have been involved in one, but there was a tradition of Christmas parties. One Christmas party had a game that I'd never heard of—sounded rather fun—where you had a bowl, and in the bowl would be a globe of cheese. [00:16:15] Not too big a globe. Probably—or nearly—

ROBERT F. BROWN: This size?

JOHN COOLIDGE: And a pile of toothpicks. In the middle, and everybody would put a toothpick in. The winner was the man—this, of course, got higher and higher—who could put the final toothpick in without either its falling out or one of the other ones falling out. You've got the thing that high of toothpicks, and it was kind of tricky to get it. Who should win, but Panofsky. Morey, with a broad smile, delivered himself. "Panofsky has won, as usual, and as usual, by the most dupiest [ph] method." [They laugh.] It was this quality of—they gave him a party when he retired, and we were there. He stood up and talked about things that happened. Talked about how modern art had developed in this country. He never expected, though he knew Alfred Barr was a Princeton man—he remembered him as an undergraduate. Enormous recognition of his achievement, which he never expected. Then went on to say that he'd been in the start of the College Art Association, and he remembered when the proposal came to start *The Art Bulletin*. [00:18:06] Said, "I thoroughly disapproved. I violently fought against it. What a foolish thing to do." I mean, it was this kind of quality to the man. But also loving, fatherly advice if you needed it. The person you could count on—if there's some tragedy, he would be there to help somehow, always and everybody. Well, that's a long way away from what we were talking about.

ROBERT F. BROWN: His basic research tool, the index, as well as his own writings, he did leave as great monuments, right?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Oh, yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: There's no denying.

JOHN COOLIDGE: That's right.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah. He did not leave a legacy, particularly, of students.

JOHN COOLIDGE: No. Well, a legacy of students who—of people who—devoted to him, and who continued in the field, but not a legacy in his field. Well, this has certainly gotten us a long way away from—

ROBERT F. BROWN: We mentioned that you wanted to say something more about *Marcias*, the student newspaper, or periodical, you started at NYU, or was started.

JOHN COOLIDGE: This leads into a—well, there are two topics that come out of this. One of

the things that we did in the summer was to come back to this part of the world, partly because Polly's father died three weeks before we were married. My mother was living here as a widow, and she lived in West Newbury, not far from that school down there. [00:20:01] We often stayed there. I would come in and work here. One year, I went to summer school here and took an intensive course in German, since I—that kind of thing. But one year, I came here. This must have been, again, about '40. I had been working on Vignola, and I came to the conclusion that the original design, which was known from an engraving, of the smaller domes of St. Peter's, which always had been attributed to Michelangelo, as well as the main dome, were not by Michelangelo, and were by Vignola. Then carried it further, and concluded that Michelangelo had never intended it to be little domes. I mentioned this to Kenneth Conant, and Kenneth Conant said, "Oh, how very interesting." A couple of weeks later, he produced a perfectly beautiful drawing—I think it's a beautiful drawing—of my reconstruction of Michelangelo's St. Peter's. Yeah, this is [inaudible]. [00:22:06]

ROBERT F. BROWN: He did this on his own? He was enthusiastic?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And you had known him since you were—

JOHN COOLIDGE: I'd known him since—

ROBERT F. BROWN: —an undergraduate.

JOHN COOLIDGE: Undergraduate days. My—yeah, there it is. Well, this was the kind of kind thing he did.

ROBERT F. BROWN: That drawing is familiar. It's used quite a bit now, I think, or has been subsequently. One-domed St. Peter's.

JOHN COOLIDGE: One-domed St. Peter's. I mention this because this is a topic that we might as well discuss now, though it's apart from the NYU bit. In the summers, there were apt to be quite a few students, art history students, here, and a group—oh, six to ten—architectural history students, and most of them working with Conant, or former pupils of his. They not only met informally, but planned field trips, and so forth and so on. [00:24:00] Because that particular summer—I think it's the summer of '40—this can be looked up—I was in Newbury, and the field trips were on Saturday, I didn't want to—well, it was difficult in terms of a car for me to get up here, and in any case, I didn't want to leave my family just to go on a field trip about all the buildings that I had probably seen anyway. But it was suggested once that we have dinner together, and so I went to a dinner, and Conant was there. There were, I think, six of us. Afterwards, we—this was in the faculty club—afterwards, we went up to the library of the faculty club, and Conant suggested that some of us talk to the others about the work we'd been doing. Turpin Bannister talked about the use of iron in 18th-century architecture, and I think I talked about Lowell. I'm not sure, but I think I talked about Lowell. There may have been another talk. Then there was sort of general conversation. Then Turpin Bannister simply suggested that we found the American Society of Architectural Historians.

ROBERT F. BROWN: As simple as that. [00:26:00]

JOHN COOLIDGE: As simple as that. Each of us, then and there, contributed a dollar to him—he said he'd do all the work—for postage. He then canvassed people around the country, and that was the beginning of it.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Had you known him at all? Had he been a graduate—

JOHN COOLIDGE: No. I knew him that summer, slightly.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Was he a graduate student elsewhere at that point?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yes, certainly. To my knowledge, he never had any formal association with Harvard. He must have been a graduate student elsewhere.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But he was well-organized, was he, or he liked to organize things?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yes, very. Very—a man of towering modesty. Quiet. Not very interesting. No sense of vivid personality. But full of—not full of—producing a succession of good ideas,

and infinitely willing to work towards carrying the load. The thing that was particularly a part of Harvard was that it had the best—the most tolerable summer climate of any place with a first-rate library. [00:28:07] North of here, or—well, it is north of here. It's not particularly cool in the summer, but it gets cool the moment you're a few miles north. North of here, there ain't the kind of—

ROBERT F. BROWN: There aren't many libraries.

JOHN COOLIDGE: No great libraries, and south of here, it's hotter. The place was, and—was then, I think—whether it is now, I'm not so sure—I'm a little more doubtful—was very friendly to people coming back, or to new people coming in. There was particularly a marvelous woman, Ruth V. Cook, who was the librarian there. The present library of architecture is now architecture and planning. It was split, and she was the architectural librarian, and just wonderful, and a friend to everybody. Made it enjoyable to work here. This group had been here the preceding year, and I know Hanfmann played a role then. I don't think he was there the year I'm talking about. But it was the second year that this group had been meeting informally, and it was of the outgrowth of that that the—I happened to be around the year that Turpin got this thing started.

ROBERT F. BROWN: It was, from the beginning, open to, or encouraged, membership from across the country? [00:30:01]

JOHN COOLIDGE: That's right.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did it also, from the beginning, encourage membership by members of the architectural profession, not simply academics? Or is that a later development, where the architects and city planners are also contributors or members?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Turpin was at Rensselaer Polytechnic. He may have been—and then didn't he end up in Texas A&M or something like that? Conant himself was trained as an architect. I don't think the issue ever arose, and in the course of the preceding five years—here, I know what I'm talking about, because I took an active part in this. The College Art Association, which had been entirely historians, had deliberately stretched out to include artists. I think, to anybody—I think that just was an obvious, natural thing to do. I can't remember the issue having been raised, and I can't think that—I just don't think it would have been a matter of debate.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Nor was it particularly in the College Art Association?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Well, that was more problematic, but it—

ROBERT F. BROWN: And that was a little later, you say?

JOHN COOLIDGE: No, that was a little earlier. That had gotten established. Mind you, the artists didn't occupy a very major role. Come to occupy a much larger role. But in principal, it was there, and I just don't think the—I think that was assumed. [00:32:06] And of course, you know, I can't—don't—can't give you my dates, but Claudia Williamsburg was still a live issue, and one expected—there were a lot more people who were practicing architects who were learned historians within their area, and you would have expected some of those to come in, as well as architects, like Conant, who trained as an architect and became an artist.

ROBERT F. BROWN: During the Depression, the Historic American Building Survey.

JOHN COOLIDGE: Sure.

ROBERT F. BROWN: A number of those learned architects were glad to pick up some—

JOHN COOLIDGE: Glad to pick up some cash.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —government change.

JOHN COOLIDGE: So I think that this was never raised, because it was unconsciously assumed. People who were interested in architectural history, and a certain number of architects were.

ROBERT F. BROWN: So your summers here, though, you were mainly working on your Vignola studies towards your PhD paper?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yeah. Well, one year I was studying German, and one year working—one year, I took a course—I went back to my Gothic Revival and did a second version of it, partly because, in the original one, I'd only done churches, and I wanted to get in secular buildings, houses particularly. I did that with Conant.

ROBERT F. BROWN: How was he as a teacher, as a tutor? Because he was highly specialized in his principal work, wasn't he?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yes. [00:34:00] Very encouraging, always, and with a—very, very interested and encouraging, and with—he'd make one fundamental, good point. You know. I don't know—I can only imagine he might have said, in a case like that, "But how would it have looked from the other side?" You know, that kind of thing. He'd bring up one thing, or, "You've completely forgotten the element of liturgy in this study that you've done." He was not a man of little helpfulness, or a man who would—he was not a man of any great bibliographical knowledge. Not a man to tell you a new thing to go read, much. But very humanly, personally encouraging. Basically not profoundly interested in any work but his own. Interested in buildings. An appetite for buildings. Architecture in that sense. And had worked with a great range of buildings. And he worked on Hagia Sophia. He worked on Hagia Sophia in [inaudible.] Worked in Compostela. He worked in Cluny, of course. Was that kind of thing. Was that kind of thing. But theory, not really. Or ideas, not really. [00:36:02]

ROBERT F. BROWN: But the visual things, he was—

JOHN COOLIDGE: The visual things, he was splendid with, yes. Visual things only, as far as I know, of buildings. I never heard him talk about a painting, or how wonderfully this sculpture looks, or whatever.

ROBERT F. BROWN: One maybe last thing. Your director of studies at NYU, was it Friedlander, possibly? Or Hart, was it?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Never had one. When you went there, there were only like a dozen serious students, and—

ROBERT F. BROWN: You mentioned there were these others there.

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yeah. Walter Cook was the person you would go to for university regulations and that kind of thing. None of the other professors knew anything about this, and thereby hangs a funny little tale. Then, I was—it's hard to say. I was—very much Krautheimer, but very much Friedlander I couldn't say between those two. One difference being that, when I was doing this, Krautheimer was still at Vassar, and you could—you know, you'd get an idea this afternoon, writing. Friedlander was there tomorrow morning. Krautheimer might not be there until next Tuesday. So there's that kind of thing that comes in.

ROBERT F. BROWN: So this juncture was possible. Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Well, Friedlander—you mentioned Baroque, of course. At that time, to be interested in Baroque, was that still not quite so?

JOHN COOLIDGE: First course I—first year, I took a course on Baroque with Panofsky. [00:38:00] It was virtually unknown in America, except for Arthur McComb's courses at Harvard, and his book, but it was thoroughly [inaudible] in Europe. You had all of it [inaudible].

ROBERT F. BROWN: But here, people still looked—

JOHN COOLIDGE: There wasn't any enthusiasm for it here. I think the younger generation, the generation of had been the generation of Fred Deckentale [ph] the people, again, 10 years younger—and certainly Russell Hitchcock admired German Baroque, but there was no American scholarly work in it. It was an enthusiasm of the bright younger generation. John McAndrew, again. But nothing scholarly that I can think of.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You continued with your family in Princeton into 1943, and then—

JOHN COOLIDGE: Navy.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —you go to war.

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yeah. And this—yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What is that anecdote about Walter Cook and NYU? His knowing the regulations.

JOHN COOLIDGE: Oh, yeah. I, uh—I think I, so to say, got my degree in June of '47. [00:40:01] And then I came in September to Harvard, and at Harvard, I got a note from NYU that I hadn't gotten my degree in June, because my summary had been—my thesis had been inadequate, and somebody—nobody paid any attention to these things. You were meant to produce a summary of your thesis, and I produced—you know, casually say, "How much—what should it be like," "Oh maybe two pages." I'd done that, and was expected to be eight or ten. In any case, it was thoroughly inadequate. So I didn't get my degree until June of '48. Now, in the meantime, Harvard had approached me about being director of the Fogg. I was a brand-new assistant professor, and I said to the dean, "Look, the Harvard department is an oligarchy, and I cannot assume that job unless I'm a member of that oligarchy, and I am not likely to be accepted in that oligarchy unless I am an associate professor." There was no one else in it that were other assistant professors, but the oligarchy was bright, because, at that point, you had tenure, and I specifically said, "I'm not asking for tenure. [00:42:03] I have no basis for asking for it. But I must be in that oligarchy." So I was promoted to associate professor, and I think my implication tenure, because I never knew when I got tenure—before I got my degree, technically, by a matter of weeks. [They laugh.] Which was silly.

[END OF TRACK AAA_coolid89_2of11_SideB.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: —with John Coolidge, Cambridge, Massachusetts, March 22, 1989.

[Audio Break.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: We could talk a bit now about your time during World War II.

JOHN COOLIDGE: Will do.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You were at Princeton and NYU, and then—

JOHN COOLIDGE: I was living in Princeton and completing my work for the PhD, which was basically writing the thesis.

ROBERT F. BROWN: So the Vignola studies?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yeah. Then I enlisted and was taken into naval communications, in the spring of 1943. I joined the navy to see the world, and because—under my own steam, I hadn't gotten any farther from New England than Princeton, and the navy sent me to see the world, back to indoctrination school at Harvard. I don't know whether it's worth men—let me be personal. Why not? Uh. My mother—my parents were deeply religious, and every Sunday of my childhood and youth, we regularly walked down to Christ Church. [00:02:00] From the time I was 10 or so, after church, father was apt to take me on a little walk around the Harvard Yard, and by the time I was 12, I knew the name of every building in the Harvard Yard. By the time I was in my late 20s, I was confused as to which was Hollis Hall and which was Holworthy Hall. The navy obviously thought it was more important that that little confusion should be straightened out than that I should see the world, so they sent me [laughs] back to Cambridge, and I was billeted in Hollis Hall. That lasted only a month, and then I was stationed in Washington, where, basically, I remained for the three years, my three years of service.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Had you volunteered?

JOHN COOLIDGE: I had volunteered.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Knowing that the draft was coming, perhaps?

JOHN COOLIDGE: No, I volunteered. I volunteered. I assumed that the draft was coming, but I got in as soon as I could.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Was there a certain patriotic fervor in your part, or shared with—in general?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Oh, no, I think this was just, in general, one of the things you obviously

did. I can remember Princeton was relatively alert in preliminary training, and one of the things that was set up were field courses on—how shall I put it? On what to do in case a community was bombed, or other emergencies. [00:04:13] I can remember being in a group that was being taught how to use a firehose, and I and Erwin Panofsky, together, held a firehose, and were told to head it to the street in front of a certain house, a house that was set back a little way from the street, with a nice, sloping patch of lawn down to the street. We were rather too close to the house, and the power was at full steam, and the hose got away from us, to the point that we simply took out the sloping bit of lawn in front of the house. [They laugh.] However, I did get into the navy, and was stationed in Washington.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Can you describe what sort of work you did there?

JOHN COOLIDGE: I was in naval communications, and basically was in the administrative—not being a great communicator, I was in the kind of minor administrative activities. I can remember dictating a memorandum upon the costumes that WAVES had to wear when exercising in summertime. [00:06:09] That's the only specific thing that I remember doing.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You did considerable research for that. [They laugh.] Well, could your family be with you in Washington?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yes. We had a small apartment, which was separated from our office by a beautiful quarter-mile stretch of parks. So I walked through the park every day to and from work, and it was—across the street was the Sidwell Friends School, where our daughter went to school. It was an idyllic life. We were very fortunate, and my work was interesting to me. I did spend—I volunteered for the submarines, but was not accepted, because I was too old for the beginning age rank in the submarines. I guess I was an enson [ph] and I was 28 or so. You couldn't be an enson of 28 in the submarines. My commander in back said that he had let me volunteer for the submarines, because they needed men, but he would not let me volunteer for anything else. [00:07:58] However, I think, as a payoff, I was one of the very first men to be sent from my office to Europe, and was in Europe in 1944 for about 10 months. In the spring of '44, I was part of a joint and combined expedition to Germany. The organization had the idea that when the Germans surrendered, there would be a uniform procedure worked out for the way that members of the German forces spoke to members of the Allied forces, but that until they surrendered, when a German outfit was captured, there would be no guidelines, and that the German officers would speak quite freely to the members of the armed forces. [00:10:10] Our particular group was interested in communications technology, and we were sent there, to what was technically the front lines, to go to visit German laboratories, communications laboratories, the moment that they were taken over, and to try and find out about their technique, or their research in communications technique. So I was in the—as far as I was concerned, it was on the front lines, in that you saw material that—the places they visited, places that had been bombed, within a day or two, but there was never any fighting, though I did earn a battle star for the Battle of Regensburg. When I returned home, the first thing my wife said to me was, "Where did you get that?" [They laugh.] She having thought of me as being completely desk-bound.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Would you go there with technical specialists?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Oh, yes. We—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Who would boot around the—

JOHN COOLIDGE: Indeed. In fact, it was a small group, like 15 or 20 people, and we had a bus of our own, which was not quite large enough to carry the group. [00:12:18] So in addition to the bus, we had a Jeep for the officer or enlisted man left over. It was always an officer, and the officers took turns riding in the bus—in the Jeep. You could go faster than the bus, and could stop and look at the scenery, or whatever seemed appropriate. This was the occasion for one of the—perhaps the most dramatic event of my life. One of my five sisters had married a Frenchman, who was an employee of the French government, and while she and her children came to this country for the war, he was sent to a camp in Germany. Somehow or other, I had the information that he was on his way back from the camp. He'd been at two camps, and I can no longer remember what their names were, but that he was on his way back from Germany to France. [00:14:00] We would pass through—I believe it was the city of Clermont-Ferrand. Not positive of that. All I knew was that my brother-in-law had a cousin in Clermont-Ferrand who was a *huissier*. That's H-U-I-S-S-I-E-R. I did not know what *huissier* was, and in fact, only learned about it in 1989, when reading a student's PhD

dissertation. It means an usher. And sure, he was a junior court appointee. I knew his name. I inquired around Clermont-Ferrand, and the Jeep took me to the *huissier's* house, to discover that my brother-in-law had arrived the preceding evening. I was, other than his—the first American contact, the first person who had known his children. He arrived picturesquely enough, having walked all the way across Germany. His camp was somewhere east, in Berlin. At some point—it astonished me, and it shows something of the confused state of mind, that recently he had, as we said at the time, liberated an enormous hot water—what do you call it? [00:16:02] Hot water urn. It must have been 30 inches high, and brass [laughs] and the last umpteen miles, he carried this thing as far as Cleremont-Ferrand. But it was very, very gripping, not having had any communication with him, to meet him there, and then take my turn in the bus on the way back to England.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You had known Europe a bit in your travels.

JOHN COOLIDGE: Oh, yes, I'd been to Europe many time—a good many times.

ROBERT F. BROWN: How did it strike you then, being there for 10 months in a war zone, or a recent—

JOHN COOLIDGE: Well, England was—been a private school and was taken over. The eating conditions were better than in Washington, and were very well-organized. In fact, my wife was quite irritated when she discovered that, counting bacon at breakfast, I had meat three times a day in England [laughs] and we would have it a couple of times a week in Washington. But—

ROBERT F. BROWN: But in France and Germany, it must have been rather different. Did this appall you? Would you go through and see—

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —great monuments blasted?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Only thing I can remember is going through—I think it was Essen.

[Audio Break.]

JOHN COOLIDGE: Saying to myself, oh, you're going to remember this as terribly bombed, but how would you describe it? [00:17:59] So I looked for a few minutes, and I came to the conclusion that it was only one building in ten that could conceivably be restored to use. It was not only that there were a great many buildings that were flat, but there were other cases where only the facade survived, and that in damaged form, and it was perfectly obvious that it was more practical to tear down the facade, to start anew.

[Audio break.]

JOHN COOLIDGE: This was the only statistic I could say. The other thing that was extraordinary, we were a small and very congenial group. We had known each other in—at our desks, and it was as clubbish a venture as you can imagine. Much of the time, we were headed, we were headed for southern Germany, and much of the time we were going through countryside, where the villages had been untouched, and village life went on in a perfectly normal, non-military way. I remember—and it was charming. Kids were playing in the streets. [00:20:02] The cafes were open, and people were drinking beer out of doors. It was lovely, late spring weather. It's just a vision of rural charm. When we first hit this, and we had several days of this, we Americans reacted immediately to the—affectionately to German rural life. It was amazingly enchanting. Endearing, even. Then I thought to myself, well, the English have been fighting these people for five years, and they're going to react very differently. But in the course of two days, their reaction was exactly the same as ours. They ceased to be—these ceased to be, in any sense, the enemy. They were just delightful peasants, doing normal things. So I had an interesting, a safe, very interesting war, but nothing, in any way, dramatic.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Would you have ever thought of going into the monument service, the group of art historians who followed the—[00:22:04]

JOHN COOLIDGE: If I had known about it, and if the—communications wouldn't have let me transfer out of that. That was the moment the—in fact, my commanding officer, though it

was a communications and safe thing, was a regular Navy, and I think he let me volunteer for the marine, for the submarines, because he quickly saw that they wouldn't take me on this age thing. But rather than saying I couldn't do it [they laugh] "Let the submarines turn him down." But also, it was perfectly clear that we were held to where we were. There wasn't any question of being able to get away for that. Of course, I would have been a monuments officer if I had known about it. We didn't know about it. We were very apart from normal military life.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Were you—

JOHN COOLIDGE: Oh, I might say, the only other thing that was curious, we were headed for southern Germany, precisely because, of course, it had been less damaged, and what we were after was the laboratories and the institutions that had suffered the least, and got to Berchtesgaden and went to see Hitler's villa, and went through it. It was—Americans could get there. It wasn't isolated, exactly, but nobody was there. In fact, I made a side trip, somehow. [00:24:02] Afternoon, went up there and saw his bedroom. This was—it was burned out. It was not destroyed. But the floor was in two inches of ashes, as it were. I liberated the little brass terminals from his and Eva's bed, and brought them home. Eventually gave them to my son-in-law, who is interested in military matters. It was this kind—you were that directly involved. You could still wander into things of that sort and make this kind of finding.

ROBERT F. BROWN: So you had a certain amount of—a little bit of freedom in your kind of work?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yeah. What else shall I say? At five o'clock, if they laid off work and there was nothing much you could interview them, but by that time, you pretty well knew, and you knew where you were going the next day, you might well have an hour before dinner. Dinner was at six and you didn't—or whatever. You might well have an hour to do these things.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You had, then, particular—you knew exactly where you wanted to go?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Oh, yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Which manufacturer, and which—

JOHN COOLIDGE: We knew exactly where we wanted to go, but we were free, and if it did happen that one laboratory would say, "Well, of course, you realize we've just split and set up a new branch, and it's five miles away." So you would do that. [00:26:00] You also had other kinds of experience. We were on our way back. We were in a town where they had captured some very high officers, and since we had transportation, we were asked if we would take one individual in particular as a prisoner back to a headquarters, where we were headed, and was arranged that we should do so. I was deputed, at nine o'clock in the morning, to go to the bedroom, where this field marshal, I guess he was—he was the number-two active field marshal in the German Air Force. Knocked at the door, and there was no answer. Knocked again. There was no answer. Eventually opened the door. He was lying in bed, and he'd committed suicide, rather than take him—us taking him back from the field camp, as it were, to a headquarters camp. [00:28:00] Where we were, it would have—it was known that he would have been, more or less, automatically turned over to the Russians.

[Audio Break.]

JOHN COOLIDGE: —Princeton. I made the acquaintance of a devoted Princeton graduate, David Raab [ph]. After the war—I can't remember now when I was mustered out, but I spent, in effect, an academic year in Washington, finishing up my thesis, and David Raab got in touch with me and offered me a job as assistant professor in Penn. This led to one curious episode. I had been invited to lecture at Ann Arbor, and was offered an assistant professorship there. But in the process of visiting Penn, of getting to know about—I don't know how to—let's begin again. [00:30:07] When David Raab got in touch with me, we went to visit Philadelphia, and somehow—I've now forgotten how it started. We had gotten to know the Kimballs.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Fiske Kimball?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Fiske Kimball. After the day, looking at the university, we went and had

cocktails with the Kimballs, I having told him that I came up to see Philadelphia or whatever. We had drinks in a small study, and Polly sat between Marie, and I talked to Fiske. I told Fiske what was indeed the case, that I had had an offer from Michigan, and Fiske, whose first or whose second job was at Michigan, spoke most warmly about it, and urged me to go there. [00:32:03] Polly told Marie that I had been given an offer at Penn, which was not strictly true. When I returned to Princeton, I got a letter from Fiske, saying, "I had no idea that you were considering coming to Penn. That would be a much better place for you. Ignore everything that I said." [They laugh.] Well, it was a better place for me. Actually, I had —well, I don't know. This gets too personal. I don't want to get into that.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did you know Kimball pretty well, or get to know him quite well?

JOHN COOLIDGE: We got to know him extremely well that year, really very well. He became —they became dear friends, and dropped in on us casually when we found a house in Rosemont, near Bryn Mawr. After I left, we had a gloriously happy year in Philadelphia, and liked the city very much indeed, so much so that, one way or another, we came back from time to time, or I came back from time to time. [00:34:01] After Marie died, I would, when I came back, often take a night train to Philadelphia, and then would go and have breakfast with Fiske, alone in his great house of Lemon Hill. When I was teaching a museum course at Harvard, I would bring my students down to visit the museum, and Fiske would give us a splendid tour. And—I was close—I was close to him at the time of his retirement, but also close to some of the trustees, and was told the whole sad story.

ROBERT F. BROWN: He declined since, did he, in the last year or so?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: How would you characterize him, apart from that? I heard he was a brilliant man, wasn't he? Extraordinary museum person?

JOHN COOLIDGE: I have never met a more brilliant man than he, and I would—and at the time, would specifically include Panofsky in that statement. [00:36:07] Man of extraordinary intellect. He was also a man of a certain violence, and immensely impetuous. The violence was, oftentimes, an act. Once, when we were visiting him, after we'd left Philadelphia, we had—after Marie had died, and after we had left Philadelphia, he invited us to drinks at the small but very fashionable hotel on Rittenhouse Square. It may have been the Ritz. I don't remember its name. With a delightful but small bar. He apologized and left us in this small bar, and went over to speak to a woman, alone. Woman perhaps in her 80s. [00:38:01] He proceeded to upbraid her in a loud voice, because she had not made an annual contribution to the museum. He returned to us and sat down, and Polly remarked, "Wasn't that brash of you, Fiske?" He turned, in an equally round voice, and said, "Brash? Nonsense. That was brazen." [They laugh.] Fiske lived as you met him, as you were with him, as you saw him, in this world of vivid reactions to what was going on at present. In my experience, you could always—however intense the involvement seemed, you could always break him out of it, out of it, by asking a question which touched his intellect. He would immediately drop whatever the vivid mood was, and address the intellectual question. I can remember another occasion when there was a meeting of an art historical group, possibly the College Art Association, in Philadelphia. [00:40:14] We went from the lectures into luncheon, I presume, some kind of relaxation—coffee, tea, lunch—and there encountered, casually, George Kugler. Fiske, who I think—of George Kugler, who I think had just delivered a talk on some aspect—a scholarly talk of some aspect of Latin American art. Whether Spanish Colonial or Mayan, I don't remember. Fiske either had just given or was about to give, and Fiske burst out, again, in a loud voice, "George, how could a man of your intelligence devote himself to such a second-rate subject?" After Fiske retired, he talked of returning to New England, where I think he owned, or expected to buy, a small piece of rural property, and was quite poetic about living in the country. [00:42:20] That, of course, never happened. One spring, he told me that since he was alone, and Ludwig Heydenreich was alone, he'd planned to take a trip with Heydenreich in especially—Italy, north of Florence, looking at architecture together. That summer, my daughter was finishing her freshman year at Radcliffe. That year, she had met a sophomore at Harvard, and they fell very much in love. The sophomore elected to spend his junior year in Germany, and my daughter told us that they wished to get married. [00:44:15] We—they and we decided that it would be pleasant if they were to get married in Europe, where we expected—in Italy, where we expected to spend the summer.

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JOHN COOLIDGE: For reasons that will appear later, we had come to know Bernard Berenson, B.B., very well. And B.B. had offered us a guesthouse of his, across the road from I Tatti, the so-called *villino* [ph]. My daughter was married from the *villino*. Before that time, in the middle of the summer, here—I have a feeling the chronology is going—going to have to switch sections around, but doesn't matter. In the course of that summer, we heard that Fiske had fallen seriously ill, and was in Ravenna. One of Fiske's oldest and most intimate friends was Richard Offner, who taught Italian art, Italian painting, principally of the 14th century, at New York University. I had known him, slightly, as a student. [00:01:59] We got hold—so happened that Offner was also in Florence at that time, and we got hold of Offner, and hired a car, and the three of us drove to Ravenna to see Fiske. He had been taken to the Ravenna hospital. He had just been taken to the Ravenna hospital. It was a crucial moment for him, because Heydenreich had come close to the end of his summer vacation, and he and Furentina [ph] Mutternicht—M-U-T-T-E-R-N-I-C-H-T—his girlfriend, who had been traveling with them, would have to go—have to return to Germany, very shortly, like the next day, leaving Fiske alone in Ravenna. Fiske, devoted to Heydenreich, couldn't stand Furentina. [00:04:07] I don't think, when he planned the trip, he had known of her presence or had expected her to accompany them. I don't think it had been an altogether happy occasion. Nonetheless, the three of us and the two of them went to see him in the hospital, where he was completely conscious, not feeling well, but not seeming desperate, as desperately ill as in fact he was. He was, above all, miserable at the prospect of being alone in this distinctly provincial Italian hospital. Offner, the Offner I had known, had been a very distant and arrogant person. I had never had, or wished to have, any personal association with him, though he was a courteous companion on our long drive across the Apennines from Florence to Bologna. [00:06:13] I vaguely remember a picnic, the side of the road, and this most urban of men adjusting quite elegantly to a difficult rural meal.

[Audio Break.]

JOHN COOLIDGE: What was astonishing was to see him in Fiske's presence, where he became a warm and fatherly man. It was like he was younger than Fiske. Fiske had given him his job at NYU, where Fiske had been chairman of the department before leaving to take over the Philadelphia Museum. But it was like one of those occasions—it was like seeing one of those occasions which we all experience, when an older son takes over and manages his formerly dominant father. He was marvelous in bringing back Fiske's confidence in himself, and making him see this as a challenge that he was going to surmount. [00:08:17] I can remember one episode where we were visited by a very scrubby Franciscan, the priest at the hospital, a man of working class, of no distinction. After he'd left us, Fiske, who apparently didn't know much Italian, said, "He's the only person who knows any English in the hospital." Offner's remark was to turn to Fiske, who, as far as we knew, was a complete agnostic, and saying, "That will be a challenge to you, Fiske. I expect you to convert him to Methodism." It was on this atmosphere of happiness, and of being bucked up, that we left Fiske. [00:10:10] To revert momentarily to Florence. On the morning that—the morning of the wedding, as we were about to leave to drive my daughter, in her full wedding dress, down to the American Church, Polly was delayed, and we waited for her. Delayed a minute or two, a noticeable amount, but we paid no attention. Went down, and the wedding took place. It wasn't until the next morning that she told me that she had been delayed by a telephone call, informing us that Fiske Kimball had just died, and she had not wished to tell me before the wedding was over. Well, so much for knowing Fiske.

ROBERT F. BROWN: He was perhaps the most vivid thing of that year at Penn. Nineteen—

JOHN COOLIDGE: Well, certainly one aspect of it. [00:12:00] One thing that I was anxious to do was to incorporate the splendid works of art in Philadelphia into my teaching, to make my students go to the museum, to take the students to the museum, but above all to make them go and look on their own. In preparation for this—I can't remember my courses, but this was to be a feature of the second semester—I was at the branch museum, as it then was, of the Philadelphia Museum—what had been the art building of the 1876 World's Fair, and was retained as a branch of the Philadelphia Museum—and was taking notes on the works of art there, when I was approached by one of the guards, who told me it was illegal for me to take notes. I said, "But I'm taking notes in pencil. It's not going to do any harm." He said, "It's still illegal." I didn't argue with the man, but in fury, went to the public telephone and called the museum, in order to protest immediately to Fiske, only to discover that it was Good Friday, and that the offices were all closed. [00:14:04] It so happened that Fiske stopped by, late in the afternoon on Easter Sunday, and I immediately told him this story, at our house, expressing my still keen sense of outrage. Fiske looked at me, paid no

apparent attention, and said, "I'd like to tell you a story." He said, "You know that Louis XV and Madame de Pompadour, from time to time, came into Paris, to go to the opera, to go to a ball, to attend some function. And though both he and Louis, his predecessor, lived in Versailles, there was always a bedroom in the Louvre that was available, at no notice at all, for him. After one ball, he and Madame de Pompadour discovered that it was raining heavily, and late—early in the morning, decided that instead of going back to Versailles, they'd spend the night in the Louvre. [00:15:59] And there they were, on the Key [ph], and after very few hours' sleep, Madame de Pompadour was woken up by some farmers' carts coming into Paris to sell their vegetables. Six in the morning as they passed. After a second one of these, she woke up Louis and protested, and said, 'Why does this happen? Can't you do something about it?' And Louis said, 'My dear, if I were *pret faire du* police of Paris, I would put to bed farmers' carts coming in at an early hour in the morning, and particularly along the Key. But I'm only an absolute monarch, and there's not a damn thing I can do.'" [They laugh.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: He could make a point.

JOHN COOLIDGE: He could make a point. The point being, of course, that the Philadelphia Museum was, to a great extent, supported by tax money from the city, that the guards were city employees, and that not only had he no command over them, but as we later learned, the administrative staff and the curators were not, necessarily, currently informed of how the guards were operating. [00:18:15] When there was a shortage of guards, for whatever reason—say, illness—the guards would close off a gallery or two to the public, and the curators would not necessarily, or even likely, be informed. So much [ph] by the way.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Was this about the first year you had a full load as a—

JOHN COOLIDGE: This is the first year of full year of teaching, yeah. All I had done before was at Vassar. That was the first time I—

ROBERT F. BROWN: How did you take to it? Did you feel that this was something you wished to—

JOHN COOLIDGE: Oh, yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —carry on with?

JOHN COOLIDGE: But I was fantastically lucky. The fine arts department was then part of the School of Architecture. It consisted of David Raab, I think alone, though the university administration had suggested that it was an area they believed should grow. I think I was the first person appointed in that process of growth. [00:20:00] The budget was so limited that David Raab himself made the slides, and while I suspect the material was provided—the university paid for the glass and so forth—he was not paid for the slides. And it was—he was generosity himself, in pitching in and devoting a weekend to making your slides, but it was—you thought twice about ordering extra slides. However, he was a marvelous colleague, giving me full freedom. We collaborated, at his suggestion, on the general introductory survey. I taught my lectures as I wished. It was a superb relationship. In the spring, or in the middle of the year, he took me for luncheon at a club of which he was a member, and by spring, saw to it that I was offered the opportunity to join that club, and indeed another club in Philadelphia, simply because the Philadelphia we knew was such an astonishingly friendly and sympathetic place. [00:22:25] It was the—this has remained our experience of the city. One came to realize that what distinguished Philadelphia in some ways was the freedom of an individual in a public position to conduct himself as he wished. Philadelphia—Fiske Kimball had made the Philadelphia Museum the way he wanted to make it. David Raab made the art department at Penn the way he wanted to make it. As a young person coming in, you were expected to make your position the way you wanted to make it. This marvelous freedom, this exciting freedom, had, of course, one immense cost. [00:24:00] You received no automatic support. The board of trustees expected Fiske Kimball to find, to raise, the money to run the museum the way he wanted it. There was absolutely no sense that there was—that being a trustee obligated them to seeing that—aid—aiding the director run the museum. Their job was to find the director and let him run it. I suppose, by analogy with the fabulous Philadelphia—well, no, you can't even say that, because they didn't expect the conductor to raise the money for the symphony. That was the exception. But the—well, can I move to another experience here? I don't know how I'd fit this in. The situation at Penn was somewhat tense, in that the dean of the Architectural School was elderly, was on the eve of retirement, and was extremely old-fashioned. I think it was understood that he could not

restrain Dave Raab. The university may have anticipated that the fine arts, department would move from the Architectural School into the faculty of arts and sciences, which indeed took place. [00:26:08] In any case, David was running his department as he wanted, paying no attention to the elderly dean. The dean had a committee—no, I take that back. Trustees, the board of trustees of Penn, included various distinguished graduates, including Francis Henry Taylor, the young, extraordinarily vigorous and conspicuously successful director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Taylor, immediately after the war, announced a fundraising campaign and a plan to greatly extend and remodel the Metropolitan Museum, and plans were published. I was appalled at the Neo-Assyrian design that was proposed, and got to know the associate curator of prints, Hyatt, A. Hyatt Mayor, and talked to him about it. [00:28:14] Was surprised that he was as appalled as I was. I wrote an article about it for a magazine. I don't remember which. Maybe *The Magazine of Art*. I don't know. Showed it to Hyatt Mayor, who approved—made minor suggestions, but basically approved what I was going to say. The dean of the Architectural School—and either on my own initiative—I don't know on whose initiative, the magazine's, or mine, or whose—the article was shown to Francis Henry Taylor. The dean of the Architectural School thought it would be nice to have Taylor, as a trustee in the art field, come and give a talk at the School of Architecture. Taylor refused, saying, "As long as one of your junior faculty attacks the proposal I have made for the Metropolitan Museum, I will not talk to your school." David Raab—I at once, of course, told David Raab. [00:30:01] Raab went spiraling through the ceiling, and the first thing I knew, Raab and I and the dean and the president met, and the president said, "We are much more interested in our assistant professors than we are in our trustees." Indeed, we ought to go back and say that Taylor had said, "If that article is published, I shall resign as a trustee." The president said, "We are more interested—have you talked to Taylor?" and I said no. He said, "Well, you talk to Taylor, and be sure you are right, but if you are sure you are right, go right ahead and publish the article, even if he does resign." Taylor convinced me that while I might be right, I had not been thorough. He offered me a chance to study the budget and all the documents, and get at the background. I had not had that kind of information, and I decided that it would take more time than I wanted to spend on it to be correct, so that I did not pursue the thing further. But I have never forgotten the president of Penn saying that—encouraging me to go ahead and say, even though a trustee might resign—it was very—I mean, my—I was, in every sense, a kid. [00:32:14] It was my first job. It was six months into my first job. I wasn't a kid in years because of the war, but I was not—early 30s.

ROBERT F. BROWN: This must have improved your—or upped your feeling about the academic life, the way the president stepped in.

JOHN COOLIDGE: Oh, yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Academia seemed like it could be, as embodied in him [ph], quite a fine place.

JOHN COOLIDGE: Oh, yes, and so much of—and not only that, but the fact that he was at once accessible, and that Raab was, sure, a promising young professor, but he wasn't—it wasn't as if he was a major figure in the faculty. He wasn't the president. I think Raab talked to an assistant dean, a person he knew in the hierarchy, and that person got to the president and got the thing. But it was a—it gave you a wonderful sense of what a place the University of Pennsylvania could become. It never did become that place, in part, I think, basically, for the reasons that I talked of earlier, of there being inadequate support.

ROBERT F. BROWN: People going too much their own way.

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yes, and that there was just no feeling in the city that, gosh, this is our university, and we ought to kick in just because it's our university. [00:34:04]

ROBERT F. BROWN: You could contrast that, at the time, with here—Cambridge—Boston.

JOHN COOLIDGE: Well, with Boston. There was no—of course, Penn, Penn was interesting. The place that the first families went, by and large, was Princeton. It was a minority of them. It was perfectly acceptable for a minority of them to go to Penn. That was nothing degrading, but it was a little like going—learning music from a family tutor rather than going to Julliard. It was something that was not the usual thing to do, but perfectly acceptable. But it was loyalty—I was—the group loyalty went to Princeton, I suspect, rather than Penn. I can't—don't know Philadelphia well enough to know.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did you continue, later, to know Francis Henry Taylor a bit?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yes. I never found him—as a type, he was not sympathetic. But I came here, and Paul Sachs liked and admired him, and was very nice to me, and more or less took the attitude, these two young men ought to know and like each other, and brought us together, and we came to a tolerable relationship without ever being intimate. [00:36:15] That continued after he moved to Worcester. Yes, I got to—the temperament wasn't ever mine, but I got to respect him, and I admired what he did for the men. Unfortunately, his particular project collapsed. It was very interesting that it was impossible to raise money after the war, though. There was a lot of people—wealthy people had made a hell of a lot of money out of the war, but it was not charitably available for about five years. I don't know why.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Taylor was quite a different personality, say, than Kimball, wasn't he?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Oh, yes, utterly different. Kimball was profoundly a scholar, and he was an intellectual scholar. Kimball wasn't—uh, Taylor wasn't in the least. Taylor had a profound sense that a museum was an institution for the public. As long as Fiske got his money from the city, and got great works of art for his museum, he didn't give a damn whether the public came or not. Never really crossed his mind. More interested in the public than a professor at the Institute for Advanced Studies. [00:38:05] Interested in higher ed—in the high school education. No, he was—that was—gotten out. And Fiske, well, did all the correct social things. He had, I think, few friends, and no—minimal social life. Had more friends than one would think, but not many.

ROBERT F. BROWN: A towering figure to those who knew him, or knew his work.

JOHN COOLIDGE: But also, to Philadelphians, they knew what he'd made out of that museum, out of nothing. He was the next to the last of those figures who created—period who created major museums, the last being man who created Cleveland, whose name escapes me for the moment.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Sherman Lee?

JOHN COOLIDGE: No.

ROBERT F. BROWN: No, but—

JOHN COOLIDGE: Predecessor. Sherman Lee's—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Oh, William Milliken.

JOHN COOLIDGE: Milliken, yes. I mean, Milliken created out of nothing. Sherman Lee did wonderfully on what Milliken had built but—

ROBERT F. BROWN: It was Milliken—

JOHN COOLIDGE: —created it, and similarly, there was nothing in Philadelphia before Fiske. His predecessor had been—curiously enough, few people remember it—Langdon Warner.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Really?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Huh. Was Warner still around Harvard when you came back?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Oh, indeed, yes. Sure. Yeah.

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ROBERT F. BROWN: —March 29, 1989. We've been talking a bit about Fiske Kimball in the last session, and John, you perhaps want to say something more about him and his career.

JOHN COOLIDGE: Well, I knew him towards the end of his career. I knew him after he had retired. Hold on a second. Um. Fiske, I had known previously, before I went to Philadelphia, and very quickly after I got there, we hit it off very well. We were fond of his wife, Marie, and had a very informal relationship with them. I can remember their dropping in. I had a

problem, I think I've mentioned, calling up on Good Friday afternoon—Good Friday—and it just so happened that they dropped in for cocktails. And I mean dropped in. We weren't expecting them on that Easter Sunday. After Marie died, it was—as I think I've mentioned, my—had occasion to go to Philadelphia for one reason or another, and my routine would be to take the night train, getting into Philadelphia at 7:30 or 8:00, and then I went out to Lemon Hill and had breakfast with Fiske. [00:02:07]

ROBERT F. BROWN: That was a great house, in Fairmount Park, wasn't it?

JOHN COOLIDGE: In Fairmount Park.

ROBERT F. BROWN: A perk of the job, I suppose?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yes. I think that Fiske got involved—when Fairmount Park was created in the end of the 19th century, they ended up with these houses, and one piece of unexpected good fortune for Philadelphia was that, when Fiske became director of the museum, the Fairmount Park Association, or whatever the bureau of the city is called which runs it, discovered that they had the ideal expert on their hands, and he told them he was the advisor on the care of these houses, and was able to arrange that he should live in one of them. In fact, by the time we knew them, or as we knew them, it was a very limited life. We went there to dinner, I can remember, once, but after that, it was a sort of huge, empty apartment, and Fiske worked on his writing. They didn't seem to have a very active life at home. Fiske's retirement was—I remember it odd, in the sense that—oddly, in the sense that, while he was still running the place, he seemed to have, if anything, too much time on his hands. [00:04:14] I, as I'll discuss later, gave a course for students going into museum work, and we—I took—they went—we went on field trips, and Philadelphia was an obvious place to go. Fiske did a splendid job talking to my students, and to an extent, taking them around the Philadelphia Museum. All these visits to Philadelphia enabled us to keep up with the very warm friends that we had made in the year we were there. Among them was a woman, a middle-aged woman, whose name I have forgotten. Her husband was very much a member of a distinguished Philadelphia family, and was very much a figure in Philadelphia's cultural life. I think he was, at the time, the chairman of the board, either of the symphony or of the Pennsylvania Academy of Art. She, knowing my intimacy with Fiske, told me the inside story of his retirement. [00:06:11] She was a member—she was not only a trustee of the museum, but a member of the inner circle. Whether it was in fact an executive committee of the board, I don't know, but it functioned that way. Fiske was a man of explosive temperament, which, as I've said, he deliberately used for—I had always come to think that Fiske was a man of pseudo-explosive temperament, that he could feign these outbursts of activity, and no direct experience, but the effect was wholly convincing. But no experience of mine would have led me to that conclusion. It was—specifically, it was just a sort of hunch. It always seemed to work so well that I began to wonder. She told me that there was a certain new secretary in the building, not in any sense Fiske's secretary—he had a splendid and very efficient and kindly middle-aged woman—but in some other department, who, in some way, irritated him. [00:08:03] I have a feeling that I had met her independently of Fiske, and that she was attractive young girl, early 20s. But something happened, and Fiske hauled off, and I won't say slugged her, but certainly, at least, hit her, very positively. This, the staff, senior staff of the museum, immediately brought to the attention of the trustees, and the inner circle decided that the only way to keep the episode from public knowledge was for them, abruptly, to fire Fiske Kimball, which indeed they did, and which the papers picked up, and roundly attacked the trustees for abruptly—and by abruptly, I mean they said that he would cease functioning as the director as of the following Monday, but would remain of the use of his office until the end of the fiscal year, or something like that. It was perfectly clear that he was very quickly fired from the directorship. [00:10:02] The newspapers then started hue and cry against the trustees, because this man had created—and that's the only word to use—a great cultural institution in Philadelphia, and the trustees had, without lack of feeling, without appreciation, ruthlessly fired him. The trustees' venture was a complete success. Any word of physical breakdown on Fiske's part, loss of control, never emerged under the public record.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did you see him after that time? Or you did see him—

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yes, I saw him—

ROBERT F. BROWN: more alive [ph] in Italy?

JOHN COOLIDGE: I saw him after that time, but it wasn't all that long before he died. He had dreams before he retired, of when he retired, coming up to live in rural New England. He told me, and I was astonished at the statement, that he had something like $200,000 in capital, and with his pension he thought he could buy a farmhouse, live in rural comfort, or a reasonable comfort. [00:12:00] In fact, when he died, his will left his money to the Philadelphia Museum, but with the vivid—I can't think of the word—clause that it should not be available to the museum as long as "R"—the letter "R"—Sturgis Ingersoll remained president of the board of trustees. I had known—I knew—I came to know Sturgis. I had known him in Philadelphia, and I came to know him a little better. I was unaware of the strength of the ill feeling between Fiske and Ingersoll. Parenthetically, it was an awkward relationship inherently, because the Philadelphia Museum was the vision of a powerful citizen who was, in the early '20s, chairman of the board, and persuaded the city council to put up what was, at that time, I believe $35 million, to build the building. [00:14:10] Since the city had built the building, they owned it, and the guarding of it, as well as the maintenance of it, was entirely done by the city, and the function of the board of trustees, and especially the president, was to keep the city happy, to, in a sense, guarantee the annual income. This was just his job, and then Fiske—

ROBERT F. BROWN: A difficult job at best.

JOHN COOLIDGE: A difficult job at best. Fiske got what the city via the board of trustees gave him, and was in turn given, as I said earlier, complete freedom to run the thing, but had to be careful not to undertake anything that would annoy the city, so that it was a two-headed museum with the functions very split. Sturgis, who was nothing if not a Philadelphia aristocrat, carried this off. I've never known what his problems may have been. He was a leading Philadelphia lawyer. [00:16:01] How he managed that, I don't know. Fiske, of course, was neither interested in social life, nor in local politics, and simply was passionate about running a museum scholarship. It was not inherently—it was a relationship that was made for trouble.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did you get to know, then, in '46, or later, some of the collectors in the Philadelphia area, and curators?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Uh. Fiske talked of his—with pride—of the three Henris, whom I certainly met when I was in Philadelphia. One was Henri Marceau, who was the curator of the—name escapes me—it may come back—collection and curator of paintings, and succeeded Fiske as director. One of the Johnson—the John G. Johnson Collection—one of Fiske's first great achievements was to acquire, for the museum, the Johnson Collection. Johnson was probably the source of the phrase, quote, Philadelphia lawyer, unquote. [00:18:07] He was, in fact, the lawyer for Morgan and Company, U.S. Steel, and all the other big trusts. I suppose the Pennsylvania Railroad. He was, not perhaps in a personal sense, but in a business sense, the elder Morgan's lawyer. He was a passionate collector, with a marvelous eye, and the gift to purchase works of art in unfashionable fields, notably early Flemish painting. He owns the only—he owned one of the two van Eycks in America, and it was a remarkable collection. I remember reading a quotation from Bernard Berenson, whom I would call B.B., because that's not only what everybody called him, but what he asked me to call him. B.B. had written that it was attributed to B.B. that the great American collectors, Frick and the like, were the easiest people to bamboozle, and the hardest people to un-bamboozle, that he had ever known. [00:20:13] I asked him, therefore, about John G. Johnson, who was, in a certain sense, aggressively a professional man, and didn't want to be thought of as a captain of industry. He was simply a damn smart lawyer. Though he went collecting, too, he didn't want to be confused with the likes of Frick. Berenson, who must have known him, certainly knew the collection, wouldn't give. He simply brushed the thing aside, and he said, "That's right. That's absolutely right." He included Johnson in this statement. Johnson lived well, but perhaps one should say—I don't know the facts—moderately well, and the collection was to remain in his house, according to the terms of his will, which was wholly—I mean, this was no Fenway Court. This was wholly inadequate to the possessions that were in it, and quite impossible to administer as a public institution. Simply, it couldn't accommodate the crowds that wanted to come and see these fabulous paintings, and they were fabulous paintings. [00:22:00] They still are fabulous paintings. But Fiske persuaded the courts to give a kind of seepray [ph] ruling, and the Johnson Collection came to the Philadelphia Museum, and was then the start, and is still the core, of their Old Master collection. But the collection had to be treated as an entity. Had its own curator. You couldn't borrow works of art from it. It was maintained within the museum, as much in the—well, put it this—let me start that sentence again. The integrity of the Johnson Collection within the Philadelphia Museum, integrity of

the Johnson Collection as a private collection within the Philadelphia Museum, was very jealously retained, because the museum was simply—a judge could simply void the agreement that had come to it, and remove the collection to some other place. Well, the three Henris—Henri Marceau was in a position of semi-independence as to curator of the Johnson Collection, and then became director.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did you know him a bit?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yes, I knew him a bit. [00:24:01] Not at all well. To me, a distant character. I never got any sense of what his virtues were. It was a perfectly pleasant relationship. I don't think we had any social relationship at all. There was a second Henri. My impression now is that this—he was a member of an old Philadelphia family, a man with plenty of money and not too much to do. He and his wife were people of great charm. Lived in a nice, or handsome, house. I remember lunching there. They couldn't have been more delightful people. I don't know what his—he was a curator of some field. It might have been drawings or something in the museum. He was, through and through, an amateur, and was a man of—delightful, friendly man. He died young, shortly after we left Philadelphia. We never got to know them well. The third Henry was something else again. Henry McIlhenny's father, I think—but it's conceivably his grandfather—immigrated to this country from Ireland, and made a fortune in Tabasco sauce, but invested part of that fortune into the manufacture of taxi meters, and therefore ended up with a double fortune. [00:26:39] He had a most attractive daughter, 10 or 15 years older than we, who collected contemporary art. Terribly nice person, and was well—a committee woman and so forth in Philadelphia. Just as nice as she could be.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And that was Mrs. Withersteen, is it, or—

JOHN COOLIDGE: That's right. Wintersteen, Bonnie Wintersteen. That's who it was. Henry was one of a group of three—came to Harvard and was a group of three with Perry Rathbone and a third man, whose name escapes me, from Cleveland. Henry—I think his father had died, and as an undergraduate, he could lay his hands on a considerable amount of money, and he bought, as a junior, I think, the great David portrait of the pope, pope who crowned Napoleon, whose name I can't remember—which pope it was. [00:28:19] But this staggering picture of David, one of the great portraits in this country. And then continued collecting, not in quantity, but at an unbelievable level of quality. I certainly met him, at least I think I met him, in that year, in Philadelphia. I didn't get to know him, but he was a loyal son of Harvard, and grateful to the Fogg Museum, so that later, I came to know him quite well. A matter of weeks after he had met me in the director of the Fogg, he said, "John, it seems to be fated that you and I will not get on." This, indeed, is the way it turned out. He was impeccably loyal to the institution. [00:30:00] He was graciousness itself when I brought my class to Philadelphia. Gave us a cocktail party. He couldn't have been nicer. He got on very well with Agnes Mongan. Made one notable gift to the Fogg, an interesting gift. Paul Sachs, of course, was a great collector of drawings, but his taste strongly ran to the human figure, and he didn't have much sense for landscapes. In a moment of enthusiasm, when he may have felt a little pressed, he bought a great drawing. I've never known which one. But he traded in for it a marvelous Cézanne watercolor of *Mont Sainte-Victoire*. When Agnes succeeded me as director of the Fogg, when she was director, Henry McIlhenny gave this drawing back to the Fogg. Whether in her honor or in Paul Sachs's honor, I don't know. But he was a man capable of that kind of generosity. As he said, we were fated not to get on. [00:32:00] One of the most imaginative collectors that I have known. I mean, in that sense, like Johnson—oh, what? Thirty years ago, he started collecting Greek Revival furniture. Then, you know, you could get—problem was to find it. There was no market for it, and so he got this superb set of Greek Revival furniture. He was one of the first who moved back from the Philadelphia suburb—I think it was Chestnut Hill, where he grew up—into—bought a house on Rittenhouse Square, one of the first to participate in the re-gentrification of Philadelphia, and had a standard-size, a good-size, house, in no sense a palace, with a court, and a perfectly beautiful fountain playing in it when we were there for parties. But he allowed that, except at parties, he had to turn it off, because it kept the servants awake, and they didn't like the sound of running water. [They laugh.] There was a kindly streak in Henry, I suspect.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Was he determined to be difficult, and hence that early remark to you?

JOHN COOLIDGE: No, I think he just came naturally, as far as I was concerned, by being difficult. He certainly had plenty of money. He ran out of collecting paintings, and turned to collecting other things. [00:34:00] I seem to remember some wonderful French 18th-century

furniture. You went to this house, and it was a house where there was a—he added a big-ish room. Not a monumental room, but an ample living room, with these incredible pictures [inaudible] Degas, you name it, and of course the great David portrait, hung around. Everywhere you turned in the house, there were fabulous things. I remember he would give us, the students, the run of the house on the third floor. What shall I say? A kind of grandchild's bedroom, that level. You would find Degas drawings on the wall, and the silver in the dining room was just incredibly beautiful. He was a, I think, curator of silver under Fiske Kimball. Those were the people, three people, in the museum that I knew of.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What about at the Rosenbach Foundation? The collector where—I believe Elizabeth Mongan had worked—

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yes, Betty Mongan. I didn't know them at that time. Had no connection with them, nor did I have, at that time, any connection with Barnes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: The Barnes side of the—

JOHN COOLIDGE: That came later. [00:36:00] I can maybe put all this together in a kind of Philadelphia passage. I knew—you said Rosenbach, and that's not quite—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Rosenwald.

JOHN COOLIDGE: Rosenwald. Rosenwald, yes. I couldn't get it. Rosenwald was a great friend of Paul Sachs's, and I knew him in that connection, but of course his loyalty was entirely to the National Gallery. There's a major story concerning him, but it's a Fogg story. I don't mean not to tell it, but I don't want to get—he was the main connection I had with Rosenwald and Betty Mongan. The Barnes Collection—I think I just simply wrote them. Barnes was dead, and Violette de Mazia was running it, and asked if my students could come and see it. I wrote them well in advance, and said, "Well, we were thinking of coming on a weekend in early April," something like that, four or five months ahead, and we had no problem at all. We spent half a day there. You neither could bring, as I remember it, a brown-bag luncheon, nor were there any facilities within walking distance for eating, so that you tended to get there as soon as they opened, and left there as soon as you—left there as soon as you were so hungry you couldn't bear it. [00:38:05] [Laughs.] It gave you a good three hours there. Her teaching continued. I never kibitzed on it, but it was a serious educational effort. I don't have—I won't judge what was accomplished on that, but it was a school. The collection is, I suppose, much the way it is, still, to this day, astonishing mixture. The Impressionists and through early Matisse, sort of, say, 1910, 1912. One had the impression, or I had the impression, that he simply got the pick. That, you know—there was a question of a Cézanne landscape. All the rest of the world had, from 1A down. Number one was in the Barnes Collection. On the other hand, he had very strong tastes within that period. Striking that there were no early Cézannes. That enormous, wearying number of big Renoirs. Those were the two largest outings, very large. [00:40:01] They were—I think there were something like 40 Cézannes. I have notes on it somewhere. I took notes at the time. On the other hand, artists that he didn't particularly specialize in, and I remember Monet as one. He would have two or three absolutely ravishing pictures. A very odd Monet of his raft, you know, that he had on the canal. Perfectly marvelous little picture of this. You would find, you would find a first-rate Daumier. There was just single ones scattered around, as well as the big things, and of course the great Matisse painting. Then, mingled in, smaller in size, definitely apartment-sized as against house-sized, were the collection, I think almost as numerous—perhaps not quite as numerous, but 60 percent as numerous—of Old Master paintings, which I remember as absolute, unadulterated junk. I can't remember a single—I mean, I can remember—I could remember—I can't remember now a single name of a picture. The names were familiar, but you'd sort of go look at that and say, "Oh, that can't be a Roystev [ph]. There they were. The function, pedagogically, may have been to point out the superiority of French 19th-century to Old Masters. [00:42:06] But there it was, this jumble of things. Then, a third element that was quantitatively not great, but visually conspicuous, was Pennsylvania Dutch ironwork. These would be—oh, what do we say? Like the head of an axe, which would be attached to the middle of a wall, intermingled among the paintings. But enough of that.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Was he, as a person, or his collection, talked about much when you were in Philadelphia? Of course, he'd been at it for 30 years or so by then, hadn't he?

JOHN COOLIDGE: He died. Uh, no, because it was very tightly restricted. We were told—and I

subsequently checked on this, and it was, in essence, true—that he had discussions, or difficulties, with his neighbors. He was not—he was nobody's pal that I could make up. When push came to shove, he would simply announce to the other neighboring landed estates, "Okay, I'll move, but if I move, I've deeded my property here to an orphanage for colored children." [00:44:03] By that, pulling that every now and then, he got pretty much what he wanted out of the [they laugh] locality. So they, the Philadelphians, hadn't been there. He had admitted people like Alfred Barr. He heard from the art world. The art world knew about it, in a small way. I was astonished at how easy it became. Of course, they subsequently got into trouble, but Violette de Mazia, who was a very odd woman, but as far as I was concerned, a nice and helpful woman—but that was—I didn't have any experience with that until later, with the Barnes Collection.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Perhaps we could move away from Philadelphia, for a bit at least. I wanted to, if we could, now talk a bit about some of the people you had known and were going to be reacquainted with when you came back to Cambridge.

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yes, I will do that, but I can't resist, since we started with the insane asylums, telling you, I took over as director, actively, on, shall we say, a Monday—

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JOHN COOLIDGE: —and uh, on a Wednesday, I met with a mature, middle-aged woman, who was an old friend of Paul Sachs, had known Paul Sachs all his life. I think, probably, they were family friends. I can't remember her name. But that family and the Sachses had known each other. She was a powerhouse, and Paul Sachs had said, "Please meet her," and of course I did. She was obviously a wealthy woman, obviously a generous patronage, and interested in social causes. She would come to Cambridge because Paul Sachs had told her that she simply must meet James Conant. She said, "I have no interest in meeting James Conant. I don't think he has the slightest interest in the causes which interest me." Paul Sachs, as you know, is a man of very straight determination, and I was coming to Cambridge for reasons of my own, and he arranged for me, and I've got to go through with it. Well, we sat there, facing one another, and realizing that we had nothing serious to say to each other, but we chatted very pleasantly. [00:02:14] She was a woman with great charm. Would ask me about what I planned to do with the Fogg, and I asked her about her children. I vaguely remember there was something about children involved. Orphanages, that kind of thing. This was a very pleasant occasion. There was, at that time, a woman whose name I have forgotten, who was the director of the state reformatory for women in Framingham, and she was a national figure, and very much a local figure. She was in the newspapers all the time, but universally respected. One of the most interesting—to judge from the newspapers, one of the most interesting people in Massachusetts. My lady, it emerged, was going to spend some time with this woman. Let's call her Dr. X. I hate to just refer to her as a woman. Well, what was my astonishment but, like, Wednesday, to get a telephone call from Dr. X, to say that Mrs. So-and-so was staying with her. [00:04:01] She'd had an enjoyable time with me, and would I be free to come to dinner, perhaps later that week, because Mrs. So-and-So was only going to stay for a few days. I said, "I'm very honored, and certainly I have great—well, a sister who was particularly was interested in problems of women criminals, and this is a great honor that you asked to meet you." This was an invitation to dinner. I said, "There's only one problem. My family is staying at my mother-in-law's in West Newbury, and I commute by train, and I don't have a car." She said, "Well, there's no problem in that. I'll have a state car pick you up." She said, "There's only one thing. You will have to be—I'm sorry, but this is part of my way of life. You'll have to be very prompt." I said, "I don't know how long it will take." This administrative voice said, "Well, I'm sure that 35 minutes would be ample." And so, indeed, I was picked up duly. I arrived—was outside the door of the Fogg at 4:20, and at 4:25, or whatever, there I was, and the car picked me up. Well, I sat back, relaxed, and chatted with the driver, and thought nothing.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Not knowing what was in store.

JOHN COOLIDGE: Knowing nothing of what I was doing, but said I was going to have dinner with a fascinating person. [00:06:02] To my horror, the time allowance had been [speaks French] and one minute of [inaudible] [laughs] or whatever, I arrived at the reformatory, and the [inaudible] was a state car. I'd never seen—I know now [inaudible] state car. You know, the big S15 or something [laughs] on the license plate, and he knew exactly where I should go. He said, "You can go into that door and turn right." I went into that door and turned right, and very worried staff members were there to greet me, because they'd expected me five

minutes earlier, and here I was on the dot. [They laugh.] Well, there was an enormous, big guestbook, and first thing I had to do was to sign my name in the guestbook. I looked at it, and it said name, address. Then there was—a column was, "Have you ever been indicted for a criminal offense?" Well, that was easy. But I did glance at the signature immediately preceding mine, and it was Cardinal Cushing. And under this, "Have you been indicted?" he wrote simply "Not yet." [They laugh.] I always loved the man for that. Well, I went up the stairs, as I was directed, and at the top was greeted eagerly, the sense of relief, by a tiny little woman, who was Dr. X, and introduced herself, and then pointed through the door and said, "We're having a meeting, and we very much hoped you'd be willing to say a few words to us." [00:08:18] I went in the door, and I sat up on the platform with three or four other people and Dr. X, and it came—then the other people were members of the community who started giving reports. I became aware that I was facing all the women criminals in Massachusetts, and I was expected to give them a speech. I thought I was going out to dinner. [They laugh.] I was stuck with this thing. Fortunately, I had, I suppose, seven minutes, as other people were giving reports on recreational activities, or repainting the music room or other things, and got together something, and was introduced as the director of the Fogg, the position I occupied three days, as you know. I literally cannot remember a single word that I said. There was, fortunately, in the back of this huge gymnasium kind of space, a sort of Tiffany glass window, and I was able to call everybody's attention to that. Well, got through this somehow, but then went down to dinner, and Dr. X had nice, small quarters, but beautifully appointed. [00:10:08] She was a woman of high distinction. Everything about it was simple and high distinction. We had a cocktail. We had wine with dinner. I thought to myself, by God, she put me through hell, and no warning at all. I'm not going to be impressed with her, and got into just a fun evening, because I felt I could trip her up on anything. I said, "What do you mean by that? Define your terms." We had very lively—and with nice Mrs. So-and-so in the background, being intelligent and putting her own ore in, it was a very, very good evening. Then the state car delivered me, I guess to North [ph] Station rather than the Fogg, and I went home. It was the worst speaking problem I ever had or expect to have. [They laugh.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did Mrs. So-and-so ever come back around again?

JOHN COOLIDGE: No. I mean, I was—Mrs. So-and-so, no, she obviously—she was one of those marvelous people who said, "I've known Paul Sachs, but I'll tell you what I've told him. I have no interest in the arts. Don't try and get any money out of me, and I won't ever darken [ph] your—I won't ever bother you again. [They laugh.] Because he insisted on it. He insisted that I meet you and so forth."

ROBERT F. BROWN: Perhaps your major engagement of your first week on the job was this—

JOHN COOLIDGE: Oh, yes, unquestionably. [Laughs.] It was certainly baptism by fire. [00:12:00] I'm certainly happy I never had that particular brand of fire again. But there are pictures of all the insane asylums brought this onto [ph].

ROBERT F. BROWN: Well, you came in, then, in the—was that the fall of '48? Something like that?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yes, that was—I suppose, actually, this must have been the spring. No, wait a minute. No, no, no, it was summer. All Harvard appointments are as of July 1st, and in a job like the Fogg—I mean, if you're a professor, you don't start teaching until the following September, but a job like the Fogg, you're at your desk on the Monday nearest the first. I don't know where the Fourth of July fit into this schedule. I've told you the story of [they laugh] or maybe it fit in—maybe it was the Monday after the Fourth of July that I began, likely. No, I came back as an assistant professor, teaching the history of architecture—well, with that in mind. Back to Princeton for a moment. I was terribly aware of the fact that, having grown up in Cambridge, then having had these intensive years at NYU, and then in Princeton, I really didn't know any other part of the country. [00:14:09] By my third year in Princeton, fourth year in Princeton, I was a fairly advanced graduate student, and the prospect of jobs became real. Indeed, it was in my year there that Rens Lee organized a trip to go to see something-or-other hall, which was Mr. Widener's home, and I saw the Widener Collection hanging there before it went to Washington. I don't think we knew it was going to Washington at that time. This was the sort of thing that could be arranged occasionally, and it was all very graciously done. One didn't see Mr. Widener, but was very aware of an impressive array of butlers, impeccable manners, and visual distinction, and presumably great skill. But since it was an exceptional thing, Rens Lee had asked David Raab, then

already teaching at Penn, if he would come along, and I met David at that trip. [00:16:07] It was a very—we had a very good time, and I can remember bantering with David at that time, because we hit it off, and then he casually mentioned that he was relatively new at Penn, and said, "I know I'm going to have to build up the department. Maybe—we're not making a formal offer, but you might think about it. I'd be very interested in having you join," or something of this sort. I had completely forgotten that. The thing that astonished me was that he hadn't, and that he came back on the Philadelphia thing. Well, we didn't want to come back to Cambridge. Polly grew up in Brookline. On the other hand, when the offer came, and we looked at it soberly, combination of the Fogg and the Busch-Reisinger, and the Harvard Fine Arts Department—and I had—one of the things that sort of one thinks about in one's graduate student years was, well, where do you want to end up? I definitely had the feeling I wanted to be—what shall I say? A figure in the profession, not just a lonely scholar. In that sense, somebody like Morey, somebody who was known. [00:18:03] It was clear, thinking about that, that Harvard was a much better springboard than Penn could be. Penn could become that, but not in time for it to help me. I also had—oh, yes, I forgot one thing that was getting me into this. In Princeton, I was asked to go to and give a lecture in Bloomington, Indiana, which I did. This, in the fall. Then, in December—you can figure out the date—I'll get it slightly wrong—the president of the University of Indiana happened to be in Princeton. Extraordinary man named Herman Wells. I think he's still alive. He was possibly the—probably the fattest man I've ever—he was one of those butterballs of a man. It didn't seem—there wasn't an ounce of flab. It just seemed pure energy filling up this round figure. Well, any case, he asked to see me, and I met him. He offered me an assistant professorship, starting the coming September. [00:20:05] I had liked Bloomington very much. I had learned there that he very definitely—he was—he took over a third-rate state university, and was determined to, well, get it somewhere in the other league with Wisconsin and Michigan, as indeed I don't think it's quite that rate, but it's not third-rate now. It's a minor—something like that. One of the areas that he was interested in developing was the visual arts, and indeed he—oh, I can't remember—a couple of years later, spent something like three-quarters of a million dollars buying a private library of a private scholar or something like that. He was determined that that should get on the map, and he achieved that. When he offered me the job, which was, as I remember—but this can be checked, or can be checked—was like a Monday morning, I said, "Of course I'll accept. I had a wonderful time. Yes, by all means. But, in view of what happened yesterday, I don't think that your offer can be entirely seriously, and I know that you will understand if my acceptance is not entirely serious." What happened yesterday was Pearl Harbor. [00:22:01] Was literally the day after Pearl Harbor that this took place, and one sensed that this—he was carrying out what he intended to do, and of course one could only respond to his carrying out the word [ph], but knowing full well it was very unlikely that anyone would want to carry through with this without having any—literally the day after Pearl Harbor, you didn't know how this was going to affect one's life.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But that never came—

JOHN COOLIDGE: That never came anywhere. Henry Hope went—Henry Hope and I, I think, were both slated to go together. We were about of an age. He was a little older than I. I can't remember where I got to know him. We liked—yes, was in summer school here. I was coming up to summer school, and he lived in an enchanting 17th-century house—an enchanting SPNEA house in Ipswich. We were very sympathetic to one another, so this would have been fine. However, this is getting—I'm not embarrassedly personal here. I don't mind being personal. I'm just wondering whether the archives wants this kind of personal thing. I was in the Navy during the war, and was, as I told you, sent abroad, and was, of all things—we arrived, well, flying in the plane—plane—at that time, all stops—you made all possible stops. [00:24:19] So we flew from Iceland to Shan—no, island was neutral, and therefore, they couldn't let us, as members of the U.S. Navy, appear there. As you approached Shannon [ph], the stewardess—it was a very, very simple plan, but the arrangement was made, and I can't now remember the details, but I can remember that I was handed, as all of them were, a straight razor, with which I snipped every gold button and the braids from my sleeves. I emerged in Shannon, or the inspectors came aboard, and all they could see was men in dark blue business suits, but Lord, they didn't have any buttons on them, but there they were. There weren't any naval officers around. [They laugh.] The hats were conveniently stowed somewhere else. Well, this created an enforced stay in London. They had set it all up, but you arrived in London, and the first thing that happened was that you'd have a—we'd turn these things over to—your clothes with your name on it to the Navy's tailor, who recreated. [00:26:09] A necessary adjunct of this was I guess you had two suits,

and you could wear one without buttons while the other one was being—or you wore a button in case you were billeted for one night or so in London. I was billeted, pleasantly enough, at Brown's Hotel. The only time I've ever spent a night there. I was accompanying—or accompanied by my companion. Was a marvelous guy. Great, big, stunning-looking, very high-colored country boy from, oh, I'd say, Georgia, rural Georgia, who got himself some kind of athletic scholarship, and had a couple of years college education, and then went into the navy as an enlisted man, and had risen to the rank of warrant officer. And he didn't know—nicest man you could wish to meet. A man who had—who knew life. His career had been in the navy, and he'd been in the Pacific, the Pacific fleet, and this was a guy who knew his way around the world, but didn't know beans about Britain. [00:28:19] What's it mean to have a queen? What are the powers of the queen? What are all these lords I hear about? All this kind of thing. Spending a couple of days with him, with essentially no work to do until your papers—you were in shape and your papers were in shape to be sent to other work, you just wandered around. It came over me, specifically from this experience, that my whole vision of the wonders of teaching in the Middle West was at least partly false, that I was not an American. I was an Atlanticist. My family had traveled abroad for generations. As a graduate student, I'd gone to Europe a lot, and I had the conventional languages. [00:30:00] What potentially I had to offer was the experience of knowing the world around the Atlantic, and that it was idle to imagine that there was a sort of virtue of going out to a part of the country that didn't have many art departments, bringing culture and light from the Eastern Seaboard to them. And so when the chance of going to Cambridge came up, it fit these two basic motivations of wanting to get ahead in the profession, and the feeling that I couldn't live with myself if I turned down a big-league opportunity. I might not be able to survive in the big leagues, but you couldn't say, "Oh, no," and to go to Michigan, which was the alternative. There was, after all, no tenure track in Penn, particularly. I hadn't really discussed this with either the Michigan offer or the Harvard offer, with David, and I think Penn would have matched it if the departmental outlook had been as good, but it wasn't. In any case, there was no question there. There was no illusion that we wanted to come back. We didn't. It was a challenge. Loved Philadelphia, and, well, we loved—well, the things that hit us first was what we'd come to call Middle Atlantic urbanity. [00:32:13] This is not a fantasy, and the reason I know it isn't a fantasy is the experience of living here. We had a house in Rosemont, which is the next suburb to Bryn Mawr. We were closer to Bryn Mawr than any of the very nice people that we got to know in the Bryn Mawr faculty, who lived further out, but this is perhaps a couple of miles walk from Bryn Mawr. We lived on a circle of houses, very much like Grey Gardens West, and after we'd been there a week, a man approached us from one of the neighboring houses and introduced himself as living next house, but one, and he said, "I notice you're moving in here. My name is so-and-so." He said, "We have a practice. Once a month, after church, one o'clock, all of us living in this group have cocktails together, and I am here to invite you to come to cocktails to meet the other people in the group," and so we did. And then, along come March, one of these gatherings, I spoke up and said, "I don't know what the plan of the group's [inaudible], Polly and I would very much like it if, on April the 15th, you would all join us for cocktails." [00:34:13] Of course, they all did, and it was this elegance of simplicity. All kinds of things, one realized, got resolved. If your dog was chasing the cat of somebody next door, I would talk to another neighbor about it, and we would figure out how to approach you on this point. It was nothing anything—you avoided all kinds of possible little tensions by letting in the other members of the group, and what do we do about it. And it extended, of course, to everyday meetings. Meet them on the platform as you commuted into Philadelphia. Came here, and no regular meet—no meetings of any sort. There was man who had been president of the Investment Bankers Association of America. Enormous dignity of white nostalgia. I forget what his name was. Higginson, something like that. There was an elderly widow who lived in one of these houses here, a woman in her late 80s. He, I think, was making some such gesture as a neighborhood cocktail party. Met her, and asked her if she would come, and she looked him straight in the eye—lived there for 15—10 years at least—said, "I don't think we've ever been introduced." [00:36:04] Well, it's the—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Big difference.

JOHN COOLIDGE: It's the difference, and the first thing we met was what seemed to us friendliness, what's standard courtesy in a certain way.

ROBERT F. BROWN: That was something that you feared returning to—

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yeah, we didn't—we just—we didn't verbalize it, exactly, hadn't analyzed it, but when we got back here, we realized that it was precisely this that was one of the thing

we resented. Well, of course, when you live here, of course, you make your own friends. You work it out, but the shock of getting away from it, and then of coming back to it, and realizing that it is a reality, is—well, had the people who just bought the house next door to drinks last night to get to know them. I mean, this kind of thing. So this was purely a professional opportunity. One of the nicest aspects of this was that I got to know Joseph Hudnut, who was always known as Vie [ph] Hudnut. Had liked him. He gave a course on the history of cities, and this is very much, as it was then, particularly an interest of mine. I expected to go on and be a serious student of it, and he asked me if—well, about December—well, November, perhaps—whether I would join him in teaching his course next year, and of course I agreed. [00:38:11] I felt enormously flattered. Then, before I discovered vitamin C—I still am, to an extent, subject to monstrous colds, and I've learned that when one of these comes on, you go to bed and stay in bed. I was in bed and staying in bed, one day in December, and the telephone rang. The voice, a female voice at the other end, said, "Just a moment, please." Then it was the dean of the faculty, by then provost, Paul Buck, calling. He said, "The visiting committee of the fine arts department and the Fogg Museum is here, and I should like you to meet them. How soon can you come down?" I said, "Well, it will be at least half an hour." He said, "Why?" I said, "Frankly, Mr. Buck, I have a terrible cold and I haven't eaten a shade yet." He wasn't used to junior members of the faculty not being there in five minutes, particularly when they're at home, and presumably not working. [They laugh.] Well, I met them, and then the—and literally, I guess Paul Buck tipped me off, but the next thing I knew was being taken by him to see Jim Conant, and Conant making me the offer. [00:40:20] I knew that—sure. Of course, it was obvious that—I'll go into the background, that there was going to be a new director of the Fogg, but I had no idea that I was even remotely considered for the thing until the visiting committee, or shortly thereafter I became aware, then went to see Conant. I remember talking to Conant about this and saying to him, "Well, look, just to begin with, I have never had any administrative experience," and that was true. I had never had a secretary. I'd never had—I'd never even had a piece of a secretary. Work in the Navy, you'd write out something long-handed. Somebody who was there to type out the notes that all of you wrote out longhand would take—but it was not personal. It was that there was a typist attached to the office when you had something that—you'd take notes on a telephone call, hand it to the typist. This was part of the routine. You weren't directing somebody. Conant's one remark—and I can remember, and it puzzled me—said, "Oh, you'll have plenty of power. Don't worry about that." Which was, of course, indeed true. Well, the—

ROBERT F. BROWN: How did it come about? Did you ever learn? [00:42:00] People had their eye on you and—

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You were teaching. You'd been teaching here.

JOHN COOLIDGE: I had been teaching. To go back, there was a rule at Harvard, and for all I know it still exists. Administrative officers must retire at 65. Professors can stay on, or could be invited to stay on, but there was an automatic retirement of anybody in an administrative position. I have observed that however marvelous an administrator has been, at 65, people say, "It's time for a change." I never—I mean, I can remember how people regretted that Alfred North Whitehead quit teaching at 70, and all the young graduate students who said, "But I didn't know last year. Next year I won't be able—I had counted on taking his courses." Indeed, people into their 70s, professionally useful, but administrators, I think, are not. Well, what had happened was that Edward Forbes hit 65 in approximately 1944, and Paul Sachs [laughs] curious aspect of Edward Forbes. [00:44:07] Harvard repeatedly offered him the title of professor, and he said, "I am not a scholar." He did teach, but "I am not a scholar," and he always refused. Paul Sachs accepted, and was indeed chairman of the fine arts department at one point. Served his term there. So Edward Forbes retired in 1944, or thereabouts. Conceivably '45. I don't remember. And Paul Sachs retired with him, but remained as a professor, so he continued teaching his museum course for a couple of years more.

ROBERT F. BROWN: I can put in a—

JOHN COOLIDGE: Oh, sorry, yes.

[END OF AAA_coolid89_4of11_SideB.]

JOHN COOLIDGE: The—Paul Buck was then running the university. He was the dean of the faculty of arts and sciences, but when Conant went to war, he became de facto president.

They ultimately gave him the title of provost, which hadn't existed before, because it was expected that Conant would come back, as he did, but it was partly to indicate that he was senior to the other deans, say the dean of the law school. When push came to shove, you had somebody who advised the corporation on a major university policy thing, and Paul Buck was it. He assumed—he, uh—the corporation, we'll say, realized that you'd be looking for somebody, at least potentially, in their 30s or 40s, to replace—to be the next director of the Fogg. Most—many of the eligible people were in uniform, and even if you identified the person and it was all right, they couldn't effectively take on the job. So they appointed Arthur Pope as director. Arthur Pope was one of the small group that I mentioned who had—after the retirement of Charles Eliot Norton, younger group came in, so that he was, himself, a very senior man. [00:02:18] For all I know, a person like that can be over 65, because it becomes evident that you are in [laughs] whatever you're called, you're an acting director if you take it on. Well, Arthur Pope was director, and one important fact, Edward Forbes and Paul Sachs agreed to be responsible for the fundraising after they retired. Arthur Pope said, "I'll take it if I don't have to do any fundraising. I hadn't done it." He was not temperamentally adapted to it. Just wouldn't do this. When Conant returned in, say, '46—

ROBERT F. BROWN: He'd been on a research—

JOHN COOLIDGE: Oh, he was very much, on the atom bomb. I think he was an administering scientist in that. I think they brought him. He was distinguished as a scientist in his own right, but I think he probably had an administering function. One of the things that I remember is Conant saying, after the war, to a small group at some dinner or other, that he was present when they set off the bomb in the desert. [00:04:14] He said, "We had calculated everything." There was the thought, at the time, that this could set off a complete explosion, really blow up everything. He said, "We calculated that. We're pretty sure it wasn't true. But I was lying there in my foxhole, and what we had not realized was the tremendous blaze of light." He said, "When this light came, I was alone in there. I remember thinking, 'Oh my God, you don't suppose we were wrong?' That our whole universe is going to blow up, that this is the first sign of it." [Laughs.] Well, showing only the—he was high up or he wouldn't have been present watching it or had now had the discussion. So Paul Buck took on the person—the hunt for the new director. They offered it to [inaudible] he talked to me later, very frankly, about this, and very nicely said it was only offered to one other person. That was Dan Rich at Chicago. Said, "I thought very seriously of Alfred Barr. But oh no, he's not the kind of man for this job. [00:06:02] He's a wonderful magazine man, but this is—no, he couldn't." He couldn't have fit it in, sort of phrase. I was too new—I mean, I was three months into the department. Had no way of knowing how, how Harvard went about finding people. When Dan turned them down, somehow my name came up. I don't—have no way of knowing. The only thing I had here was Paul Buck saying to me, "We only offered this to one person before you, and that was Dan Rich. That was the only person we offered to." That's all I know about, but he also obviously, because of remark about Alfred Barr, had come in and he looked around, then, at some point, offered me this. I made two conditions on accepting it. The—I don't remember if I've told you this, but I'll assume—you can always cut out repetitions. I'm trying to be orderly in my biography, not trying to be vain. The department, like all departments, but more than it is now, it was an oligarchy, and the oligarchy included the tenured people, and the tenured people included both associate professors and full professors. [00:08:06] I was an assistant professor, and I said, "If I take the job, I must be a member of the oligarchy. The two institutions are—the point of the thing is to have them intimately connected, and I've got to hear discussions about issues in the oligarchy." This meant—I said, "I'm not asking for tenure. You can make me an associate professor without tenure. It's not what I'm interested in. My interest is—slap me, I just can't run it, unless I'm a member of the oligarchy." When Edward Forbes took over, the university was paying, like, $10,000 a year for the heating and lighting and maintenance of what became Hunt Hall. In the Depression, Forbes and Sachs pointed out to Radcliffe that more than half of the girls that were—that the students studying fine arts were girls, and that Radcliffe ought to chip in here. Radcliffe chipped in five, and when I came there, I said, "Look, the museum is a museum, fine. It's endowed as a museum. But the lecture halls and the offices for the department are faculty responsibility, and that [$]15,000 is not an adequate reimbursement. [00:10:06] You've got to kick in more to the budget for the use of those." On the theory that, well, if the city of Cambridge took over the museum, the department—Harvard had to find quarters for the professors and the students and the library. They would have had to have spent more than $15,000 building, maintenance. I can't remember. It wasn't enough, but they did kick in. I don't know, they may have given me an additional $20,000. [Laughs.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: This was one of the other conditions?

JOHN COOLIDGE: The other condition was I want this, is this is absurd. I'm not administrator, but even I can see that that's absurd. [Laughs.] They made no bones about that.

ROBERT F. BROWN: They did meet those conditions, and you then—

JOHN COOLIDGE: I then accepted it.

ROBERT F. BROWN: In the summer of '48, I guess.

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yes, I came on in the summer of '48, having started here in September in '47.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You talked—could I go back a bit to Joseph Hudnut? You co-taught with him.

JOHN COOLIDGE: No, I was to.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You was to, but—

JOHN COOLIDGE: The moment I took on the Fogg, I went to see him and said, "No, I can't."

ROBERT F. BROWN: What was he like? Was he a—

JOHN COOLIDGE: Oh, he was—

ROBERT F. BROWN: You followed him to Columbia, and he—

JOHN COOLIDGE: He disappeared, and then—

ROBERT F. BROWN: —he came to Harvard.

JOHN COOLIDGE: Deceptive man. He was little, which I suppose means he was my size. I find people who are exactly my size look little to me. Rather roly-poly. High-colored. Uh. [00:12:00] Innocent-looking. Knew his history of architecture. Prided himself on writing well. It was a letter-to-the-editor kind of writing, but they were always first-rate, and occasional—non-scholarly—no pretensions of scholarship. I guess he was trained as an architect. Passionately a teacher. Cared very much about this. By the time I had known him, Gropius had taken over, and there was a sadness. He was almost—not quite a pathetic figure, but almost. I think if he could have, as it were, gone back into teaching and not been a dean, he might have—would have almost been happy to do so. On the other hand, a sharp mind, and a ruthlessness, an intellectual ruthlessness. He propounded one thing to me. I don't know how this came up, but it was—he threw it off in the course of conversation. Fogg, of course, has this huge—well, not huge, but a large slide collection. [00:14:00] Whatever, 150,000 slides then—it's much more now—and a whole batch of people who service it. And he—one of the things that is a damn bore at Harvard is that, of course, the Architectural School has slide collection, and in those days, when I first came here, the landscape architecture school had a slide collection, and those have been largely merged. Not wholly, but largely. But the result was any lecture that you gave, you would have to consult certainly two, and very frequently, particularly if you were interested in cities and things, that gets into city planning, which was in the landscape collection. If you—bear in mind that there were two sizes of slides. Harvard had 150 of the big slides, and one is cataloged and one isn't. You ended up in—par for the course was consulting three to four different collections. Of course, when you wanted to buy a new slide, when you were dreaming up something, you had to be sure that it didn't exist in those. Well, I guess I commented on this to Hudnut, and he said, "It's perfectly ridiculous. I can't do anything about it. But the way this should be run is that every professor should have a sum of money budgeted for slides. [00:16:06] He can order those slides against this sum of money, and then he keeps them. Then, if he needs, he teaches a new course. Following that year, he'll have a much larger sum of money, so he can buy the new slides he needs." He said, "That would cost you so much less." You're paying for the slides anyway. But if the professor kept them, you wouldn't have paying for people to run the slide room. One immediately thought—I don't know whether I asked him, but the thought comes to one—supposing I want a slide of the Parthenon in Professor Huntman's [ph] collection. He said, "Look, it's always cheaper to duplicate that slide than it is to pay a secretary." Sure. The idea, when you retire or quit teaching, then that—your

colleagues can pick through the slides of your collection, and since Harvard paid for them, you potentially can merge them into other things. But this is dead logic, and I suppose I have told 20 art departments who were starting out this. I've never been able to persuade them. They think of these things in terms of books, which do not cost a dollar and a quarter a piece, as it were. Well, this is the way—the kind of mind that you were up against, which, in friendly conversation, you never—rarely ran into, but was there. [00:18:00] He was a delightful, friendly person. I can remember going over for cocktails with him. My impression is that his wife—had no children—was in some sense a very disappointing woman. And there's a dim memory, and this is—I don't mind talking frankly, because it's only coming out—that she had been a quite extravagant person. That maybe his life was constrained by the need to support her whims, if they were. I never knew them well enough to say that with any conviction, but it was not a—there was never any sign of conflict or anything, but somehow one never felt that—well, unlike Marie Kimball, she was not a person of the stature, of personal stature, such as would give him support in the emotionally difficult professional—the emotionally difficult professional years that he had at Harvard. At least that's my impression.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But his coming to Harvard, he had quite transformed teaching of architecture, had he? Or at least he'd brought in the interest in Modernism.

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yeah, he started that at Columbia, and enough survived. He had a person teaching design named Yan Rutenberg [ph], and what succeeded him there was a triumvirate of men who taught construction, and Yan Rutenberg and somebody else ran it brief—Leopold Arno [ph], who was the construction man, I think, taught, and then became dean after a couple of years. [00:20:13] But Yan Rutenberg, nice man, but I think he had his eye on the Gropius league, and would have brought in somebody like that in Columbia if he'd stayed. One of the things that the likes of me then and me now, really, crucial things like the kind of level of salary that Columbia was prepared to pay, we early received a salutary experience in these matters of Princeton. The story was told to us by another member, a slightly more senior member, of a Princeton department, which was a familiar department like classics. I won't say it was classics, but it was a basic department which they had. A young man, a young assistant professor, got an attractive offer from another university, and went to see the chairman of the department and told him about the offer, which was a very considerable raise in his salary. [00:22:00] The chairman looked at him in amazement and said, "Young man, you don't mean to tell me that you're attempting to live on the salary that we pay?" Princeton could do this in part because there was no state income tax in New Jersey, which there was in Massachusetts.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But this assumption also was that these were young men who had means—

JOHN COOLIDGE: Had means. Everybody had—everybody did, to a very real extent, until my generation at Harvard. Edward Forbes had needs of his own, and so did Paul Sachs, so did Kingsley Porter, so did Charles Eliot Norton. I don't know about Pope, but the—and it was, after all, widely true in the faculty as a whole. Lawrence Lowell had means of his own. This was quite usual [inaudible] have means. You were surrounded by people, until the refugees appeared. Well, now, you were asking me—

ROBERT F. BROWN: We talked a bit about Joseph Hudnut. I'd like to know—maybe you could talk a little bit about some of the other people that you knew, or were shortly to know, or got to know very quickly here. Let's stick, for a moment, at least, with the architectural side. Gropius, had you known him, or did you get to meet him?

JOHN COOLIDGE: No. Two people to speak of. One can be spoken very briefly. While I was in Princeton, we were invited to a dinner party in New York. [00:24:04] I don't remember who my host and hostesses were. They were obviously people who were interested in the art world, or the architectural world. At this dinner party, I, I guess, in that delightful period when the men and the ladies, in them days, separated over cigars and brandy, and the ladies, we visualized as telling dirty stories in the living room [they laugh] I was talking to a little, very enthusiastic man about his line of research, which had to do with industrial activities in the arts. I said to him—he'd been introduced to me, but the name had slipped me—I said to him, "You know, the person you will want to talk to is Giedion [ph]." He replied to me, "But I am Giedion." [They laugh.] Gideon was not a regular member of the faculty. He came here originally as one of the Norton lecturers, and gave *Space, Time, and Architecture*, and then kept coming back. A very remote person. Uh. I suspect somehow—well, this is

partly borne into people who are remote, and then I think personal tragedy. [00:26:01] A marriage broke up, and I don't know anything about Giedion Vulker [ph] but he seemed very alone thereafter. Of course, he was the historian for modern architects, but by the same token, modern architects didn't approve of more orthodox historians, like, shall we say, Russell Hitchcock. He was their historian, but at the same time, Giedion felt cut off in some way from his pure historian colleagues. He was branded as a radical, and he had to think of them as stuffy old conservatives. This was—these were the roles into which people were placed. I never knew the exceptions to these roles that may have taken place in Europe, but one met Giedion here in the library to give lectures, always well-attended. He was somehow a figure of absurdity. I can only remember one lecture, and one statement in one lecture, but it was, in some very broad way, on the history of architecture. [00:28:16] The Egyptians got into it, and he was talking about the Egyptians, and he announced, in the flow of lecturing, that the pyramid was, of course, the pubic triangle upside-down.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Well, that's history for you.

JOHN COOLIDGE: That's history for you, and in some ways, it was expected that Gropius would make remarks that you could either characterize as ridiculous or stimulating. But—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Giedion or Gropius?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Giedion, yes. Giedion would make remarks that were characterized this way. And so that he was—

ROBERT F. BROWN: He was a man of uncertain status.

JOHN COOLIDGE: He was a man of very uncertain status, and of universally accepted stature, but he was expected, like the court fool, either to be stimulating [laughs] or to be absurd. This tended to isolate him. Of course, it must have been something in his personality that—because I wasn't—you didn't have a feeling that he was a close friend of anybody. He was simply this remarkable man. Gropius, on the other hand, was, oh, astonishingly friendly and helpful. [00:30:08] The thing that sticks in my mind most clearly, I was one of the—Harvard had an introductory survey course for decades. When I came, or shortly after I came—I would think it was in my first year, but I can't swear to that. It was first or second year. The scholarly, grand old man, Wilhelm Curler [ph] approached Frederick Deknatel and myself, and proposed that we should give a survey—offer a survey course to replace the, by then, extremely old-fashioned course that was being given by not the oldest, but the most old-fashioned member of the department. Rather amazingly, both courses, for a number of years, continued being given, but I, of course, taught the history of architecture in the new course. When it came to the 20th century, possibly not my first year, but damn soon—I taught it first—I taught that course, my part of that course, seven years, and felt I had done my bit when—gave other courses. [00:32:12] I was giving other course. Any case, when it came to the 20th century, I asked Gropius if he wouldn't lecture to this course, give one lecture on 20th century architecture. He not only willingly accepted—and implicit in any such invitation is, of course, that you have to adjust your schedule to fit the course. You can't say, "I'd like to, in principle, but it's not convenient." If you do it, it's twelve o'clock on the Monday, Wednesday, or Friday that the other professors have planned for you to do it. He continued to do that until he retired, or until I was—well, certainly as long as I was teaching the course, whether my successors kept it up. But this was the kind of thing that he would say yes to. If he couldn't say yes, he would say, "Well, I've got to be in Germany all April" or something, but he was awfully willing to do that.

ROBERT F. BROWN: As a lecturer, was he quite—

JOHN COOLIDGE: Oh, yes. Yes and no. There was nothing that he hadn't said before. I mean, you could have—if you missed that lecture, a couple of hours reading Gropius's books would have enabled you to pass any final essay question on the course. [00:34:00]

ROBERT F. BROWN: Perhaps it was the manner in which he talked.

JOHN COOLIDGE: But it was the manner in which he talked. The manner was of commanding modesty. He would talk to his knowledge, but it was never overriding. There were those who said that he disapproved of architectural history, or he was anti-architectural history. There were various ways of formulating it. I remember once talking to him and saying this, saying, "A lot of people say this. Is this true?" He completely dismissed the allegation. Said, "Oh, no, that isn't true at all. I do believe in history. I tend to find that conventional history is too

narrow, conventional art history." He said, "A field that I admire very much is Spanish folk pottery." Which you never get that, any art historian talking about that. He was receptive to architecture without architects. All that kind of thing is what he was saying, that it's a lot broader than the Greeks and the Romans and the gods. [00:36:00] All my experiences with him had this simplicity. I can't remember, did I tell you about the graduate center business? I think I did.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You may have, but only in passing. You mean the Harkness—

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —Commons. I think it might be worth recounting.

JOHN COOLIDGE: I'm happy to repeat it. I'm happy I'm—

ROBERT F. BROWN: This was done by his firm, right?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yeah. Paul Buck was scandalized that he had taught at Harvard for—whatever it was—roughly 13 years, from '37 to 1950, and Harvard had never—had built buildings, but had never offered him one. Rumor has it that, shortly after Gropius's arrival, they built the Littauer Center, and this involved tearing down the old gymnasium, which had been partially replaced by Lawrence Lowell. It was a great, sprawling Queen Anne building, 1880s. Peabody & Stearns built it. It was used, at least in part, for graduate students, and they built a new Hemenway Gymnasium. The gossip was, and I've never pursued this—I don't know how one would pursue it today—that this was offered to Gropius when he arrived. [00:38:12] The date must be approximately right. Shall we say '37 or '38. And that Hudnut had told him that it was such a small building, it wasn't worthy of his position, and maybe this was not—maybe this refusal, if it took place, was not gracefully handled. In any case, the fact was that he had never done anything at Harvard after 13 years of teaching, and Paul Buck got him that commission. Gropius, in this case, proved an extraordinary architect, in that he came—he was finished well within the stated time, when he said the building could be occupied, and it came in under budget. There was, of course, a contingency fund, which, as I was told, was half a million dollars. When it was clear that the building was likely to come in under budget, Gropius felt—must have known all along—that it was too austere. The building has one appalling weakness, and that is that, between the bedrooms, there's absolutely no soundproofing, and nobody stays—lives in it more than a year, if they can possibly avoid it. [00:40:15] It's appalling that way. But this was a fact of Harvard asking for more than it would pay for. Here's your umpteen million dollars, and we want accommodation for umpteen hundred students, period, and there you are. Well, Gropius came to feel that it was too austere, and was well within budget, and decided that he would ask the corporation to allow him to commission a group of artists to produce works of art to go in the building. He was a very smart man as a professional, and he realized that—or he thought it might help him, in making this unheard of request, if he had the support of the people in the fine arts. And so he approached Fred Deknatel and Charles Kuhn and myself about this, and said, "Do you think it's a good idea?" [00:42:05] We said, "Of course. It's a marvelous idea. Would you back it?" He said, "Of course." Then he came back later and told us the artist that he had—whom he was proposing to commission. Well, again, we made two stipulations, and one was that the completed—this, I'm sure—the first of these, I'm sure, was my idea. That the sketches that these artists were going to produce should become the property of the Fogg Museum. The second caveat that we introduced, we said that the artists that he had chosen, which were Herbert Bayer and [inaudible] now I can't remember —

ROBERT F. BROWN: Miró?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Miró. Were all Europeans, and of stature, and that he ought to include one young American. It was really not acceptable without including one young American, and there was not an instant's argument on that. I don't think the point had occurred to him. He picked the best artists. We wouldn't have, we wouldn't have—if this was the UN commissioning it, we wouldn't have quarreled with that choice of artists. [00:44:00] He picked Richard Lippold, and again, when we heard the name, we said fine. He was very little-known then. Of course, this was the disaster You know the *World Tree* that Richard Lippold produced.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Can you mention that?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Well, we didn't—I came to know Lippold quite well on two later occasions He's a lovely guy, and I think he's a wonderful artist, but it was the only chance he had had at that point to do a monumental commission, and he produced this—what the students called is the *World Tree*, and it just simply isn't up to his standard. It's just somewhat conventional sculpture, and not very good, whereas his marvelous hung—

ROBERT F. BROWN: The *Sun* and—

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yes, all of these. These were what we expected, and certainly we wouldn't have denied him doing something different for his own first monumental commission. I don't know—I think, almost certainly, if he had said he wanted to do something inside, Gropius, on the basis of his work, would have let him, because he picked Lippold on the basis of what he had seen. But for whatever reason, it is out there. [00:46:00] Well, it's just an absurdity. But what you gained in the other commissions were more than worth it. But in all this kind of approach, all this kind of discussion, no man could have been more reasonable, more straightforward. There was no sense of manipulation. There was no sense of this being a kind of quid pro quo for his giving the lectures, or that he expected anything more than he asked. Any straightforward thing you asked from him, he would do. I never got to know him personally at all. I've never known anybody who spoke of him in those terms. It's a very complete life, so that one's not saying that he didn't have friends. I wouldn't for a moment assume that. I just have never happened to run into that. He was a—perhaps one would say he was a bit of a technocrat at the highest level. I mean, a technocrat with a world view, but not a person who—I found it hard to imagine a relationship with him that was purely friendly, in a sense, and I don't mean this in any derogatory way. [00:48:22] I think it's a limitation of my—when I say that, let me say that's a limitation of my imagination, more than a limitation of his capacity.

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JOHN COOLIDGE: I had difficulty getting a barber who Polly thought did an acceptable job, and the result was that I would go into the Ritz to be taken care of. And as I remember it, the charges were controlled by the union, so that one said, "go into the Ritz," it implies it was much more expensive. It wasn't, or not significantly. But as director of the Fogg, I went to New York so often that I ended up by having my hair cut in New York quite as often as I had it in Boston, which, again, reflects a kind of provincialism in our lives.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You found here, as you were saying earlier, that dealers and so forth were few and far between here, when you came back?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yes, and precisely Kirk Askew was commenting on this. He said that he had no respect for Boston dealers, because they didn't discover any local artists. He said, "If these artists were being the people to whom I turned to discover who the young talent in New England was, then I would respect them, but I don't. I have to find that on my own." This seemed to me a very damning criticism. And true—by and large, I think is only 20th-century true. I think the dealers were as alert to 18th-century furniture as their New York—or to 19th-century paintings. [00:02:10] I think Vose, for instance, is as good a person for 19th-century paintings of a certain [inaudible] is as apt to discover a new artist as any New York dealer is.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But this didn't particularly affect you as Fogg director, the fact there wasn't much of a contemporary art community of dealers or collectors, I suppose, for that matter, here in the Greater Boston area?

JOHN COOLIDGE: No. One thing about being director of the Fogg, you were also almost ex officio—that's arguable—a trustee of the Boston Museum, so you didn't compete with the Boston Museum. I can't remember having bought anything from a Boston dealer that was of any consequence. It seems to me we got a De Fleeger [ph] from old Mr. Vose, the grandfather of the present Voses. But that only—though it was a nice picture, they'd not bothered to change the price, and we got it—God knows the date of the label on the back when we bought this—oh, it must have been 12-by-18 landscape by De Fleeger for $300. There, you felt you had every right to be smarter than the Boston Museum. [00:04:03] [They laugh.] They had as good a chance to get it as you did. But I don't think we would have—we avoided competition.

ROBERT F. BROWN: As you came on, Paul Sachs and Edward Forbes were very much still

around.

JOHN COOLIDGE: Oh, very much.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did they act, to a degree, as your mentors, or what was—

JOHN COOLIDGE: No. Paul Sachs retained an office in the building as long as he taught, and then refused to have an office in the building. An office, I guess, in Widener, something like that. Edward Forbes had an eyrie [ph] of his own. One of the things that was extraordinary about Edward Forbes was that he—I think the most extraordinary things about Edward Forbes was that there was no question in anybody's mind that he was the boss. But his—and they've said so, beginning with Paul Sachs. But his subordinates were more distinguished than he. Surely, Paul Sachs is known as a collector much more than Edward Forbes. Langdon Warner is an expert in Oriental art, and comparably more distinguished career in a sense. Therefore, Edward Forbes was used to having people—letting people go their own way. [00:06:08] He very much let me go—it was no effort for him to let me go my own way. He was used to it. Sachs, I think, may have been an effort—was a determined—he was a man of determination as well as passion, and simply did these things this way because he believed in doing them that way, and not having an office in the building.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Was Forbes a person you got to know quite well and over time? He lived into the 1960s, after all.

JOHN COOLIDGE: Well, Forbes was a classmate of my father's, and I went to primary school with one of his sons. Was aware of the other members of the family in our generation. So, in a sense, we'd always known Edward Forbes. We never became intimate with him. Forbes was a man who had protegees, to whom I suppose the most astonishing—well, the two most astonishing were—oh, Lord—Dan Thompson [ph] and—oh, the director at Hartford. [00:08:06] Uh.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Austin?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yes, Chick Austin. There must have been others, but those are the two that I came to know personally. In some ways, rather alike, these fabulously brilliant and gifted people. Edward Forbes just seemed foggy and absent-minded, and was—again, I go back—he was a profoundly deceptive person. The man that one knew bore no relation to the achievement that he had had. One respected Forbes enormously for what he had accomplished, and he was sweet and likable, but there was nothing remarkable in the individual that I was aware of. Anything but. I mean, he was maybe even prematurely old. He would come in and say, "Can I have just two minutes of your time?" The statement bore no relation to two minutes. [00:10:00] It would be pushing an hour. It was—without thinking of a specific instance, it was apt to be something long-gone or—and in that sense, you couldn't do anything about it—or something of the present that could be immediately fixed. You know, a lightbulb that needed replacement, and that this became the subject of 20 minutes conversation. I came to dread the "May I have two minutes of your time?" There was something profoundly, almost deceptive about him. I remember admiring, enormously, his eye when we would consider a painting. We'd be in my office. Encourage all kinds of people to come in, but certainly Edward Forbes. He would say virtually nothing, and when he said something, it was apt to seem terribly irrelevant, such as, "I don't like the color of that frame very much." [00:12:00] I've really never been able to figure out whether this meant that he didn't like the painting, and felt it would hurt my feelings having had it sent up, to say this, but wishing to express some kind of negative reaction, or whether that was just all he saw. The color of the frame just bothered him, and he was expressing all that was on his mind. For a good many years, like, 10 I would say, he was on the board of trustees of the Boston Museum with me. I never heard him say anything of any consequence there, so it wasn't exclusively because of our relationship in the Fogg.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You mentioned that Millard Meiss said, "Oh, if only Berenson had had Forbes's eye." In some quiet way, he seemed to exhibit, at times, this—

JOHN COOLIDGE: Well, there were these legendary stories—legendary. They actually happened., but everybody knew they happened. One would hear them as gossip, and then you'd check with Forbes. On the first landing, as you go up the main stairs of the Fogg from the first to the second floor, there's a wooden statue, oh, I suppose, five feet tall, on a bracket. [00:14:05] Forbes told me, confirming the gossip, that he happened to be in

Pittsburgh, for a reason he couldn't remember, and he saw this in an antique store and bought it for $150. So he said. The piece arrived in Cambridge, and no one could attribute it. I think its condition was much what it is today, bare wood with flakes here and there of gesso. I don't think there's any color that I can remember, but a sort of bitched-up bare wood, if you can put it that way. It was vaguely Romanesque, perhaps. Kingsley Porter was abroad and was asked to give a lecture in Spain, and before the lecture, he was shown into the green room and left there for the appropriate five minutes. On the wall was a photograph of a series of, say, half a dozen statues, leaning against a wall, and our mysterious statue was in the middle. [00:16:11] No label on the photograph. He told of having given the lecture, but with the greatest difficulty, because he couldn't concentrate on what he was saying. He was just dying to get hold of his host and find out what this photograph represented. And he did, and indeed this was a group of five statues that had been found at Tahull, T-A-H-U-L-L. I don't remember whether they were all stolen or only the one in the middle. Well, now, Edward Forbes knew less than the average high school student about Romanesque sculpture. Sure, he bought some for the museum, on the recommendation of people like Kingsley Porter, but he simply spotted something that was remarkable and seemed to be worth $150, even though that was a lot more—that was more nearly $1,500 in our terms. Then it turns out to be this extraordinary, unique, and invaluable object. Same way, he bought—he had a penchant for cheap objects, and he used some of these in his teaching. He was teaching—had a course in—taught a course in the history of the practice of painting. [00:18:09] A beat-up fragment of a fresco that you could buy for a few dollars was useful, because the students could study, see before them, the layers of paint and size and so forth, and indeed, since it was of no inherent artistic value, would chip away at it a bit, and find out for themselves how these things worked. But he bought one clearly modern crucifixion, in the style of Botticelli. No known Botticelli, but a sort of Botticelli-esque style. And, to everyone's astonishment, he had a contemporary copy made, and the copy exists. He's then had the, so to say, original, cleaned, and underneath was the wreck of a Botticelli, and the drawing of the angel—some of the figures. It's quite clearly Botticelli's. The authenticity has never been questioned. [00:20:00] He had a kind of X-ray eye that saw into what everybody, including the owner, said was a 19th-century painting, the remains of a Botticelli, and had the object copied to prove it. His taste was limited. I don't think he understood nor cared about contemporary art. He was a painter himself. I think his taste probably ended with Sargent and Sargent's contemporaries. European, academic art. It was also focused on the very best, and he said to me once that he considered so-and-so the five greatest painters, and I wish I'd written down whom they were. The only ones I can positively remember were Turner and Titian—Giotto, Turner, and Titian, and then went on to say that he—the Fogg had acquired examples of, well, at least three of the five, if not more, and that was the simple truth. [00:22:00] You might not agree with his choice of the painters, but—and he—the condition of the objects—he wasn't worried about condition. I think people of that generation were much less worried about it than we are. He didn't mind repainted wrecks, clearly. But the basic standard was there.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did that come out in his teaching? Must have, where he had students—sort of what we would say hands-on approach to things.

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yes. I don't know. I've never talked to any of the people—I haven't talked to anybody about his teaching, but anyone who studied his courses, I never talked about him to, say, Dan Thompson. The only approximate evidence I can give on this was that I inherited a middle-aged secretary who had been his secretary, and who had then be Arthur Pope's secretary, and stayed on with me, and then, very quickly, left me. I was supremely aware of my own ignorance, but I was not aware of her knowledge, and I hurt her feelings by asking other people in the Fogg, curators and so forth, questions for which she had much more adequate and ready answer. [00:24:05] It hadn't occurred to me that—she didn't seem like a—she certainly didn't project the appearance of knowing anything about art. In any case, that happened. But she was certainly an experienced pro as a secretary, and she commented on Mr. Forbes in the most friendly way, saying, "It was astonishing. You could never get away with anything with Mr. Forbes. He seemed to live in a cloud, not to know what was going on, but he knew absolutely every little detail of what was going on, and you never could figure out how he knew it, but he knew it." I didn't have any direct experience of this, but I take that statement from a tough, experienced secretary very seriously.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But he was something, still, of a presence, although he was retired—

JOHN COOLIDGE: Oh, very much.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —but around quite a lot.

JOHN COOLIDGE: That's right. Less a presence than a personality, and an amazing personality. Again, his achievements were legendary. He—Eliot, who appointed him—and under Eliot's direction, Harvard was expanding north along Oxford Street, Divinity Avenue, that direction. [00:26:15] Forbes, I don't know at what point, but certainly by the late '90s, recognized that the riverbank of the Charles, and the area between the Charles and Massachusetts Avenue, would become valuable, as long as there was no dam. It was stinking tidewater flats. It was the slum area, where the blue-collar, the lowest of the blue-collar people, who serviced the terminal MTA station for the horses that pulled the buses into Boston, lived. He organized a group of Boston and New York graduates, who put up the money to enable him, or the group, gradually, to buy up the land between—or most of the land between Massachusetts Avenue and the river. [00:28:02] This was, in effect, held in trust, but he'd relentlessly bought up virtually all that land and turned it over to Harvard when, under Lowell, Harvard wanted to build the freshman dormitories there. So he had this combination of vision—and his vision of the Fogg Museum as the laboratory of the art department is the most simply expressed of his visions. I don't know if those words are his. And then the determination to go ahead with it. J.P. Morgan—and I can't define it better than that, because that's the way I heard the story—said of him that it was so much easier to reach for your checkbook when Edward Forbes appeared, than to try and explain to Edward Forbes why you really couldn't afford to give him the money that he was asking for. He was a relentless fundraiser, but when you talked to him about these matters, he would tell you only about the ones that got away. Great collectors who willed their collections to the Fogg, and then didn't sign the will. [00:30:04] That was what his memory was of, not of achievement as such. But then, what was remarkable, when I came to know him—he didn't live all that far away from where we lived, and as I say, I went to—his son, John, was in my class at Buckingham. I almost certainly must have known him as a child, but didn't remember him. By the time I'm director of the Fogg, he was deep in other activities. He was terribly concerned with the—what survived of his grandfather's—was it grandfather or a great-grandfather? Ralph Waldo Emerson's possessions, and he was sort of chairman of family committees to look after things of this sort. I don't think, by that time, he was, in any sense, involved with the administration of Nashawena [ph], but he was deeply involved with the history, the family history of Nashawena, and the administration of it, the sheep-raising, and whether the tree that had been planted by General Grant was doing well, and so forth and so on. [00:32:03] For a stretch of time, they'd had every president in succession. I don't know whether it began with Grant, but it surely included Grant. I would guess between Grant and Hoover—maybe it went further than that—and planted a tree in Nashawena. He remembered them all. So that he was very, very busy with a life of his own, which was a life partly of maintaining family properties and connections, and partly what he advertised it to be, in which, knowing him—I couldn't tell you why this was true, but one had a sense, when he said that he was tidying up his records or whatever, that this was true. That he was, in some sense, organizing the past. He had written his memoirs, and these are deposited in the archives. I only had occasion to look at them once. They—I don't know whether he wrote them up for publication, but they are long. Much more surprisingly than the Sachs memoirs were not publishable. No publisher was willing to undertake them. But what I read had what the man had: a certain devastating innocence. [00:34:06] I remember—one passage I remember is something like, "I early discovered that you should not ask a generous patron for a major gift more frequently than every six months." The things that one hears about him, we—and this will come out later. Got to know Berenson quite well, and one of the rare insights into Berenson was his capacity to laugh at himself, and Berenson was the most thoughtful and generous of hosts, but he thought about his life, and he planned his functions as a whole within the pattern of his life. He told me about Edward Forbes's last visit. In fact, it was the last, but obviously when he told me about it, it wasn't guaranteed that it was the last. Edward Forbes didn't travel much in his last years. [00:36:00] He said that—well, as one went to bed, plans for the coming day were discussed, and Berenson said that he told Edward that the car would be ready for him at nine o'clock in the morning to take him to the Uffizi, and Berenson said, "Imagine my astonishment when Edward Forbes replied, 'B.B., I am no longer director of the Fogg. I do not have to go to the Uffizi. I am going to spend tomorrow painting watercolors.'" All right, he determined the way he would live, and whether it was looking after Emersoniana or painting projects. I don't think he ever thought back. I don't think he was a very keen observer of what was going on in the Fogg. I may be wrong there. He was certainly much too polite to tell. But he kept very busy. He—the one—there was—as I say, when he came and asked you, and it turned out to be the lightbulb, and it took 40 minutes to discover what the problem was, there was the capacity for the absurd. I

forget now whether it was when the Austrian pictures were in Boston or the Berlin pictures were in Boston.

ROBERT F. BROWN: This was the late '40s, early '50s, something like that?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yeah, that's right. [00:38:01] They both came here, and I don't remember which it was. He had, more or less, the run of a studio on the top floor. I guess it was assigned to the conservation department, but he made his—it was available, and he made his own arrangements there. He told me that, in among the paintings in Boston, there was a portrait by Titian and then said that he had acquired a very similar picture, perhaps a copy of that picture, that had not been accepted as a Titian. He went on to say that he thought it might be a Titian, and the reason it hadn't been accepted was that there was a certain leer in the expression of the woman portrayed in his version that was not true in the original, and that he had therefore obtained permission to make a copy, in oil, of the European original. Small-scale copy of the face of the woman, in which he faithfully reproduced the sobriety of expression. [00:40:07] He then brought it back, and placed this little strip, and it was a strip, possibly, four inches by seven inches, over his copy, to see if he could bring it back to its Titian haute [ph], so to speak. The characteristic—the ultimate in absurdity here was that he had gotten hold of his then—of his friend, then well in his 90s, the portraitist Charles Hopkinson, to help him in this endeavor, and sort of implied that Charles Hopkinson really wasn't willing to throw his back into the effort. Sure, he'd come, advised and things, but—and went up and saw this perfectly absurd operation. I mean, God knows, if he had produced the correct effect, would it have made the Forbes version original Titian or not? Things like that popped into mind, and then were carried out with the utmost determination, and took up his time. But involved me in no way, except he was very happy to tell me about this, and had I wished to, I could have heard all the details of what he was doing about Ralph Waldo Emerson surviving [inaudible.] [00:42:07] I don't know.

ROBERT F. BROWN: [Laughs.] He could be—he could take a bit of your time?

JOHN COOLIDGE: He could take a bit of your time, that's right. When I say he was withdrawn, the relation between Forbes and Sachs had somehow soured. I know this from Sachs's point of view, but I never saw them together. Oh, except maybe they'd formally appear together at a Christmas party or something, but I never sensed—one would see them. They both were trustees of the Boston Museum. They'd both be there, but not as personal intimates, particularly.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Had they ever been, as far as you've heard?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Oh, yes. Sachs was Forbes's discovery, and the fundraising that they did for the Fogg, but for the university generally, must have involved both of them. Oh, yes, I think definitely. I think the loss of interplay came after they retired. One of the first things I had to do, and the really painful things I had to do, was to tell the two people I had inherited as—who were by then the senior conservators in the Fogg's conservation department—that I couldn't promote them. [00:44:09] I remember telling this to Sachs, with whom one—or I, at least, couldn't tell things like this. This was my responsibility. I told it to him as information. An action that I—financial reasons—partly for financial reasons—done. To my astonishment, he burst out, and saying something like, "I quite understand. When I think of all those years when I had to work so hard to raise money to keep that enterprise going." I had never thought of conservation as being something towards which Sachs was not overwhelmingly committed, and that he regarded it as a burden.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And difficult to raise money for, to boot.

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yeah, and because—and central to my decision was the fact that, in the years before I was director, say between '45 and '47—I can't be more precise than that. May have gone back earlier. They had had a fundraising drive for the conservation department, to endow it, and this has been another failure. I was left to make decisions with what remained of it, in the sense of surviving personnel who would have had to have been promoted, in raises and salary and so forth, as they grew older, or pick up the drive, or any case, do something about it. [00:46:25] Couldn't—those situations are never static, as it were. Nobody had told me about the fundraising drive. I can't—I don't mean that—I have no way of knowing now how major a factor it was. I just know what I was left with, and then learning, oh, yes, they tried and it didn't work. I don't even know when they tried, but my impression was in the '40s.

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JOHN COOLIDGE: —uh, I was at some meeting—it was like a committee meeting—at lunchtime, and my classmate, Edward Crane, appeared. Edward Crane was then mayor of Cambridge. He reported the events of his morning, which consisted of obtaining the final, definitive assurance from the federal government that they would develop that stretch of land on Kendall Square, next to Kendall Station, as they eventually did. I can't remember—they changed the department. Was it weather that it was planned for, and it's now used for transportation?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Transportation now. It was supposed to have been a much larger—

JOHN COOLIDGE: It was larger. But this was the start, and his was the vision, as far as I know, that saw that part, stretch of land between Kendall Square and East Cambridge, as a potential area of quasi-industrial growth. Well, there's—

ROBERT F. BROWN: We were talking about Sachs.

JOHN COOLIDGE: As regard to Sachs, uh—

ROBERT F. BROWN: He was very much more around, in a sense, even though he was—

JOHN COOLIDGE: Oh, yes, because he kept an office in the building. I don't remember Sachs as an undergraduate. [00:02:00] I suspect he was chairman of the department, but he had the—at one point, Sachs was chairman of the department. I think it was while I was an undergraduate, but I don't remember. Something that normally I wouldn't recall, in the sense it didn't make all that much impression at the time, but coming to know Sachs in the department later, it made—it remained as a memory. We had to have an oral examination on the general history of art our senior year, and this was held in the numbered room, and a batch of professors were there. Did I tell you this?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-mm [negative].

JOHN COOLIDGE: One, of course, knew from other students, students who were a year or so older, or graduate students, what went on, and one of the questions that—or the line of questioning that was brought up was by Paul Sachs, who always asked you about the leading works of art in the Fogg Museum. So I boned up, as it were, for that question, and sure enough, it came. [00:04:08] I remember speaking about the Mayan sculpture that was then in the Fogg, and various other things, and he nodded, and then pressed me about other things, and got nowhere. I wasn't aware of an important early Renaissance, early Italian Renaissance, illuminated manuscript that the Fogg owned. I may be wrong here. I should correct that. Of any manuscripts that the Fogg owned. When I didn't give—he mentioned a certain manuscript, and said, by way of explanation, "It is a"—said, "It's 11th-century," and then turned to Curler, who had only just walked into the room, and said, "It is 11th-century, isn't it, Curler?" And Curler said, "No, it's 13th." That was the only suggestion of what people later told me was the case, that Curler had no respect for Sachs, that he was a pretentious banker—little ex-banker, and so forth and so on. [00:06:03]

ROBERT F. BROWN: No respect for him as a scholar?

JOHN COOLIDGE: No respect for him as a scholar, and I don't think in any other regard. One forgets that Curler himself had been a museum director, so that he saw Sachs from a larger perspective than one would normally assume. He didn't seem like somebody who had been a museum director, though he was. My first contact with Sachs was one summer when I took a course, a lecture course, on French Impressionists at summer school, which he taught. I, there and then, concluded that he was one of the two best teachers I'd ever had, the other being Karl Lehmann, and I can only remember the vividness with which he spoke of the beauty of these works of art. Curiously, I can remember only figure paintings that he spoke of. But this was—I didn't see him in connection with that course. On the whole, one didn't see professors, unless you'd known them previously in summer school, because they were rushing to spend their weekend with their family in whatever summer resort the family had been in. So it was crowded. He went out of his way to—they went out of their way to be nice to us when we came to Cambridge. [00:08:08] I think they had us to dinner at Shady Hill in the first months, certainly, before there was any association with the Fogg. He explained to me, when I became director, that while he was going to continue teaching his course, and would have an office in the Fogg—would keep his office, because he had an office there,

under Arthur Pope—he wasn't going to interfere in any way. He—one of the first things he did was to get me elected to membership in his dining club, and that happened, I would have said, in the course of the first year, but it was certainly quickly. I can only say that it's been a source of tremendous happiness to me. I discovered that I'm not a club type, but I've had a wonderful time with that group, and still do.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Is this in Boston or here in Cambridge?

JOHN COOLIDGE: It's mixed. It's thoroughly mixed. My guess is it would be, or has been over the years, 50/50, but the question never arises, so to speak. [00:10:00] It's not conspicuously professorial. Then he was always, as it were, comforting. I didn't have occasion to turn to him for advice, partly because the—first place, I don't think he wanted to be turned to for advice, and partly because I was concerned, very acutely concerned, with my active colleagues. It was to them I turned for advice, because it was they who were expecting it. It was they who would be affected by anything that I did, or whose actions would affect me. The only time I can remember talking to Paul Sachs was, again, '48 or '49, when there came on the market a drawing that was very close to the [speaks French]. In fact, it was a drawing of the torso of the crucified Christ on the crucifixion, in, if I'm not mistaken, Flamel [ph], the picture from which the artist gathers his name. [00:12:04] Question was, of course, its authenticity. It impressed me that Sachs would not express his opinion. What he did was to say, "Well, what has Jake Rosenberg said about it?" Well, I had done some work with Panofsky on—I'm partial to the early Flemish painting, and I've done some work—spent a year working with Panofsky on that field. It's an area of great weakness in the collections of the Fogg, and so we bought it. I think it's now generally agreed that it is not by the master himself. On the other hand, it's a beautiful drawing that didn't cost very much, so I don't feel guilty about it. Sachs was never willing, that I can remember, to express an opinion, even after the fact. I mean, he was not one to say, "Oh, that was a lovely picture you've just acquired," or something like that.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But thereby, he was supporting, in a way? Or supportive.

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yes, that's right, he was supportive. He was always—on the other hand, Jakob Rosenberg went to him and would ask him, "Won't you give us this"—I remember Picasso print that PJ [ph] gave us at Rosenberg's request. Rosenberg and Sachs were in, I think, constant communication this way. [00:14:05] Certainly anything that Rosenberg did, he told Sachs about, so forth and so on. One of the things that nobody knew anything about was the personal finances of Forbes and Sachs. When the Sachs facts were known, after his death, it struck everybody with amazement, the—perhaps I'll say the fact. He—first thing that was surprising about Paul Sachs in this area—one couldn't help but be curious, particularly me, who had no background—was that his position in the company was then assumed by his slightly younger brother, I think less than a year younger brother, Arthur Sachs, who became president of Goldman Sachs, then retired, and went and married, I guess, his second wife, who was French and lived in Paris. Arthur Sachs was a really wealthy man, and he collected—he would collect Old Master paintings. He had a Tintoretto. He had superb Impressionists. I mean, he was—he lived and operated on a very different level from Paul. [00:16:01] Paul was well-heeled, but—never among the poor men, but Arthur Sachs was a distinctly rich man. I know that Paul Sachs was so injured, suffered so in the Depression, that he went on the Harvard payroll then, which he hadn't been on before. Arthur, I guess, could have ridden through any of these things. So this was a slight puzzle, but it was a discrepancy there. When he died, it emerged that he had settled a decent amount on each of his children. He just put money in, so that each of them had a degree of independence, then lived as he saw fit, and didn't hesitate to dip into capital. He moved out of Shady Hill and sold it to Harvard for $30,000, which was, of course, infinitely, even in those days, less than what it was worth. He never commented on its destruction, I think about which he must have felt desperately badly. So happened that I knew the man who took care of his affairs, and this man, very cautious, very wonderful man, but a cautious, respected Boston banker, said, "I told Paul Sachs, 'It's going to be a race, Paul, between you and God.'" [00:18:12] He said, "Paul said to me, 'Yes, I know it is. I planned it that way, and I'm going to win.'" His estate, when he died, was worth $100,000. It sort of felt, from the way of life, as if he was spending about $30,000 a year. This was the kind of way he was living. Living like a Harvard professor, and that was the sort of salary that we were getting at that time. It was, in a way, a close shave, and it would have been embarrassing if he'd had a horribly expensive illness, because it would have been awkward to ask for help from—and the children were—while they had a little money, they were not, in any sense, wealthy.

ROBERT F. BROWN: He lived to the hilt, you could say.

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: In a sense, in several senses.

JOHN COOLIDGE: And, of course, Shady Hill was a two-story house, but big. In other words, the rooms were large, but not all that numerous. He certainly entertained. He entertained there, and entertained in the two apartments that he had after he sold it. The club would meet at his apartment or house for dinner and that sort of thing, so that—he kept up appearances, and was the—was characteristic of him. [00:20:03] He was the first person who made the point to me that it's really cheaper to use taxis than to own a car, if you're only doing it, as he did, around Boston. So he really took taxis. He got rid of his car. And he lived, and he lived well. You know, you drank—the wine was good, the food was good, the way of life, and even when it must have been quite risky in terms of what I've just told you, he wouldn't hesitate to pat out $2,500 to get a Picasso print for the Fogg, you know, not hard to do that [ph]. Hard to talk more fundamentally. Polly was full of admiration, and I shared it, but didn't have as warm a relationship as she to Meta, his wife. She was certainly a—I don't think he can have been an easy man to be married to. I think he was generosity itself on one level, but I also suspect enormously demanding in the way that men who know how they want to live can be demanding without realizing it as being demanding. I think that she was a wonderful person. One of the fascinating experiences that I had—the club can be a forum where the members can talk about themselves in ways that are astonishingly personal. [00:22:15] I don't, I think, ever belonged to another organization in which this is the case. One evening—it's our routine, when you entertain the other members for dinner, you give a talk. He gave us a talk on his courtship of Meta, and what it was like. The families were completely different backgrounds. I can go into that, but 2:12, and you've got to beat it or you won't make it.

[Audio Break.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: —talk now of other colleagues. We spoke at some length before of Sachs, who had been at the Fogg for so long.

JOHN COOLIDGE: Let me start with the process of arrival and so forth. I came here from Penn as an assistant professor of architectural history. The wonderful thing about the Fogg was that you could use the material in it for teaching, and I remember my first semester—or rather my second semester—I gave a course on Italian Renaissance architecture, and was able to put up a little exhibition in connection with it, which included, of course, the books of the period, Saleo [ph] and Alberti, prints of the period. [00:24:13] For example, the great bird's-eye view of Venice, 16th-century bird's-eye view of Venice. Then, when necessary, one had good reproductions. There's a famous interior design that's traditionally been attributed to Bramante, and this was produced. You were able to show the kids—give the course a certain kind of life, thereby, and that was something that certainly couldn't have done it in Philadelphia. It's a rare place that you have space to do something like that, rare in a teaching institution, in which you have protected space. You don't have to worry about guarding it the way you do in a normal classroom building or whatever.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Were these put in regular exhibition galleries?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yes. I don't now remember, but almost certainly in an exhibition gallery, or in a corridor space outside an exhibition gallery. It was treated as an exhibition, and I made a sort of brief, amateurish catalog to it. It was fun for me, because I had never thought of Renaissance architecture in precisely those terms. Sure, I'd read the books and knew the books, but I'd never thought of bringing it out visually for the students, and this was a challenge within the course for me. [00:26:03] I hope it was for them. In any case, all of life changed in the middle of the year, when I knew I was going to be director of the Fogg. The man who succeeded Edward Forbes and Paul Sachs was Forbes's near-contemporary, and close friend, Arthur Pope. I may have mentioned Arthur Pope, because he was the leading follower of Denman Ross, and the apostle of the Harvard school of the study of the craft of painting. He was a painter himself. He gave the appearance of idleness, if not laziness. He had taught an introductory course that was compulsory. With the possible exception of Charles R. Morey, the worst lecturer I have ever heard. It was a dreadful course, and it took me two years to get a D in it. He was a very gentle director of the Fogg. He kept things—the machine rolling over, ticking, but he didn't take any initiative that I could see. However, after

I had been appointed, or my appointment had been announced, which was, oh, I suppose, January or February, I happened to go to Philadelphia, where there was an exhibition, important exhibition, of Matisse. [00:28:23] I came back from this exhibition and talked enthusiastically to Edward Forbes about it, and noted particularly how wonderful the late Matisse book, *Jazz*, looked. What was typical of Arthur Pope—did I say Edward Forbes? I mean—

ROBERT F. BROWN: You meant Arthur Pope.

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yeah. I mean Arthur Pope. What was typical of Arthur Pope was that, in the course of the next few weeks, he bought a copy of *Jazz* for the Fogg, as a courtesy to me, as a kindness to me. It emerged, when I became director, that he'd spent very little money on acquisitions, and though there was very little money to spend on acquisition, I had, perhaps, more than a one-year's supply. *Jazz* was taken out of that. The institutional situation was, as I've said, that Forbes and Sachs continued the responsibility for fundraising. Pope took the job on condition that he hadn't done that. The annual budget, as I remember it, was about $200,000. [00:30:04] Though Forbes had—Sach—Pope had been director for three years, and the final year—Harvard's financial year ends on July 1st, and after my appointment, Forbes and Sachs went out and raised the unprecedented sum of $50,000 in annual gifts, so that the museum was in the black that year. However, the preceding two years it had run, it had much less success, and it had run in the red.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Despite Pope's frugality?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yes, despite Pope's frugality.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Just not kept up with costs.

JOHN COOLIDGE: So that the long-range plan of Sachs and Forbes had been to leave the museum amply endowed, and indeed, as of 1940, it was, but it was by no means amply endowed as of 1948. We needed at least another million dollars of endowment. The current endowment ran—I think it was $7-8 million. I don't really remember the figure there. It was—for two out of the three years since the war, it had been running in the red, and it was perfectly obvious that it would take me some years before I could develop the number of annual givers to put it in the black. [00:32:16] In fact, it took me something like 17 years so that it permanently got into the black.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You've mentioned the immediate post-war years were poor for fundraising.

JOHN COOLIDGE: Not only that, but there was what always happens immediately after a war. There was inflation. Not only was it running in the red, but the salaries were appalling. As an assistant professor, I think my salary was $5,000, and they raised it when I became a director to $7,500. An assistant professor at [$]5,000, I can remember one of the best secretaries I've ever known, a woman in her 30s, 10 or 15 years' experience, whom the Fogg paid $1,600. Agnes Mongan, who had an international reputation, who was in her 40s, who was curator of drawings, was paid [$]3,600. Langdon Warner, the year before, in Pope's one extravagance, Langdon Warner's salary was raised from [$]6,000 to $9,000. [00:34:00] So you took an institution that was broke—it was doubly broke in the sense that you were not paying reasonable salaries, and all sorts of things, like deferred maintenance, going on. That was an absolutely basic consideration. Against all this was the fantastic strength in the staff. The three curators were people of international reputation. Langdon Warner, who was so idolized in Japan that they created a monument to him, which I have seen, at his death, in one of their major sanctuaries, a grave steeling [ph] for him. Jakob Rosenberg, who was an, again, internationally eminent curator of prints, and a scholar, particularly of Rembrandt. Agnes Mongan, who, in her 40s, was certainly the most energetic person in the drawing field. E. Louise Lucas, who was the splendid librarian, the fine arts—what is now the Fine Arts Library was in fact the Fogg Museum's library. [00:36:01] It came under the budget of the Fogg Museum, though it was Harvard's Fine Arts Library, and was, of course, used, the basic, for the functioning of the fine arts department.

ROBERT F. BROWN: She was one of the notable art librarians. Developed new systems and so forth.

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yes, absolutely. Then a perfectly splendid superintendent, Milton Worthley. So one came into a situation with very strong staff. The problematic area was the

conservation department, which was, I suppose, easily the largest conservation department in the country. Two chief men had left before I came. George Stout, perhaps, was—he became director of the Worcester Art Museum. I think he left the Fogg to assume the directorship. He had been the head man there. And Murray Pease had gone to head the curatorial department in the Metropolitan Museum, leaving me with two men in their 40s, both good, one whose specialty was in research, and the other who was an active restorer, particularly working on Hamilton. [00:38:07] At some point in the preceding years—I was never very clear about this, but before Stout and Pease had left—though Stout, at least, was in the war. I first met him on the *Queen Elizabeth*, coming home from my assignment in Britain, and he was coming home from his assignment as a monuments officer. Nonetheless, Edward Forbes and Sachs had conducted a fundraising drive, endowment drive, of some kind for the conservation department, which had been a complete failure. I knew that fact. I never looked into it. But the conservation department was out of all proportion to the other departments, and when, a couple of years later, the time came to renew the appointments of the two men who were running it, and since Harvard—since the Fogg Museum appointments had a kind of assimilated rank with university appointments, they were at an age where they would have had to have been given tenure, and I let them go, which was—with the loss of the four—several years of the four principal men completely altered the character of the Fogg conservation department. [00:40:20] It became much more responsible for the collections of the Fogg, much less a national training ground than it was. Although the person that I appointed to replace Elizabeth Jones had been trained in the Fogg, and developed the department to be, for many years, the leading training ground of the profession in this country, so that it, under her, it gradually came back, having been cut back. They had published a magazine called *Technical Studies*. That had to be dropped, and the Fogg published a—quarterly, I would have said, maybe not, but in any case, a magazine, a bulletin—yes, it was the Fogg Museum bulletin. I was struck, after a couple of years, that you had to twist everybody's arm to get them to produce articles. It seemed to me the articles that they produced could have been just as well published in well-established, professional magazines, so I let that go. [00:42:00] These were ways of—well, my first concern, administratively, was to do something about salaries, and though, for a good many years, as I've said, I ran a small deficit, the first thing I did was to get a salary like Agnes Mongan's up to what a professor of her age and stature would be receiving. In other words, I was inflating the budget deliberately that way, and had to take fairly radical ways of cutting it down.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Were those fairly—they were radical, but did they noticeably affect the performing, otherwise, of the Fogg and the fine arts department, the lopping off of the conservation department, the dropping of the two publications?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Publications, certainly not. The conservation department—well, I never knew it at its height, and the two people who inherited it, Dick Buck and John Gettens [ph]—well, from my point of view, just not very effective. One of the things that I felt such a department should do, particularly if you are operating at the scale in which I found it, was to be a strong teaching institution, as it had been under George Stout. They were not teachers, and with a single exception, who's, I guess, the present head of the conservation department at the Fogg, Jerry Cohn, I've never known a person in conversation who was a good teacher. [00:44:23] John Gettens gave a course in conservation at the time, one-semester course, and this subject, which thrills every amateur—I mean, you go in there and you see what wonderful things can be discovered and being done. He started out by making the students in the course memorize the 92 elements, and that is the kind of teaching that—sure, this has its place, but in an introductory course on conservation, you shouldn't begin with that. [They laugh.] That was the nature—this was the problem, and this was why I let them go. Betty Jones was at least a much livelier personality. They went on to distinguished careers. Dick Buck went to work at Oberlin, and with major foundation support, persuaded—and if I say the Ford Foundation, I may be wrong, but it was a similar big national foundation—the idea of creating regional centers for the conservation of works of art. Very intelligent idea. One of the first he founded was at Oberlin. [00:46:00] Our problem with him was that he was incredibly slow—but incredibly slow—at the business of simply cleaning or repairing a work of art.

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JOHN COOLIDGE: —sonian—his specialty was research, and 25 years later, or whatever, at the end of his life, produced a book on bronze disease, as I remember it, but it was not a life that was fundamentally devoted to research. He worked—or said he was with the

Smithsonian, but he was attached to the Freer.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Freer, which is part of the Smithsonian.

JOHN COOLIDGE: Which is part of the Smithsonian. He did some work on their bronzes, but was mostly very slow research, and this was, again, not up to—well, simply, if you were dealing with—if you were—these people, as I say, had assimilated rank as Harvard professors. The tradition was that they all taught, except Louise Lucas, of course, didn't, but the Harvard curators taught. One expected them to be different, but comparable in quality, to the faculty. Buck and Gettens clearly weren't in that league.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Warner, for example, was he quite a good teacher?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yes, Warner was even a great teacher. He trained all the next generation of American Orientalists. He was a wholly unconventional teacher. He boasted of the fact that though he knew more about Japanese art, and published on it magnificent classic books, he knew no Japanese. [00:02:05] He naturally must have known some, more than he admitted. Warner posed as a gentleman amateur, and taught as a gentleman amateur. He was long on enthusiasm. He would rub your noses in the objects, but the course had no structure at all. I can simply remember, at the beginning, the only substantive thing that we learned was the periods of Japanese history, and I can still, more or less, say them off, but that's about my learning. Classical antiquity, the Dark Ages, the Romanesque, the Gothic, the Renaissance It was about as fundamental as that. That was the most substantive thing in the course. But my—the field that you got for objects, and his perceptiveness about particularly individual pieces of sculpture—and we went many times into the Boston Museum, and of course knew the Fogg collection quite intimately.

ROBERT F. BROWN: The formalist training. Aesthetics were his strong suit?

JOHN COOLIDGE: No, there was—his strong suit was a—

ROBERT F. BROWN: —connoisseurship?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Connoisseurship, and the enthusiasm of a collector. That, he did project.

ROBERT F. BROWN: He would have been a great field man, hadn't he?

JOHN COOLIDGE: He would have been a great field man, but unfortunately that was a little far away and a little expensive. [00:04:03] But he did train the next generation of people who were amazingly creative in the field. My relations with him were curious, in that his children, his two older daughters, had been at school with me at Shady Hill, and Warner had —well, I don't know enough, really, to say this, but the impression one got, pretty consistently, is that he was really financially quite irresponsible, and that while he inherited some money, the family handsomely lost that in the Depression. His wife was a Roosevelt, of the Theodore Roosevelt type. Had some money that, too, more or less disappeared. A combination of Langdon, who was very much a club man—belonged to that Boylston Place club, that wonderful club.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Tavern?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Tavern. Very much a member of the Tavern Club, and associated with all those people. Had a hard time in a month-to-month financial basis, with the result that, when I was growing up, his wife, who was musical, gave—taught classes in music, and I took them. [00:06:09] So I knew their children as classmates, and I knew their house. They were the parents of classmates. To come in as his boss, putting it crudely, was, in some ways, embarrassing, though more with people around them than with him. I think Mrs. Warner perhaps felt more embarrassed about it than he did, because he was a man of supreme social charm and grace and assurity [ph], and a thing like that didn't bother him in the least, so one had a perfectly easy relationship with him. But it also was—well, it's difficult when—as I think I said, I never had an administrative job, and I didn't know a damn thing about museums. I'd studied nothing much except the history of architecture. To get into an art museum—and you couldn't push the older people around very much. And Langdon—I occasionally made suggestions to Jakob Rosenberg, but Langdon was—as the friend of my father's, more or less that sort of thing, I left alone. He didn't work terribly hard, being said [ph].

ROBERT F. BROWN: You didn't try out—

JOHN COOLIDGE: He never became a professor. [00:08:00] This was because Paul Buck, the dean, said, "Well, we put him on the faculty, and he never came to a faculty meeting." We really couldn't. He never published anything, and he was obviously a man who never got an ulcer from over-work, by this time. He may have as a young man. So he wasn't made a professor, at Jakob Rosenberg was.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But he was still an effective teacher?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Oh, he was a very effective teacher, yes. One was dependent on his pupils, when he retired, to replace him in running the department.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What about Rosenberg? Had you known him at all before you came as director?

JOHN COOLIDGE: No, I didn't know him at all. Jakob was a pure museum man, and he escaped in the early—or the middle '30s. He was reputed, so Paul Sachs told me, to have the best eye in Europe. Forbes and Sachs, who had a funny quality that I don't understand, when they were given honorary degrees in 1945, they were cited together as mendicants of genius, and they had raised—and one must remember that one is thinking in money up to 1945. Paul Sachs had raised more than $20 million for Harvard. [00:10:04] Some part of it went to the Fogg, but he was also active in the business school, the medicine school, and other things. Though they were known for this, in a specific sense, there was never any extra change, and Rosenberg's first job was teaching summer school. Then they got him a job at the Fogg, I think, teaching a course for somebody who was on sabbatical, things like that.

ROBERT F. BROWN: He'd been spotted by Forbes and Sachs?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yes, he had been spotted by—he was in—he was the coming man. The most active great print room in Europe was Berlin, and the head of that was the legendary Max Friedlander, and he was the rising young man. I suppose he was 40 when he came here, and ultimate—he planned to succeed Friedlander, but came Hitler, and that, obviously, was out of the question. So they felt very happy to get him here. They had—when the Fogg was started—it started in '92. I'll go back. [00:12:00] In the 1850s, late-ish '50s, '56 or '57, Harvard was left the John Chipman Gray collection, which was prints, and contained—it was essentially Old Master prints. I think, if one looked into the history, it was the finest, by far the finest, collection of Old Master anything in this country when John Chipman Gray left it to Harvard. The extraordinary thing was that it made an immediate impact. I may have told you this, have I?

ROBERT F. BROWN: No.

JOHN COOLIDGE: I, some years ago, say 10 years ago, working on H.H. Richardson, started looking into Richardson's career at Harvard, and that got me into studying—he was class of '59, so I was studying at Harvard at that time. One of the things I did was to read through the Harvard literary magazine of that period. I don't remember—that's not far off its title, but it may be—and that's simple enough. When the Gray collection came to Harvard, articles on printmakers and on art started appearing, which they hadn't before, and the most striking of these—I'm not saying the best, because I didn't read them with all that care—was one on Albrecht Durer, which was published, I guess, in 1860. [00:14:22] The author then went off to join the Union forces, and was wounded, and saved by his father, who was a doctor, and came back and became a modest print collector all his life, but had an otherwise very distinguished career. That was the [inaudible] Wendell Holmes [ph] so that you got the idea, his—as a senior in Harvard, looking and writing an article on Durer. 'Okay. Harvard didn't know what to do with these things, and the library grew, and they were kept in the library. When the Boston Museum was founded in 1870, Harvard—the library—I think this was just before they built the new stacks, but in any case, Harvard was just delighted to get rid of it, so they went on loan. They couldn't be given to the Boston Museum. Well, then the Fogg, as you know, was a wholly unexpected gift, and you had the museum, and you had some plaster casts, and you had a few paintings—well, some 20 paintings by Copley of Harvard presidents and that sort of thing, but that was all. [00:16:18] So the first thing they did was to retrieve the Gray collection. Well, the Boston Museum had not anticipated—they sort of thought of this as a permanent loan, and they built their great collection around it, and

suddenly they found all their Durers and things one moved over to Cambridge. [They laugh.] Mr. Moore, who was the director of the Fogg, knew nothing about prints, so a Ms. Dudley was hired, and Ms. Dudley—I suppose she was hired in the mid-'90s. She was there for the—at the time I arrived, she was the senior—she was before my—I knew her as an undergraduate in the '30s. She was there. But when the Fogg had Jakob Rosenberg and were trying to support him, they couldn't make him curator of prints [laughs] because Laura Dudley had that position, and had it since the museum was started.

ROBERT F. BROWN: She was very much an amateur?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Oh, no, she was—well, she was an amateur, but she hadn't been working with prints for 40 years, and hadn't gotten to be an adequate curator. She retired in the mid-'30s and was succeeded by Jakob Rosenberg, and then to everybody's absolute astonishment, because she was nothing if not the complete New England old maid—she got married. [00:18:05] [Laughs.] I knew her as Mrs. somebody-or-other, who would turn up at all Fogg openings and things, news. Very sweet woman, but not any great brains. All this by saying that Jakob's picture was very difficult for the first few years, and then, of course, when Ms. Dudley retired, he became curator of prints and had a regular salary, though his salary was minuscule, like Langdon Warner's, and had been, I think, only a couple of—I think Pope simply raised his salary to, say, $9,000, which was the kind of sum that professors were earning at that time. I know when I was in Princeton in the late '30s, [$]9,000 was the professorial salary at Princeton. But there he was.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What did he have when he arrived? That is, what was in the collection? What had Ms. Dudley done, and others given? Was it mostly still the Gray collection?

JOHN COOLIDGE: It was very largely the Gray. There was another collection given, whose name I've forgotten. At least one other collection given. Jakob bought very, very well, and one of the things he bought were Picasso prints. So we had a, we had a sort of basic, modern collection, you had in no other aspects. [00:20:04] There may have been a couple of Matisse drawings. There were no paintings of that. The print collection had been kept up, and he continued—I think there were small funds restricted to the purchase of prints. Almost certain of that. In any case, he bought brilliantly as a print collector. The Fogg had a series of galleries that were built for the exhibition of prints. They're still there. They're where the American art is at present. I don't know when it started, but—I suppose Jakob may have started it. There was a tradition of having a whole series of print exhibitions from the collection in those galleries, so that every six weeks or so, they would put on a new exhibition, built on the collection. The Fogg collection of prints has something like 80,000, of which, I imagine, 70 had been gifts, so that he had a, by American standards, not negligible—between the Gray and the other gifts—a not negligible collection to work with. He bought well and put on good shows. [00:22:05] He was—I suppose Jakob was 50 when I came, and about five years later, he was on an airplane. I don't know—I don't remember the details. He may have been just going to—it was a longer trip than going to New York. It may have been going to Europe or something. Any case, he had a—something went wrong with his ear, and he lost hearing in one year as a result. At the age of 55, he lost, effectively, 10 years of his life, so that, for most of the time that I was working with Jakob, he was—he should have been retired. He was not very active, and not very effective. This was a tragedy that developed, and of course one didn't—one lived with it. He taught a basic course for graduate students that was very unsuccessful, but he had not—Jakob had people who absolutely worshiped him, and who learned a great deal from him. [00:24:15] The most remarkable that I know is Seymour Slive. But because of this slow start, then the war, when there simply weren't graduate students around, and then his illness, and mind you, the ear—well, it was like two years before he was doing really full-time work, and there after that, he was simply a lot older. He was not the teacher one would have expected. Jakob, as a teacher—as I say, he began teaching in summer school, and he made one of the best descriptions of teaching. He had never lectured before, and he didn't. He could communicate perfectly well, but he wasn't a natural lecturer. No gifts that way. He is reputed, after a week of teaching, to have said, "Now I understand. Pity the poor cook. He works all day preparing dinner, and it's all gone in 45 minutes." [They laugh.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: So he perhaps had no great enthusiasm?

JOHN COOLIDGE: He had no great enthusiasm for it.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But as a curator?

JOHN COOLIDGE: But as a curator, he was perfectly marvelous. [00:26:00]

ROBERT F. BROWN: And even his physical problem may have slowed him down, but he was still—

JOHN COOLIDGE: Oh, no, it didn't. All the gifts were there. The knowledge was there. The eye was there. What he did was just as good as ever, it was just that it was done at a 65-year-old pace instead of a 55-year-old pace. Very early, his Rembrandt book appeared, and we celebrated the appearance of this by putting on a—or by encouraging him to put on a small exhibition of Rembrandt paintings. This wasn't very large. It may have been 20. But you—how many American museums have you seen an exhibition of 20 Rembrandt paintings? It was easier then, just on value and insurance and so forth, but this kind of thing was a first-rate exhibition, small exhibition. That came out, and then he had an assistant, Ruth Magurn, who was the kind of excellent secretary that one calls administrative assistant. She was that type. She was no more than this. She, with his encouragement, she brought out the standard edition of Rubens's letters. So that he was effective, and a wonderful—when it came a question of spending the acquisition-ed money and buying things, this was a wonderful person to consult with. [00:28:14]

ROBERT F. BROWN: He was a good colleague in retrospect [ph]?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Oh, he was an absolutely splendid colleague. Oh, yes, he was a wonderful colleague, and kindly, and friendly, and helpful in every way. As I say, to have inherited Langdon Warner and Jakob Rosenberg, and Agnes Mongan, was extraordinary.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What of Agnes Mongan? She was certainly, you mentioned earlier, very energetic.

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: A major presence in drawing.

JOHN COOLIDGE: A major presence in drawing and in everything. A good friend, in the sense that, for instance—I don't know. After seven years or ten years, I had a sabbatical for a semester. By the way, one of the first things I did was to—I mean, the first thing I did, in the sense that it wasn't exactly a condition I made for taking the job, but when it was offered, I said of course the curators will have—they have the assimilated rank of professors, and they do teach, but they will have the same right to sabbaticals that professors do. [00:30:00] It was understood between the dean and me that they were to be treated as professors. You expected the same kind of thing from them. They gave the same kind of thing. So I had a—I, too, was in this. I found that I normally could get a month's vacation. On the other hand, what I did was I took a month's vacation, and then every three or four years, I would take three or four months in the summer. It was this kind of—they were flexible about it. You were not—your nose was never held to that kind of grindstone. Well, I also eventually got a—I had one sabbatical in 20 years. When we went on that, Agnes lived in this house. She was the house-sitter for us, if you wish. That indicates the kind of trust and friendship. She became—after I knew my way around, she became associate director, and was, in every way, an associate director. We had very, very different instincts. She was passionately anti-smoking. I was a chain pipe-smoker. It started from there. All our instincts on things were different, but we worked together without any problems at all. This was wonderful.

ROBERT F. BROWN: She had good administrative instincts, too?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Oh, she had excellent administrative instincts. [00:32:01] Yes and no. She'd run the thing superbly on a daily basis. She could meet any problem that came up. I don't think she had—she had no sense of planning or high-level administrative procedure. One of the things I observed was that everybody would take on—particularly with a place where you were dealing with graduate students all the time, you took on junior help. Let's call assistant curators, help, that kind of thing. I made the rule, very quickly, that assistant curators should have a limited tenure, and a review, and a kind of up-or-out, because, frankly, for instance, Ruth Magurn was not the kind of person who should have stayed there all her life. You needed what Jakob ought to have had, a lively, younger person, or rather a series of lively—as Langdon Warner did, but I instituted this. [00:34:08] It was not Agnes—Agnes never saw this. I think it's, certain ways, it's a basic weakness of the museum field. Bob Paine, who, after all, wrote the *Pelican History of Oriental Art*, became curator at 62 because he had been an assistant curator to Tolman [ph], who stayed on forever. This is no

way to [inaudible] thing throughout the museum. What's his name, who now is the present curator, only became curator when he was 50 or something like that. I simply took on—when I had an assistant myself, was a three-year job, and then I got another. I think you should do this. Now, I bring this up because not the kind of thinking that Agnes was involved in. She didn't think policy.

ROBERT F. BROWN: She would have thought of a particular person, and not thought of implications?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yeah. She would have thought, well, that's a good idea for a show, without saying, well, what's our policy on exhibitions? This kind of thing. When Ruth's book came out, we gave a show of Rubens's oil sketches, and this was a way of encouraging people to write, but also helping the book—call national attention to Rubens and so forth. Agnes, therefore—and Agnes was a towering strength, socially. [00:36:09] She got on with curators. She got on with collectors. I am not a collector, and I don't have any really intimate sense of works of art. The kind of people who demanded that, you let them talk to Agnes. She could handle them in this way.

ROBERT F. BROWN: She'd had years with, more or less, Sachs.

JOHN COOLIDGE: She had years with Sachs, and she developed this temperament, and I didn't pretend to have it, and didn't have it. But it was invaluable to have Agnes, who would take on anybody on pretty much any field in the history of art, knowing her own well, and the others reasonably well. So that was the enormous plus. I can't begin to state it. In the department, you had a situation in which there was one professor of the Forbes/Pope age, Chandler Post, and he was, I suppose, 60 when I was here, and was—I'd had him as an undergraduate teacher. He was—we were mutually unsympathetic. We never had any fights, but I don't think he ever came to this house, and I certainly was never entertained by him. [00:38:08] He was very much—he was a monumental example of the monumental school of the previous generation. He was a walking encyclopedia of art. He had written a history, a one-volume history, of sculpture. His immediate field was Spanish painting, but he knew the whole history of art, perfectly astonishing way. I can't remember—question came up. I can't remember if we were given a piece of Baroque sculpture, or whether I was considering buying it, and it was—dimly remember the object was an interesting object, and wondering what it could be, and devoting a certain amount of time to it, studying it, doing research on it. Finally came to the conclusion that it must be Flemish Baroque, and came up with a name. Asked Chandler Post about it, and just off the top of the hat, I said, "What do you know about Jacques [inaudible]?" Whatever name I invent now. And he told me everything, just—he was carrying in his mind this thing that I had been struggling, following up references in *Thieme-Becker* or whatever. [00:40:05] Hadn't thought about that man. Forgot nothing. He was—he had been the—fine arts department was, of course, an oligarchy of people with tenure, and by and large, they succeeded one another, in chronological order, as chairman. He became chairman and was an absolute disaster Such a disaster that, after one year, I guess the department went to the dean and said, "There's got to be a change." [Laughs.] Of all things, Paul Sachs, who was no scholar, but a great teacher, became chairman. He was a marvelous chairman. So Chandler Post was there.

ROBERT F. BROWN: He was no administrator, though.

JOHN COOLIDGE: He was no administrator.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And as a teacher?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Well, he was—

ROBERT F. BROWN: You'd had him as a teacher.

JOHN COOLIDGE: I had him as a teacher. You know, encyclopedic teachers can be—they're challenging, because they know everything, and they ask you to write a paper, and you try and find out as much as they do, and perhaps just a tiny bit, one more fact, than they do. [They laugh.] He was there—who, however, was approaching retirement. Was not at all an active person in the—

ROBERT F. BROWN: He was the senior person at that time?

JOHN COOLIDGE: But he was the senior person. Well, I'll tell you—this is a remark that I've

never forgotten. Obviously, the department voted on getting me to come. [00:42:07] Well, the next year, when—as I said, when I took on the job, I said, "I've got to be a member of the oligarchy. I've got to have the title of associate professor." The dean saw that, but the department had to vote on that, and I don't know, perhaps a year later, Chandler Post ran into me and said, "Seems to me every year or so I'm voting to give you—I have to vote to give you an appointment. I hope that's all through for now." Well, this was somehow not the cheeriest kind of remark. [They laugh.] All right. I can understand. It was true. He had a duplicate, intellectually, a good deal younger, say 15 years younger, Leonard Opdycke. Leonard Opdycke was exactly the same, except that he didn't publish anything. Leonard Opdycke was absolutely—he was a very, very nice man. It was astonishing that he was married. I think his wife had died. He had no visible social existence at all. Lived on Beacon Hill. A complete gentleman of the old school, and again, a complete encyclopedic mind. But he was an administrative—when his turn came to be chairman, he did it, to our surprise, very well. [00:44:10] Leonard Opdycke had a hobby, which was his field, real field, and that was naval history. The only thing he ever published was a pamphlet on battleships that had visited Bar Harbor, and that was [laughs] the sort of thing he knew inside and out.

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ROBERT F. BROWN: —maybe in his 40s when you came on as director.

JOHN COOLIDGE: I would have said 50. Maybe not. Maybe in his 40s. No, he was 50. When it became his turn to be chairman, he was—the bulk of the department who we would get to, not only younger in years, but in point of view. A person like Jakob Rosenberg had grown up in the 20th century. Leonard Opdycke really hadn't. But he was—we would have a department meeting, and the vote would be nine to one on a given issue, and then the chairman would have to report on whatever the matter was to the dean, and would write an impeccable description of what the department had felt. He expressed, concisely, our opinions. [Laughs.] Nine of us felt this way, and then a very brief paragraph, and one disagreed for the following reasons. You never worried about Leonard Opdycke as a representative of the department. He'd express his opinion, knowing perfectly well that if yours differed, wouldn't attempt to sell you. He worked from about 8:30 in the morning until 1:00 every day, and then disappeared. Never appeared in the afternoon. [00:02:00] As chairman, we never—he had memorized his courses years ago, gave the same—well, he had half a dozen courses, at least, maybe more, but they all came out the same way, and he didn't have to do any additional research for them. [Laughs.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: What fields did he cover?

JOHN COOLIDGE: He did Baroque. He had a series of courses on English architecture after the Renaissance, and French architecture, and Italian architecture. Those are the three I remember. Then, of course, at one point, he taught the general survey.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And fairly effective as a lecturer?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yes. Terribly well-organized. It was pretty much a matter of birth dates and the names of the principal objects. Very little interpretation of them. But he would say the essential things. I mean, he would point out that St. Peter's had been planned by Bramante, and then Michelangelo and Maderno. He didn't oversimplify anything, but he didn't get beyond the basic fact.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You had no impression he kept up in any particular field?

JOHN COOLIDGE: No, and essentially no impression that he read anything except the basic dictionaries. But if a fact changed, he was apt to know it somehow. [00:03:59] He was also—well, he had a, had a wonderful sense of humor. I wasn't there, but there was a faculty meeting, in which [inaudible] announced that he was going to change the Harvard AB degree from Latin to English. Leonard Opdycke—Seymour Slive told me this story—was sitting next to Slive, and said, "Well, if they're going to do that, they're really going to have to be logical about it."

[Audio Break.]

JOHN COOLIDGE: [They laugh.] And Seymour said, "Oh, but Leonard, you've got to speak up." Leonard wouldn't—but this was the kind of thing that he thought.

ROBERT F. BROWN: [Inaudible] would have to become truth.

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yes. [They laugh.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: At long last [they laugh].

JOHN COOLIDGE: At long last, yes. He told me that—he came in, as I said, 8:30-ish. Harvard doesn't open before 9:00, but can get in the back door. He came in shortly after the Fogg was—and remember the arches around the court there. [00:06:02] Because there's a slight step between the arches, there are cords, so that people won't go through the arches and not see the step. He said he came in there one morning, say within a few months after the Fogg was opened, and who should be there but A. Lawrence Lowell. Should be said that Lawrence Lowell had established the Harvard mile—set the record for the Harvard mile as a young man. Lawrence Lowell, he said, was examining one of these cords, and Leonard said, "Oh, God," because it was perfectly true the cords had begun to show signs of wear. He said, "The president's here in this new building. You're going to criticize?" He said, "Not at all." Lawrence Lowell drew off a reasonable distance, and then sprinted and jumped over one of the cords. [They laugh.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: That's quite [inaudible] that early one [ph].

JOHN COOLIDGE: That's right. Well, this was the kind of thing that Leonard Opdycke experienced and passed on quietly. He would never have told anybody about this, except when Seymour was sitting beside him.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Those are two senior figures who are—

JOHN COOLIDGE: Well, he was a middling senior. Then the—as I told you at the beginning, the department was sufficiently at odds—the seniors were, with people like Arthur Pope and Paul Sachs and Chandler Post, all these strong personalities—that the younger people, they tended to take people of not very positive personality. [00:08:26] So that the active people in the department were three men in their middle 40s, the oldest being Charles Kuhn, who was the director of the Busch-Reisinger Museum.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Had come about 1930, I believe.

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yes, that's right. Charles was a superb museum man—he did an incredible job at the Busch-Reisinger—who taught German art, and taught it well, and had some pupils, most notably Julia Phelps, who is being decorated this afternoon by the German government.

ROBERT F. BROWN: She had been an honorary curator there for years?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yes. She's actually—yeah, that's what she has been, and done a marvelous job. Charles didn't publish much. [00:10:02] He'd published—he was a pupil of Kingsley Porter. Published on Romanesque painting in Catalonia, and then had devoted himself to—his next book was on German art in American private collections, which was—or in American collections—which was German Renaissance paintings, in effect. Then he later cataloged what he had acquired for the Busch-Reisinger. He was completely of the 20th century. He followed contemporary art. He'd built up, after all, a great 20th-century collection, and was very—well, completely—my generation, so to speak, and completely sympathetic person. Not very positive in his—he was quietly effective, tremendously effective, running the Busch-Reisinger, but not a person who had much view of the department, or of the history of art. He just was a good, quiet practitioner. Parallel to him, slightly younger, was Frederick Deknatel. Fred had started out as a Medievalist, and again—yes, he did Medieval Gothic sculpture. [00:12:09] I don't remember now—I've forgotten his—we'll say in Toledo or something like that. It wasn't Toledo, but—then had transferred his interest to 19th and 20th-century painting, and knew that very well, but an absolute block on publication. He knew contemporary art very well, and was actively fascinated with the most contemporary, and was a first-rate connoisseur of this. The most remarkable collector, one of the most remarkable collectors, I've ever known was one G. David Thompson, who bought in the contemporary field, and of G. David Thompson, Alfred Barr remarked, "I've never discovered a modern—a young painter whom G. David Thompson hadn't seen before me." He was that kind of collector. G. David Thompson always consulted Fred Deknatel about—not necessarily accepting his advice, but he went up to him and listened to him. He was a person who trained rafts of people in 19th and 20th-century painting. [00:14:01]

ROBERT F. BROWN: Through his teaching?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Through his teaching. Not through any writing, but through his teaching.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And keeping abreast, did he go to New York or travel otherwise?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Oh, absolutely.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Frequently?

JOHN COOLIDGE: He collected—both Charles and Fred collected. Charles Kuhn, on his honeymoon, had a little money. Not much money. They both had private means. Not enormous, but some. In any case, on his honeymoon, Charles Kuhn bought a painting about so big for, he told me, $3,000, and it's a Rubens sketch. So Charles Kuhn had a Rubens sketch [laughs] along with his [inaudible] and Kirchners [ph] and all this kind of thing that he collected. Fred traded a—Lord. I can't think of it, the name. It will come to me. But a—oh, a late—a perfectly well-known Impressionist, and a good one. He went to New York, and he turned in this picture, which I next saw, and is permanently on exhibition in the Phillips Collection, which says something for—must have been [inaudible] but it might have been, and came back with a Cézanne oil sketch. As a young instructor, he bought Picasso lithographs, which were still very—were very cheap then. [00:16:04] This is a wonderful, small collection that Jenny still has. This was his background. Very knowledgeable person in 19th and 20th century. He was active as a collector.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Were they both good as teachers, Deknatel and Kuhn?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yes. Deknatel—Deknatel, livelier than Kuhn, but both good teachers.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But neither, you said, positive forces or effective—

JOHN COOLIDGE: Neither positive forces. The thing that was a basic feature of—Deknatel had a misplaced hip. I can't—there is a perfectly good name for it. I can't remember it. Any case, that kept him out of the war. He became a major assistant dean here. I think he may have been what's called dean of the college, which means dean of men, as against the dean of the faculty, something like that. He was tremendously successful at this. This was told to me by, again, my dean, Paul Buck, who was there, who was also out of the war and was running Harvard. Deknatel is just a superb dean of students this way, and this went through his entire life. [00:18:00] He was just wonderful with students, and as a department member, his problems would come up with students, and his was the judgment that was—well, you disagreed with at your peril, because it was just such a sensitive and wise—he's perfectly prepared to say, "No, that guy is never going to make it," and you would, again, disagree at your peril. He was a tremendous person. Then there was—and Deknatel's almost exact colleague—was Benjamin Rowland. Rowland was an extraordinary man. He was wealthy Philadelphian. Not enormously wealthy, but, you know, Main Line. Grew up with this, and his whole way of life was a reaction from a very sociable, conventional way of life. He'd had a rough time growing up. I knew him. He was my tutor my sophomore year, and I'd known him well. He—well, he took to alcohol, and then his wife got him out of that, but he was a person who had lived unconventionally. [00:20:07] I don't think there—I think there were a few things that Ben hadn't done. Then he'd gone into Oriental art. He, too, had something of the Post-ian memory, but he was profoundly, and all his life, a painter himself, and a collector, so that he had the kind of intimate view of art. He was profoundly unsocial, in the sense that he was—I don't think he ever entertained more than two people. We had a delightful evening with Ben—Polly and I and the Rowlands. In fact, Polly is lunching with Lucy Rowland today. But I don't think he ever went to an opening or nothing of that sort. He was—and very good teacher. He had pupils, because his intellect was so remarkable. Friends, very few. He simply was not concerned with anything except his own work. Well, then there two—deal with a central thing. [00:22:02] There was a younger person, a person 10 years younger than Kuhn, George Hanfmann, who was—had come to this country and just gotten his PhD in Berlin. He was Jewish. He came to this country as a refugee. He got a second PhD at Johns Hopkins, and had come on here as a young instructor. Yes, he was probably late 20s or 30, teaching classical art. There was a very gifted, very American young man, named Ted Grace. Nice as he could be. Boston family. Completely, as it were, Groton, Harvard, and appropriate social background. But before the war, Hanfmann and Grace were both assistant professors teaching classical art. The senior professor, George Chase, who became dean while I was an undergraduate and was still around, but not active, and they—when the

department—he had fully retired. Either one or the other would succeed him. That was sort of known. They were, both of them, first-rate, but somewhat different. I never knew—I knew Ted Grace, but I never knew him well. I mean, would speak to and so forth. A very nice man. He was killed in the war, so Hanfmann was left as the only assistant professor. [00:24:07] Classical art was his. A great scholar. Going to hear a memorial lecture given—first of a series that the Archeological Institute has instituted in his honor. A man of broad—encyclopedic in his own field of very broad interests, and then he made a success, a great success, with the excavation of Sardis. He was there as a forward-looking young man. His life took the—because he got involved in what was the biggest American excavation in terms of budget, so to speak, he never became chairman of the department, but he was—I don't know, I think he may have been the most distinguished American student of classical art of his generation. If that isn't true, it's—he'd be one of the two or three people you would consider in there, but I tend to think he was the first. He, however, was completely modern in his point of view. Well, now, what happened was that neither Kuhn—well, Rowland was not eligible for getting involved in things [ph]. [00:26:07] Deknatel was chairman the year I arrived, but it was the end of his chairmanship. Kuhn became chairman. Kuhn was slow in getting promoted. Deknatel got promoted quite early. The real structure of things—and this is, again, I'm talking frankly and egotistically, and wouldn't want to have this part published while I was alive—because they were neither very ambitious or very imaginative. The future of the department very quickly moved into George and my hands, and what—I came from NYU, which was utterly unlike Harvard. It was a big city institution, and there was, I told you, few serious students, and then everybody from New York. I had been in Princeton and at Penn, and I got back to Harvard, and the Harvard art world—I counted. There were something like 15 people, if you included in it people like Louise Lucas, or people like Philip Hofer, who was a collector in art in the library, and the people in conservation, and so forth. [00:28:07] It was more than the number of professors. I mean, the regular department people. It was eight, something like that. Maybe 10, 12. There were 17 in all. I mention the larger number because, of the 17, only the two refugees had not had some education at Harvard, including me. But more remarkable, of that 17, I was the only person—no, not of that 17. I'd have to skip Philip Hofer. But certainly in the department and in most of the people around, I was the only person who had had a full-time job, except at Harvard. Was the only person who had ever been employed elsewhere. This, to me, was just appallingly ingrown. I think Hanfmann—well, Hanfmann and Kuhn, maybe, were the only Jews. The basic thing that happened was to, over the next 20 years, make a modern department out of it, bringing in people who taught at—one of the things that got to be out of hand, seriously out of hand—of course, all these people had been promoted from Harvard. [00:30:18] At least done their—both Kuhn and Deknatel had gotten their A.B.s elsewhere, then getting them—they were graduate students who became professors. In the next 20 years, we promoted only one person who had been an assistant professor at Harvard. That was Seymour Slive. Everybody came in from the outside to balance the—to create a balanced department. Hanfmann and I remained local, I in my undergraduate way, and he—well, both of us as assistant professors, but the other assistant professors came in—Sydney Freedberg—came in having taught at Wellesley, and so forth and so on.

ROBERT F. BROWN: So both you and Hanfmann perceived this as a problem, as chancellors—

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yeah. First person that was appointed was a guy named Harry Bober, who was Jewish and was teaching at NYU, and so forth and so on. He didn't work out, and was succeeded by Sydney Freedberg. But then you got—think of the names. Ackerman, who came from the University of California. Kitzinger, who came from—don't know where his German degree was, and then he was in the National Gallery, and then he was in Dumbarton Oaks. [00:32:04] You brought in—completely changed the parochial—it—

[Audio Break.]

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yes, we felt this. The people who would have counted would be Kuhn and Deknatel. Rowland wouldn't think this one way or the other.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You mean, he wouldn't be bothered by this?

JOHN COOLIDGE: No, he wouldn't—it was just one of those boring things that came up. You went to a department meeting and voted on it. You didn't—Deknatel and Kuhn were in—did not disagree, but wouldn't have taken—we are looking for some new person. We were the ones who would go out and suggest names.

ROBERT F. BROWN: They would not take an active—

JOHN COOLIDGE: They would not take a—Deknatel was the person who discovered Seymour Slive, at a meeting of the College Art Association. He came rushing around to me and said, "Come and hear this man," so I went and heard him. Shared his enthusiasm, but the idea that the department needed changing wouldn't have really, I think, occurred to him. In any case, there was this change, and it was a change with which we were wholly sympathetic, and they went along, at least. [00:34:10] So that—

ROBERT F. BROWN: It's a change that, in any event, this man retired, right?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Post would be retiring.

JOHN COOLIDGE: I don't know the—in practice, there were rarely people of our own—well. [Audio break.] One of the basic things that happened—

ROBERT F. BROWN: And this was happening within the first 10 years or so that—

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yes, by then, the first 10 years. Then, of course, it—since the people you brought in were sympathetic—I mean, then you—this all became part of the procedure, and until we woke up, my God, that we haven't been hiring our own. A big problem here, the—I personally, strongly felt this. I'm not saying it was my idea, because other people felt that way. The study of art is dependent on the study of objects, and we feel that somebody who has taken four years studying art, in this area, should not continue as a graduate student. That you're much better—this is, of course, selfish to me. I knew the Boston buildings, but then I got to know the New York buildings, because I lived there. [00:36:05] As a student of—what will we say?—classical art, as an undergraduate, will know the Boston Museum, and they damn well ought to know the Metropolitan, though they'll get that better if they're a student at Columbia. So that our department does not take bright ABs who are going into the history of art. We tend to send them elsewhere. To some extent, this may have cut us off from people. The other thing that is more serious is that, of course, you get strong teachers—shall we say Fred Deknatel. He will have able students in his own field. When you're running a small department, you can't have two people teaching French 19th-century painting, so precisely some of the best people were not in the running as long as—or until he was—well, in the 20 years between when he was 40 and when he was 60. You could conceivably take on a brilliant assistant professor when he was 60, and then an opening.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Not until then. Not really until then.

JOHN COOLIDGE: Not really until then. So that—well, a person that I regret we don't have—it's clear why we don't—was Irving Lavin, who's now at the Institute for Advanced Study. [00:38:04] This would have been a wonderful person to have in our department. Hell, I directed his doctoral dissertation, with Jim Ackerman, in the field, and Sydney Freedberg. You really couldn't take someone like that on. So this was a second consideration that edited out Harvard people, that has forced a kind of—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Exit for these—

JOHN COOLIDGE: It forced the exit, and kept their whole group broader, though we got to the point where we were not ever appointing—were not ever promoting—were not ever giving tenure to our assistant professors, and we've had to work, and are working, to correct that, and that is being corrected.

ROBERT F. BROWN: In other words, it became so habitual, simply, to urge people to go elsewhere?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yeah, that—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Either your undergraduates or your [inaudible] or an assistant professor?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yeah. The two current professors who were promoted, given tenure, Slive and Neil Levine, but there's a long gulf between them. We took no assistant professors of our own on, for one reason or another. One reason being that it's awfully easy, because

they're anxious to get involved, if they're any good in administrative work, to give them too much. [00:40:07] We found that when we became aware of this fact, we have been making a deliberate practice of preventing the younger faculty getting too deep into administrative work, because it means that they publish less, and have less good chance for promotion. It also means that the tenured people do more, which they don't like.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But which you think, perhaps, they should, to a degree?

JOHN COOLIDGE: They should, in terms of—I think they should. Think of the luxury of Ben Rowland's career, is—well, it is a luxury, and very few people deserve it. You have to admit that there are people who deserve it. Chandler Post deserved it. You've got to watch it.

ROBERT F. BROWN: In other words, in the '40s, you fairly soon, and you mentioned George Hanfmann and some others, felt—

JOHN COOLIDGE: Hanfmann was already here.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —ingrownness was a problem, or could become a problem.

JOHN COOLIDGE: Could become a problem, and we deliberately worked against it.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You, of course, knew NYU, Princeton, and there were two or three other places, of which you might conceivably draw prospects?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Oh, sure. Hanfmann was nothing if not a national figure as a young man. Plus the fact that, being a refugee, he didn't have, as all Americans do, a prejudice for the kind of—shall we say an Ivy League prejudice. You can't help it. [00:42:05] He seems—in a certain way, Bush might have—I'm a fervent Democrat. I'm not for Bush. But he seems my kind of guy, in a way that Reagan didn't. Well, all right. You translate that into making this difficult question on appointments, and it's very easy to slip into this kind of thing.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Hanfmann brought a breadth.

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yeah. Hanfmann brought a—well, less a breadth than an absence of narrowness. They were all odd to him, so he didn't—[laughs.] Well, now, this account, because I wanted to present the central phenomenon, overlooked one major person, and that was Wilhelm Curler. Wilhelm Curler was younger than Post, but he was older than Kuhn and Deknatel. I came in at 35. Deknatel was then 45. I suppose Curler may have been 55.

ROBERT F. BROWN: When you came in in '47?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yeah. He was between 55 and 60. I guess he was older, 57, 58, because I don't know how long you worked. Curler was an extraordinary person. [00:44:00] He was a Balt. His father was, as Hans [ph] [inaudible]. I once had lunch with—accidentally, just accidentally—with the two of them, plus a visiting professor from NYU, who's a German refugee, and all three of these men were Balts. In the course of conversation, I asked them, "What did your father do?" Curler's father was the head of the local gymnasium in—

ROBERT F. BROWN: In a Baltic city?

JOHN COOLIDGE: In a Baltic city. Hanfmann's father ran the—and a very famous left-wing newspaper it was. The other man, whose name escapes me for the moment, father, was the richest local landowner, and he told us one fascinating thing. He said his father had one male secretary, whose sole function was to take care of bribes. [They laugh.] You got an insight into Baltic society. Well—

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ROBERT F. BROWN: —been here a good while, had he?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yes. Curler—

ROBERT F. BROWN: He was not a 1930s refugee. Or was he?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Let's come to that. I'd rather not answer that question the way you put it, because I'll come to it. Curler got his degree in Germany, and became a director of an art museum, and was known for his interest in contemporary art. He sensed—he was not Jewish.

He sensed that Hitler was coming, and when Kingsley Porter disappeared, they asked Curler to come as a visiting professor. They liked Curler, and Curler liked—well, I guess, by that time, Hitler was in. Any case, Curler left Germany to come to America, because he detested Hitler, though he was a very promising young German at that point. Wrote a fabulous book on a Medieval manuscript, which I don't know. [00:02:02] Published comparatively little, but was a major, major art historian, whom all the other refugees knew and admired. He was one of the greats. He was a very remote-seeming man. Polite, quietly polite, but not terribly involved in students. On the other hand, just an outstanding intellect, much the best intellect in the department, and with an extraordinary—well, he was not tracked. He would do the most surprising things. He announced a seminar in, I think, Rembrandt, and at the first session, I think with the first slide, it came in—it was put in right to left, backwards. [00:04:11] It was sufficiently well-known, so that everybody knew it. It was like *The Night Watch* or something. Everybody knew it was backwards. Instead of changing it, Curler said, "Stop. How is this different?" They got so fascinated discussing that, that the seminar changed to a study of sort of basic visual differences of—this became the introductory session on a seminar devoted to this kind of thing. He had that kind of surprising quality. Opdycke gave the introductory survey, and this was, as I say, purely encyclopedic Everybody knew that this was not adequate, but I was absolutely astonished when Curler asked if he could meet me, or if he could see me in my office at five o'clock. Deknatel turned up, and Curler said that he thought it was scandalous that the introductory course should be this way, and would the two of us joining him in making a new introductory course? [00:06:08] So we did, but a German, who was, by then, 60—in fact, the last years of his teaching were spent, great extent, on that introductory course, which eventually he took over. I don't know whether I had or Fred had a sabbatical. Somehow, he did the whole thing. This man whom everybody had thought of as this great research person, and was marvelous in seminars, suddenly had turned his attention to the introductory course. Was very surprising.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And he was quite effective in that?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Oh, yes. Marvelous. Just marvelous at this kind of thing.

ROBERT F. BROWN: So Opdycke sort of went off in the wings of graduate?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Opdycke—yes, Opdycke continued a bit. He, of course, may have retired fairly soon. He may have been—he seemed younger than Curler, but I'm not sure. I'd have to work that out. In any case, for a while they ran both, but everybody took Curler.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Curler was not part of a central core? He sort of went his own way, to a degree?

JOHN COOLIDGE: He was, but he was—to get back to this first meeting, Fred and I, who accepted this great man, he said, "I don't like what you call me. Why don't you call me what"—and he mentioned Bill Tyler [ph], who had been a close friend of his, a Harvard student—"Why don't you call me Bill?" [00:08:07] So Fred and I [laughs] with this man who was, what, 20 years older than I, not used to calling this very austere figure by a first name, started calling him Bill. Everybody else in the department [inaudible] "You're calling him Bill?" But he had this kind of surprising thing. On the other hand, he was the first person—he would not have taken the initiative himself—he was the first person to see that—an art department of our size and stature, with the only Jews being Hanfmann and Kuhn? This should be changed. You bring in somebody from outside. He always understood, and he had —

ROBERT F. BROWN: He had the right to—

JOHN COOLIDGE: He had the acquiescent judgment, as it were, and in major things would take a real part. Just before I came, they'd remodeled the PhD exam, and I know that he had played a major part in that, as did, for that matter, Rosenberg. So that you had, in those two older people, an understanding of change.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But you weren't going to really get among the local entities [ph] that had been out—

JOHN COOLIDGE: You didn't have—one of the things I did, because it seemed to me natural, was to start having temporary exhibitions. [00:10:07] No one had told me that they only had about one a year before my time, one or two. I knew that they would have them, but we had —the idea that the Fogg had regular, temporary exhibitions, I wasn't conscious of making a

change. Museums did, and I hadn't realized—I hadn't particularly noticed. I only lived with it in Pope's year, and Pope was technically the director, but was actually the acting director until the new director came along, so that you didn't make broad generalizations on that year.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Simply that the collection was up all year?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yes, that's right. Of course, I was—well, I was deeply concerned with modern art. I set out to be an architect. I wanted to be—was involved in the international style. I never studied modern painting, but the moment you—the first thing the Fogg needed to develop in its collections was abstract art and 20th-century art. This was in no sense unsympathetic to Kuhn or Deknatel, but they had no way of controlling the museum, so when the museum moved into their interests, you changed the character of the place. [00:12:04] You were able to do things that they—Kuhn had, yes. He had had modern shows.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But over at the Busch-Reisinger?

JOHN COOLIDGE: But the Busch wasn't anywhere near the same amount of money. So that all these things brought about, starting in the late '40s, a change in character of the department. Now, for—I can't go too far back, but obviously there had been a change when they moved from the old building to the new, and certain things, activities like conservation, though I suspect they existed before they moved, were so dependent on space that they took a new character. The other thing that has happened is that Hanfmann and I were—he's a little older than I, but like a year older. Sydney Freedberg is a year younger. In the middle of our time here, collectively, Ernst Kitzinger came along, who's exactly our age. So that just as there was a change, effectively, starting in the late '40s, with people coming back from the war and bringing in new people, so all of us retired. [00:14:16] In addition to this fact—and again, I don't mind talking to you, but not for publication—you had the fact that the two key members of the next younger generation, namely Seymour Slive and John Rosenfield, exhausted themselves in the building of the Sackler Museum, and have largely withdrawn from the administrative side of the department, so that you have not only the four people I mentioned, but two others, who are thinking very seriously of their rapidly approaching retirement, and you're getting a wholly different group of people. Neil Levine, and Oleg Grabar, and Irene Winter, and John Shearman. You get a group that—you've got, humanly, a complete new setup.

ROBERT F. BROWN: There are many variables. You can't quite say, right? Because Shearman's just come in.

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yeah. I wouldn't attempt to define what it's going to be, but I will say that, to a very real extent, it's changed. [00:16:10] One thing that's happened is now the unity of the department and museum has broken down. The two are quite consciously separate now. That's going to change.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Administratively, or it's just simply consciously? Practice or—

JOHN COOLIDGE: In practice, not in a different—it could change, but it's partly that, with the second building, the department is all in one building, the museum is all in another. There are all kinds of things that have combined here. This is making a change, and in the history of the fine arts at Harvard, the period '45 to—well, what?—say '80, '85, will be seen as a unit, as the period of '70 to '90, when Charles Eliot Norton was here, is a unit, and the period—or rather '70 to 1900, and then the period 1900 to certainly 1930, if not '45, was another unit, kind of unit. Institutional history doesn't interest me, so I am not prepared to say that either of these didn't break, that there weren't major breaks within that period, but these are major breaks I have seen. [00:18:00]

ROBERT F. BROWN: They help to focus what we've discussed today.

JOHN COOLIDGE: Exactly. And of course—yeah. Well—

[Audio Break.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: You've mentioned a number of people, and one you've mentioned in passing is Philip Hofer. Was he a curator? I know he's a great collector as well.

JOHN COOLIDGE: Philip Hofer was a moderately wealthy man from Cleveland, who was

interested in rare books, and particularly illustrated books. I met him at first when he was working in the Morgan Library. He found Belle Greene impossible.

ROBERT F. BROWN: She was the then-director?

JOHN COOLIDGE: She was the then-director. And moved to the New York Public, and at the New York Public, got into their rare book and illustrated book department. When the then-director, Keith [ph] Metcalf, came to Harvard, to run the Harvard Library—and I don't know the background for that change, and I'm not sure that Keith was—he may have been—

[Audio Break.]

JOHN COOLIDGE: Possibly, Metcalf was number two in the New York Public. Any case, came on to Harvard and was the first professional librarian who was director of the whole shooting match, and brought Phil Hofer with him. [00:20:11] Phil Hofer was already a loyal son of Harvard. Phil Hofer teamed up with William Bond, and the two of them—William Bond, who was interested in rare books in general—were co-founders of what became the Houghton Library. I don't know, again, the link. Arthur Houghton was loyal, a Harvard man, a great collector. I don't know whether his—whether you could discriminate. I think he was interested in both men. Any case, once the library got started, they divided it up, with Bond taking all kinds of written and printed material, manuscripts and so forth, and Phil Hofer taking illustrated books and prints. He was a brilliant collector himself. A great diversity of interests. Collected his own drawings, but had an extraordinary gift of thinking of new fields. [00:22:11] Suddenly popped into his head that travel books would be an interesting thing to collect, and nobody was collecting them, and so he collected these. His mixture of his personal collection and the library collection, there was a very complete fusion there. It was essentially one collecting operation. He built up an amazing collection. He got interested in architecture. Got architecture books, and then architecture drawings. That fit in with—well, I guess—I don't know the chronology here, but certainly the fact that all of Richardson's drawings were given to Harvard was because Houghton Library, thanks to Phil Hofer, was a logical place for them to go. He was a curious combination of a person whose fundamental loyalty was absolutely focused on the Houghton Library, but he had an enormous amateur interest in lots of other activities, not least the Boys Club of Boston. He would give a good deal, a great deal, of time to purely charitable activities like that, but he was a trustee of the Boston Museum, and he was enormously interested in the Fogg, and would give advice. [00:24:06] He teamed up with Agnes Mongan and mounted a show of Andrew Wyeth material. I can't now remember just what it was. We'll say watercolors that never had been exhibited. His watercolors, his paintings, yes, but never his watercolor sketches, or something. He did an outstanding job. He was a man who I consulted repeatedly on everything to do with the Fogg, and on everything to do with the Boston Museum, where we were both associated. He was just a sympathetic man who was deeply involved in Harvard, and was always talking to him about a great range of subject. Eventually, he left. His collection was also split with his wife. He was—Harvard's greatest treasurer, Paul Cabot, said that—I think to my wife, who my wife commented on what a wonderful gift he had for collecting works of art. Paul rudely said, "Hell, you should see the way he collects stocks and bonds." Phil, as I said, was a rich man, but he was not staggeringly rich, but he managed to give away, or trade away, or get tax deductions for his gifts, so that while he would spend—must have spent several million dollars collecting works of art, he ended up with several million dollars. [00:26:12] [They laugh.] He knew all the angles, and he unabashedly played them, and traded with dealers, and so forth and so on, but had a knack of coming out ahead. It was a full-time job for him. One interesting thing was that he loved Maine, and he had a house in Camden, and he traveled the world over, and I mean the world over, and he managed to limit his time in Massachusetts to five months and twenty-five days, so that he was a citizen of Maine, where he didn't have to pay income tax. [They laugh.] I'm sure he would spend months, six weeks, every year in Maine, but the state of Massachusetts just knew he wasn't in Massachusetts and did own a house in Maine. That was the—

ROBERT F. BROWN: At the Fogg, what sort of things, particularly, do you recall getting his advice on, or perhaps receiving from him?

JOHN COOLIDGE: He gave a piece of sculpture in my honor when I retired. He gave—he left most of his drawings. The collection, of course, was divided, so that his wife, Bunny, was the titular possessor of a great deal of it, and when she died, her collection came to the Fogg, and his collection came to the Fogg. [00:28:02] Everything but books, pretty much. The books went to Houghton, because he collected in areas where Houghton was interested. His

son, Myron, was not profoundly interested in—he's a psychiatrist—I think was reacting a bit against his father's total absorption in objects, and—well, he had a fabulous drawing by Hallban [ph] that he didn't sell, and that went to Myron. A few extraordinary things went to Myron, but most of them went either to Houghton or to the Fogg. He left—I don't know how much, but the impression I get is in low seven figures of cash for purchases at Houghton. He had a brother, who had no children, and who died before him, and who left Myron Hofer his wealth, so that Philip didn't feel the obligation of passing his fortune along to Myron. One of the amazing things about Philip was he would discuss the most personal things, like that. When his father died, he just said, "Well, that's going to be wonderful for Harvard, so to speak." [They laugh.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: I recall his saying how he hated business, but his father had put him to business for a while.

JOHN COOLIDGE: That's right.

ROBERT F. BROWN: As soon as he could get out of it, he escaped.

JOHN COOLIDGE: That's right, yes. [00:30:00]

ROBERT F. BROWN: He also had an extraordinary interest, early on, in such things as Russian late czarist material. He gathered illustrated material?

JOHN COOLIDGE: I imagine.

ROBERT F. BROWN: There was just no limit to what he might—

JOHN COOLIDGE: No limit. He discovered Edward Lear as an artist, and got into that. It was just this extraordinary gift of being ahead of the game. Then didn't mind stopping and following up some other line. Restless person in every way. Of course, he was—he was passionately social, in the sense that he wanted to know everybody and entertain everybody. He had an informal kind of salon kind of social life, so that everybody came to his house at one time or another. It wasn't as if he had Thursday evening cocktails, and people always came at that time, but anyone that came through, he'd throw a dinner party for them. You'd meet all sorts of people. He took pride in knowing everybody, and his sphere of interest in the city—he would be the first person to know the new director of the library at Boston College and that kind of thing. In the Fogg, all the time. Very close to Agnes Mongan. [00:32:00] Just interested, and would come to every opening, and always available for help or discussion. I never—one didn't ask him for money. I didn't. He's the sort of person who—I didn't, because I knew that every cent that he could, he was giving. I suppose if I'd had a starving student who was interested in his books, you might turn to him for something like that, but by and large, everything that he could was given away, and so it was—I just stayed off him. Agnes may not have.

ROBERT F. BROWN: He was one of those outside donors that you had to depend on when you came on at the Fogg.

JOHN COOLIDGE: No, he'd never been involved financially.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Or in terms of gifts of objects?

JOHN COOLIDGE: No, because that was, again, headed towards Houghton and—well, his mind was so clear as to what he was going to do, and he knew your needs inside-out, and he would—I'm not saying he never gave, but it never was notable, that I can remember. I can't remember a gift other than—sure, he gave another work of art. He gave something when Paul Sachs retired, and for Agnes Mongan. [00:34:00] He would make gifts that were tokens of friendship, and very nice they would be. They had something to do with your interests. I'm sure he would give a drawing in honor of Agnes, and a good one, and that kind of thing. But these were not—these were given because of out of affection for it to be [inaudible.] Also interested in people. You would have a student he would take under his wing. A student was interested in things that he knew about, fine, he'd take it on. On the other hand, there was a funny mixture of casualness and strict rules that meant that the Houghton Library could be difficult. They had, for example, a complete set—they would have. It's the sort of thing taken for granted of all the books that Picasso had illustrated. We had a very good undergraduate who was writing his dissertation on Picasso's illustrated books, in some regard or other, and we found it was easier to borrow all the books from another collection, one in Boston,

another great collection, than to try and work out a way where he could work at Houghton. [00:36:00] Houghton was just excessively stuffy, and stuffy in a way that—and I don't know that this was Philip's particular blame. It was the atmosphere of the place. Reasonably so in many regards, like the Richardson drawings. As an individual, a professor, or some friend of his, would never have a problem, and they had an excellent staff, and the word would get to the staff. The staff would give you anything in Philip's absence abroad [ph] and that kind of thing. But a student or somebody that was quasi-public, it could be quite stuffy. I don't know whether that was true of Bill Jackson's trick [ph], I don't know. Well, enough on Phil Hofer.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You've mentioned also that you were not to compete, particularly, with the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, unless donors would come to you on their own and say, "We want to do something for the Fogg."

JOHN COOLIDGE: You would know people who simply were not available to Boston, and either they or Boston told you, or it was just widely known, and you would approach them. There were, of course—traditionally, there had been people who had given to Boston. But basically not, and certainly a new person coming to town, you would give Boston first crack at. It was only after a while that you would feel around. [00:38:00] On the whole—I mean, it's very simple a reason. Oh, certainly, the Fogg is basically based on New York collecting and money. If you had—if the Fogg was 60 to 65 percent that, you know that Boston had only—since gifts, except for one's alma mater, are almost exclusively to the local city museum, you didn't take that away from Boston. A certain number of people would be on your visiting committee, and would make their own division. Some people felt if they were on our visiting committee and trustee of the Boston Museum, they'd owe something to both institutions, and would behave accordingly. One didn't make—one avoided going after Boston, or at least I did.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What was the role of your visiting committee? It was, for a long time, chaired by Alfred Barr, I believe.

JOHN COOLIDGE: Well, Harvard has, or had—the system has changed in recent years and so forth—but all the time I was active, they had, like, 40 visiting committees. The chairman of a visiting committee was a Harvard overseer, and I'm not going to go into the corporation and the overseer. [00:39:52] The visiting committee consisted of experts in a field, generous alumni, and then, occasionally, people who were simply wealthy patrons in a given field. Our visiting committee, they operated on a fixed term of years, like five, and they put in a very good rule, that after five years, you had to be off for a year, and then you could be reappointed. Every year, you would, therefore, lose a certain number. You knew your chairman well enough so that you would talk with him about likely people to be put on. Very occasionally—it never happened to me that I can remember, but I was aware of the potentiality of they would simply say no to some people. On the other hand, you had the freedom to—if you knew a good person, they'd put him on. I remember my first cousin, Jim Reynolds, who was head of all Harvard's fundraising, was absolutely amazed at our putting on people who had nothing to do with Harvard. He was alumni-minded. [00:42:00] We felt, if a great collector was interested in the Fogg Museum, by all means you should go—a great deal of objects and money came from non-Harvard money that way. Equally, from time to time, say once every three years, they would bring in a complete outsider. What will we say? A loyal alumnus in Buffalo, and they would want to get him more involved in Harvard, and the Fogg had an active visiting committee, and why don't we put him on the Fogg visiting committee?

ROBERT F. BROWN: So it was a staging point?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yeah. The people they put on were sometimes—were very often—splendid. I don't—you never felt that they were putting people on to inspect you. It was either to suit them or to suit fundraising, overall fundraising interests, that they did things like that. The chairman—yeah.

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JOHN COOLIDGE: —Chairman changed every five years, and if there was an overseer who was particularly interested in the arts, he would be put in as chairman. Some of the chairmen, the art chairmen, did all right, but the best chairmen, without any question, were the people who had no interest in the arts. They took it responsibly. Because they had no interest in the arts, when they spoke passionately to the other trustees, the other trustees

didn't think that they were riding their own hobby, and this made an enormous amount of difference. The most striking episode—and I may get my chairman wrong—which we had several very good ones—whose overseers came—have I told you about this in I Tatti. The overseers met Sunday and Monday—the visiting committees met Sunday and Monday. The Harvard Corporation always met Monday. One member of the corporation who was interested in the arts would drop in once a year, after the corporation always finished their meetings at 4:00, and that gave the people a chance to wander around, particularly if you came from out of town. [00:02:09] They sort of ran from 10:00 to 4:00, but might like to look in on the library or something. He came around once a year, or maybe something less. I was at the visiting committee meeting, and my marvelous secretary rushed down and got hold of me and said, "Mr. so-and-so has just dropped in." Never made a day he dropped in, so I went up to see him, and he told me that, at the meeting that day—Berenson had died within a month, and they had, at the meeting that day, considered his will, which left I Tatti to Harvard. He told me that the members of the corporation had taken no final action, but were resolved to take final action at their next meeting, two weeks from now, and that it was their strong feeling—but strong feeling—that they were going to turn down I Tatti. Well, I—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Had too much time to—

JOHN COOLIDGE: I shooed him out of there as quickly as I gracefully could, and rushed back to—I think it was Harry Tweed who was then the chairman, but it was certainly a non-art person—and rudely passed him a little note saying, "I really must speak to you, and immediately." [00:04:00] I whispered to him this, and he stopped the meeting, and he threw everybody out, all the faculty and museum staff who were attending the meeting out, and he said to me, "Will you tell the group what you've just told me?" I told them. He said, "Now, John, I want you to leave." [Laughs.] The upshot was that, in 10 days, before the corporation next met, the corporation announced their acceptance of the thing.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Pressure had been put, had it?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Where did the—

JOHN COOLIDGE: The visiting committee was just appalled at this news, and the visiting committee had—I don't know who was on at that particular time, but they would have had the director of either the Metropolitan or of the National Gallery, conceivably both. They would have had several leading collectors. They would have had a couple of professors. Then they would have just had citizens who knew. The unanimous thing was, this was not only wrong, but it was a disaster in terms of public relations for Harvard, and so forth and so on. Harry Tweed, because he was referred to, and I think correctly, as the leader of the New York Bar, the most distinguished lawyer of his generation at that time, simply went to the president of the board of overseers and said, "Look, this is what has happened." [00:06:02] He wouldn't have done it without doing that. How they proceeded from that then on, I don't know. I imagine there was some heavy telephoning, and if they got a group within the board who felt strongly about this, they were certainly—the overseers are in the position, they can overrule the corporation.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Oh, they can?

JOHN COOLIDGE: The rather fascinating old institution. The two bodies were set up in the 17th century, and the oldest one didn't go out of existence when the next one was formed, and they discovered that nobody knows who has the ultimate power. So they, in the 20th century, made a division of power where the overseers could overrule, provided they didn't do it too often. You let us run it most of the time; we'll let you overrule us on things. [They laugh.] I guess that the president simply said, "Well, it looks to me as if you'd be in danger of being overruled if you did this." Something like that. In any case, the committee, working through the chairman—now, Alfred Barr would have been in a much weaker position, because he would be speaking for the art world. Harry Tweed was speaking for the world at large.

ROBERT F. BROWN: So it could take quite an active position within Harvard—[00:08:03]

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —your visiting committee.

JOHN COOLIDGE: And um, well, I Tatti was one trouble. Another time—I can't remember. I guess they just hadn't appointed a director, or a successor to the director, and weren't doing anything about it. And then, I know, the chairman was a very distinguished judge, Ed Lumbard, who was supposed to be the senior judge in the federal court of appeals system. He was number 10 in the judiciary [laughs]—he was the top after the Supreme Court. Thank God on that. He saw to it that the administration got—he looked into these things that you can tell them, and a case like that, before their meeting, two or three of us felt strongly about it, said, "Well, should we take it up with Ed when he's here next week?" We got hold of him and said, "The three of us would like to meet you privately on something, lay this down." He took it very seriously and produced results. How he produced results, I don't know, but that's the way it worked. In about three occasions, they did things, major things, for us. [00:10:01] On one occasion, when they set up the Carpenter Center—and I don't remember the details of this. The university was going to do something to encourage the practice of the arts, and we felt strongly no, and we talked to our chairman, and our chairman came back to us—I don't think he'd waited a year or whatever, but some months—and said, "We've consulted, and the consensus of opinion is the administration is right and you are wrong." They, having gone to bat for us, you took that very, very seriously. You recognized you can always be wrong, and if these people, who helped you when they thought you were right, speak up when you're wrong, you not only accept it, but you reconsider your own position very seriously here. One of the most notorious cases was where the corporation—the Harvard Press started about 1912, and it never worked. Never worked worth a damn. In the late '40s, say '46, '47, they just—director had retired, and he hadn't been any good, and they decided there were plenty of university presses, and the hell with it. [Laughs.] They voted to stop it. They didn't think—they never could. The overseers would take this seriously. [00:12:01] The overseers said, "Uh-uh, no. Don't stop having a university"—and then they found the right guy, and he came in. I don't remember if there was a great university press or not. It became a satisfactory university press after that. I know this happened. Oh, they voted honorary degrees to people, which the overseers have not—overseers represent public opinion in a way the corporation doesn't, so that—things like that.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. What about—you've mentioned Alfred Barr, and he was—

JOHN COOLIDGE: He was not very effective.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did you get to know him quite well?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Oh, yes, but I'd known him earlier, yes. Sure, the worst one we had was right at the start, which was Edward Forbes, and he was—well, he was just nobody to—chairing a committee was not his dish of tea. He had many other virtues, but that, he never got into the—

ROBERT F. BROWN: To a degree, they were a device—through them, secondary function of theirs, came works of art. Is that correct? They would put you in touch, or they would give things—

JOHN COOLIDGE: Sure, that's right. Yes, that's certainly true, but all sorts of people would do that, from the dean, and from Phil Hofer. You get plenty of advice on this.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And they were visiting committee to the department, as well as to the museum?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Here, my mind gets fuzzy. [00:14:00] At first, there was a single committee. They then doubled it. They then split it, which meant adding rather more professors than we had had before. But because it would have been a single committee, everybody liked meeting at the same time, so that the things they went on, they continued. There were minor differences. Then the university stepped in and made definitely two committees, which is the present situation. But nominally, there were two committees for quite a while, but they met as one. In other words, they were a single committee with two subcommittees, if you wish. One for the museum, and one for the department. Perhaps the reality of what was taking place. Then, as I say, the university was not very happy, particularly with the department committee, so that was changed. Our committee, the big thing they did, of course, was to raise money for you, and to help you on that. Since they did this effectively, we had a committee of about 40, but the university pays the expenses. I

mean, wining and dining and spending the night. This was a fairly hefty item. They moved the decimal point over, and you got somewhere near what they were raising for you. [00:16:02] They weren't really objecting to that, but you could see how they didn't want this to be a precedent for all the committees.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You mean to pay for their—

JOHN COOLIDGE: Well, didn't want to have 40 people on the study of Latin, shall I say. [They laugh.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: This was, of course—these were your principal formal group, which was primarily your fundraisers, but you had others, presumably other people, not at random, but as individuals?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Oh, yeah, people who gave you money weren't necessarily on the visiting committee. Admirable people just said, "No, I don't want to be on that. I will continue to support you, and do come to see me when you have the time in New York," and you followed that up.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You've said somewhere that it began to free up and become a little more hopeful in the '50s. It was not good right after World War II, you said.

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yeah, and it gradually—then they put in a—there was a special committee that spent a year writing a report in the early '50s. John Nicholas Brown, who was in a position to know, said, "There's nothing wrong here that a million dollars wouldn't solve." This was comforting, if you wish. [They laugh.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: And then he gave it to you, no?

JOHN COOLIDGE: He did not. He raised no money. The financial situation gradually eased, but you got two dramatic changes. [00:17:57] We were—the Harvard Library is of an infinite complexity. Harvard is as rich as it is partly because they long ago realized that professors raise money better than general organizations, and the Fogg is there to prove it. They're better off than other college art museums, and so forth and so on. When a unit like a graduate school, or even a museum, gained independence, or built a new building, or whatever, there was a tendency for them to take over the library in their specialty, and the Fogg ran the art library for the university. As the department grew bigger, so the library got to be a bigger and bigger organization. Forbes and Sachs, who were mendicants of genius, had swung it, but by the '50s, it was clear that we couldn't—we weren't—as I told you, our salaries were below—we weren't paying—we were in the hole, but our salaries were nowhere near right, and so the central library took over the fine arts—the Fogg Museums' art library, and set up a so-called Fine Arts Library, which is—it's in the building, exactly the way it was, except that the bill was—picked up the tab was the central library. [00:20:33] This was—above all, they increased it. They got it into decent shape in many ways. That was taken off our budget. They also took off the practice of art from the department budget, but we gained space, thereby. Then—

ROBERT F. BROWN: You mean you reduced the scale of the practical art?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Oh, that all moved over into Carpenter, so that we—

ROBERT F. BROWN: You mentioned a little earlier the faculty, and I guess the museum people's opposition, until overruled, to the idea of the Carpenter, of the center for practice of art. Do you recall why that was? Or perhaps, why was this on the agenda at all? There had been a study or something that it suggested there should be?

JOHN COOLIDGE: The practice of art goes right back to 1870. As I said, it began at the same time that Charles Eliot Norton did. As long as you had Denman Ross's school, followed by Arthur Pope, you had an academic—you had an academy, in the sense that it was a group of teachers who had a single point of view, which was training artists. [00:22:11] The trouble with that academy was that they didn't bring their own successors, and the thing boiled down perfectly clearly to Arthur Pope, who was retiring. There was a young man, named James Carpenter, who was my age, but who obviously would never make it at Harvard. He didn't have what it took. And so while the obligation to teach the practice of art continued, the question of finding somebody to do it was turned over to the department. It had always been [inaudible] to the department, but the department decided, well, what do we do? We

tried various things. They had a very, very successful practice of art department at Andover, and we persuaded the man who taught there to take a year's leave of absence and teach at Harvard—or maybe it was two years, I think, something like that. Any case, that was a bust. Then we thought, well, how about taking first-rate local artists? [00:24:05] We got in Hyman Bloom—and I still admire as an artist, though he hasn't fulfilled his promise—and that was a bust. Then we got hold of—oh, Lord [inaudible] and that didn't work. Well, the department's opinion was split between some of us. I think this was my attitude. Thank God for the Carpenter. They will take over this problem that we found insoluble. It was not only insoluble, but the only reason it wasn't divisive was that everybody had a crack at it, and—I was all for local artists, for instance. It clearly didn't work.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You mean in the sense the students were restless and complained?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yeah, and artists just—and money just to teach, to be a good teacher. That's the kind of problem you had. But I was perfectly happy to say, "Brother, I've worked three years on this, and this was my guy, and so forth, and that didn't work. Now you take it."

ROBERT F. BROWN: "Bring in your"—[laughs]

JOHN COOLIDGE: "Bring in your man." This simply was—we came to the—many of us came to the position of saying, "Jesus, it would be wonderful to get rid of it," and a lot of other art departments had the same problem. At least we never had internal fights, which is true in many, many places. [00:26:02] On the other hand, some people just felt it should be continued, and Harvard shouldn't have two art departments. It was that kind of—I don't remember the details, but it was this—this split ran along this kind of line. And yes, a third group of people said, "Oh, Harvard should be bothering about this. We don't teach people to play piano. Why should we teach to paint watercolors?" That was, I guess, the dominant one when the Carpenter came along. Felt that—and you know, I think I've said this before. It's an old war cry of mine. I don't understand why it's true that in Greater Boston, you can get a first-rate education, an internationally first-rate education, in virtually everything except the practice of the arts, and there it's second-rate, in international terms, all the way around. Whatever you feel about the New England Conservatory—you know it isn't the Paris Conservatoire or whatever—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Oh, but Julliard.

JOHN COOLIDGE: Let alone the Julliard, whereas the Harvard Medical School is in that league. The same is true of the dance, and same is true of the drama.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And the graphic arts.

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yeah. I have a feeling that, though I can't prove it, there's just something in the ethos of the place that makes it difficult to impossible to do it effectively, and that one had better settle for doing it ineffectively. [00:28:12]

ROBERT F. BROWN: Not in light particularly of that, but why the rather large building, the Carpenter Center? Just simply a fortuitous gift, or was it—

JOHN COOLIDGE: This was a gift, and people felt that you ought to—there was a strong feeling that the effort should be made. The money was there. The Carpenters agreed to that. After all, nobody wanted the Fogg Museum, and Mrs. Fogg gave them the money, so they built it. Then see what—Harvard does do these things, and see what can be made of them.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Selection of Le Corbusier, how did that arise?

JOHN COOLIDGE: I don't know whose idea it was. Probably José Lluis Sert. But everybody on the committee felt that this was a brilliant idea. Even the local—the key person here was Harry Shepley of—Coolidge Shepley was very active as Harvard architect. He was the person who actually designed the Fogg within the firm, for instance, and he was chairman of the visiting committee at the Architectural School. People like that were strongly for it, so that this had no—the nomination had no problems.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Were you involved? Were you on the planning or oversight committee for the Carpenter?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yeah. That was a committee that—when they got the Carpenter thing, they set up a committee, and I was on it with people from the School of Design, and I guess professors from the department. [00:30:09] It wasn't a very large committee. We wrote the program, and as a committee, agreed to the Le Corbusier appointment, and so forth and so on, yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Was there any difficulty coming up with the configuration of studios and exhibition space?

JOHN COOLIDGE: No, because—I don't remember the way this worked. I remember that—I don't remember the way it ceased, the timing of the—yeah, what happened was something like this, and other people will have to fill it in, in detail. Derek Bok felt that the Fogg's facilities were inadequate, and there was some kind of suggestion, in his $80-million campaign, that a center for the practice of arts would be a good thing. When that came through, they set up a committee to plan for it. Once you knew you were going to have a building, the money was there, you were going to get it, then the—it wasn't all that impossible to draw up the outlines of a program for the building. [00:32:06] We even were—we knew perfectly clearly the guy we wanted to run it, and we tended to build our dream house around this individual, as a person like that, and how he would run it, and so forth and so on. That helped you through the program. The only problem was that he said he wasn't interested. [They laugh.] That was Charles Eames. I don't—it was, in a sense, naive, but it did say he was worrying about, well, what's the kind of person you'd like to get for it? Well, Charles Eames was the kind of person you'd like to get to run it. But drop that. Let's get on with how many students we're likely to get, and how many studios you're going to get with that many students, and so forth.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Any event, it was going to be quite an enlargement of the previous facilities, right?

JOHN COOLIDGE: That's right. I think the arrangement had been that the Fogg would keep on, and Derek saw that—not Derek.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Pusey?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yeah. Nate saw that the only real way out was to make it bigger, and therefore more independent, and put in a vague thing there, which the Carpenters built on. [00:34:02] And so that got us off the hook, and it got something rolling. And Sert emerged as somebody who was very interested here, and who was proto-Bauhaus. That gave it a direction that we wouldn't have accepted, but—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Really? You mean in terms of design or in, no?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Oh, yeah. Well, in terms of construction. They had a class of sculpture that was folding paper, and this kind of study of art, and the study of the senses, in the Bauhaus, the elementary Bauhaus way. Had seemed to us, passé. It did not to them, and this—again, it was a feeling that, they had a program, let's see how it worked. They got—I think [inaudible] was very good, and it turned out very well. But it's also—nobody would claim that it was—well, what will I say? In a league with the anthropology department. It's not an aspect of Harvard with an international reputation of its own.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But Sert was simply an influence, or was he actually supervising—

JOHN COOLIDGE: Again, he was on the committee. [00:36:00]

ROBERT F. BROWN: Design school at that time.

JOHN COOLIDGE: He also had—he had Sackler, somebody, who was on the committee, and was willing that they—School of Design, they did a certain amount of teaching of this kind of thing. For them, a Bauhaus approach was not wholly unsympathetic. They saw a way out, which we didn't see as a way out, but it was a conviction. It was stronger than anything we had to offer. We were terribly impressed with the difficulty that other departments had had along this—as I fundamentally am. I don't know the correct answer, and I haven't gotten a solution in my own mind what a place tries to be—believes in being first-rate in every area. Its trying does with areas where it seems to have consistently failed to be first-rate, and which differ in kind. There are departments at Harvard that, for long years, have not been as good as they should have been, but they're doing things that other departments are doing

to their satisfaction. What our satisfaction—I wish we were as good at teaching this as university, whether it's Yale or Princeton or Berkeley or Stanford or whatever. [00:38:01] It can be done academically, but we've never found a university that has done this so that it was a model for us. Therefore, I don't know what the answer is.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Back to that ethos of the greater area for the performing and creative arts.

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yeah, that's right.

ROBERT F. BROWN: The practice of it.

JOHN COOLIDGE: What I haven't talked about is really the running of the Fogg. Certain things were obvious. The exhibitions that I mentioned as a basic activity. A second broad direction as to get into, fully into, the 20th century. Forbes and Sachs were fine, up through John Marin and Demuth, but to bring the museum up to—well, just to bring it up to our generation remained to be done. There, we had immediate support from Joseph Pulitzer, and the first big thing that happened, that I can remember, was he put up—he said, "I will pay the money for you to put up an exhibition of"—I don't remember what the number would be, but it may have been three, it may have been five. [00:40:03] You pick the three or the five best living American artists, and get them to come and talk, and have an exhibition, with a gallery or half a gallery, works by each of them. There, I confronted my first Jackson Pollock, and hung it sideways. That was corrected by members of the curatorial—by that—incredible man, Eric Schroeder, told me that. This was something the likes of which had never happened before, and which then you started acquiring these things. The moment you started acquiring and having shows, it started coming in. But this was a basic change.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Was Pulitzer an easy man to work with? Was he an enthusiast?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Oh, yes, and deeply generous, and also marvelous, and passionately loyal to Harvard, and a very active collector. Somewhere along the line—I won't say it happened the first five years, but certainly while I was director—say, after 10 years or whatever—quietly indicated that he was planning to split his collection and leave half of it to the St. Louis museum, and the other half to Harvard. He started leaving major gifts, pretty much every year, to us. [00:42:06] This encouraged other people to leave—this was done at a time when you could still—you could leave a work of art and still retain possession of it, so that—other people were doing that. That didn't rob his selection, but it was also our property. He got his tax deduction, as you could in those days. So this was, again, a major direction. If you know nothing about a field, you don't make too long-range—and particularly if you take over an institution that's broke—you don't make too long-range plans right away, but when—say, after five years, I began to think of a program for exhibitions, and the program involved one major modern show, and modern would be primarily contemporary. It wasn't going to be rigid about that. The Russian Constructivists or something that was—but advanced, and fully advanced in its point of view. We did this, one way or another, in later years, also having one major Old Masterly program, which I mentioned—[00:44:03]

ROBERT F. BROWN: Per year?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Rubens show, and the Rembrandt show, little things of that sort, and then a great many shows that were directly in line with teaching. The other big thing was that Forbes and Sachs had talked about the integration of the museum with the teaching or the history of art, but partly because the way that the history of art was taught had changed so much, with the disappearance of Pope and that school, we got into having exhibitions that were tuned into courses, exhibitions that were—they had one exhibition a year that was run collectively by the students in Sachs's course. I tried that, and came to the conclusion that when you had six or eight people running an exhibition, two people did all the work. So I put in a small—I tried, one year, having six or eight exhibitions, one person doing each, and this was a tremendous burden on the staff, and I ended up having three or four with two or sometimes three people doing it. [00:46:00] You could at least see how the work was divided up, and everybody was doing something. So that we got a great many more exhibitions. The teaching became much more direct. Some courses actually—Jim Sweeney [ph] came and taught one, which was actually entirely in the galleries. I think it happened after I left, but if I had thought of the idea, I certainly would have put it through, but the most successful thing that was done was to have a program of exhibitions that was tied into the big survey. I think I told you about how that worked.

ROBERT F. BROWN: The big survey? You may have.

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JOHN COOLIDGE: —big survey runs from Egypt to the present day, or did for many years. They have section meetings once a week. Sections consist of 20 students, and graduate students teaching it. You end up with, oh, ten to a dozen graduate students teaching, so you have 400 in the course. You get some students who will take two sections, and some only one, but you end up with a dozen section leaders. What worked out at the end was a series of exhibitions. There were certain kinds of things that you couldn't teach in the galleries. Between slides and models and diagrams, you can make Gothic vaulting clearer than you can in any exhibition hung on the wall. A little plaster cardboard model that you can hand around, and lift up, and look up at. You can get it. So that certain things, in the course of the year, were taught in the seminar rooms, but the rest of the year, roughly every week, there would be an exhibition put on by one of the graduate students, dealing with a topic that was related to the lecture courses, but did not deal with them directly. For example, an exhibition that showed you the difference between visual—I mean, in every way, visually and manually—between a woodcut and an etching, and a lithograph. [00:02:10] Had a print show that was entirely print media, and that just took—Rembrandt was an etcher, and this came in, by the way, in a lecture on Rembrandt, but you had to explain what etchings were, as it had with Durer, so to speak. Another question that came up—fascinating exhibitions—what's the difference between an original and a fake? How do you tell repaint? How do you tell when a picture has been cleaned and tickled up, and so forth and so on? Taking the whole works of authenticity into subject of an exhibition. Or you could flip it into the—granted that your course was historical, you could take and deal with general problems. What is an icon? What is a religious painting? How does it differ from other kinds of paintings? What makes a painting religious? Or different ways of doing portraiture, or realism versus naturalism, or anything else, so that you had this series.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You kept a good many of these going, then? Each year, there were quite—

JOHN COOLIDGE: Ended up with one gallery which was devoted to this. It was expected that this professor teaching the course was—the summertime, you'd use the gallery for other purposes, but main year, that gallery was—and it was always filled with one of these exhibitions. [00:04:14]

ROBERT F. BROWN: The audience for which—well, the primary—was the student?

JOHN COOLIDGE: The primary was the students. But, my gosh, what things that was fun. You would take the visiting committee around and say, "I'm going to treat you as if I was a graduate student and you're undergraduate. If your 17-year-old kid can answer questions about this, you damn well can." [They laugh.] This got to be very good fun. It was doubly effective as teaching, because it took a freshman who'd never known anything about art and got his nose into the originals, and looking at them and answering questions about them, but it also took a graduate student to organize an exhibition, bringing up fakes and repaint, etchings and drypoint, and what you wish, so that this was a tremendously—it certainly didn't reach full fruition in my time, and I'm not sure that it had got started, but it was exactly the kind of thing that I was trying to develop in the museum. The third broad aspect of this—I know I've talked to you about the fact that I believed the museum should be full of young people. I had a student assistant for two to three years, and then up and out, and other curators did. [00:06:02] This meant that there were more jobs for graduate students, and you were training people about museum work in this way, and people like Thomas Evington [ph], people like that, who went on into museum work, were my assistants, or were Agnes Mongan's assistant. Had cut their teeth on museum work as graduate students under this kind of program.

ROBERT F. BROWN: There had not been nearly so much of that before you—

JOHN COOLIDGE: No. The directors had an assistant, but he would be there for five years, and then go off and be a museum director on his own, Jack Thacher being a case in point. Fred Robinson, who went off and became director of the museum in Springfield. There, you would take a person who was probably a little older, and keep him on for five or more years, and then he could go on and direct a small museum on his own.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Whereas you were taking people in mid-graduate school?

JOHN COOLIDGE: That's right. Many of the best of them have fussed with it, but not done it. After all, Jules Prown, one doesn't think of as a museum director, but he was the guy who built the Yale Center, and he was curator of the Yale Collections for a while, so he's had that experience. What I did with the museum training course was to take a wider range of students, a wider range of type of students, and try to introduce them into the museum world. [00:08:13] One student, who is in no way interested in museums, said that—I was really very flattered that, at the end of the course, there was very little about the sociology of museums with which they had not had a direct experience. Talking to dealers and meeting with collectors, seeing how conservation worked, and putting on an exhibition themselves, so that the—some experience with all the pieces, and that a lot of people in the art world should have a feel for this, not just people who are museum directors. A lot of these people have not stuck—well, as I say, Jules Prown had followed it up, but also partly got away from it, and a lot of them have wholly gone away from it. It was—

ROBERT F. BROWN: You did the primary teaching of that?

JOHN COOLIDGE: That was my course, yes. That was my baby.

ROBERT F. BROWN: That was given one term, or did it run all year?

JOHN COOLIDGE: It ran all year. One of the things that other people have picked up—the museum courses have picked up. You were armed with a letter, to whom it may concern, describing the course, general terms. [00:10:05] Then you were given a presumptive $100, and you could go to any source within Route 128—within Route 128 was a device, because some of your students, reasonably well-heeled, and have a car of their own, or fly to New York when they want to, and some—most—are flat broke. You could work within 128, even if you're flat broke. You borrowed an object that you could buy for $100, and we had a meeting of the course, and I brought in a jury, which consisted of an artist, and a curator, and a collector, none of whom were connected with the Fogg. That was full of trustees of the Boston Museum or curators of the Boston Museum. The students made like a curator, and the jury made like the trustees. You see, well, why this was the object that was worth 100 bucks. Boy, this was terribly good fun. Then the person who won, did the best, the Fogg gave him the object. [00:12:04] We paid for one. I don't remember how it was financed, actually. I mean, it didn't amount to anything. It probably came out of the museum's funds. I don't think I ever paid it, but I may have asked. It's the kind of thing that you could ask Paul Sachs, to give $100 for this purpose. Of course, so many people were in love with their object, and they had wedding presents or Christmas presents, and they would buy it. Of your six or eight, two or three objects would be bought. The dealers soon caught onto that fact, and were glad to play ball.

ROBERT F. BROWN: This was a quite effective teaching device, it seems to me.

JOHN COOLIDGE: Oh, yes. Sure.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did that course maintain its numbers? Increase greatly in numbers?

JOHN COOLIDGE: No.

ROBERT F. BROWN: The number of graduate students themselves weren't all that—

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yes, and quite early on, there was more numbers than you could handle right after the war, on the GI Bill, but then when that got over, Harvard limited the number, and so we were—there was time—right after the war, we were getting in 30, and then we sort of stabilized in the low 20s, and you'd get in that each year. Then, more recently, though it's changed again in the last two or three years, but for a good many years—and I don't know what it is at the moment, but I believe it's gone up—we were limited to 11. [00:14:00] Now, the admissions committee is thinking primarily of people who are going to be professors, and you can tell from the letters of application, so that there were, fairly consistently, only about a third of the entering class would be eligible for this course. You think of problem of learning Japanese, to get a degree in Japanese art. You just don't have a course that you—a year that you can devote to this kind of thing. So that we got—we varied from six to ten.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Curators were fully teachers in this or in other ways? You've mentioned

Agnes Mongan, of course. She was here throughout.

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yes. This didn't—we did, sure. The more specialized things, like conservation, they would help. Students just had gotten to know the curators a good deal, and it was more valuable to bring in—well, I, for instance, fairly regularly, got the chairman of the board of trustees at the Met, and major collectors. Kind of people that they had, who were, by and large, out of the building. We tried all sorts of things. [00:16:01] One very surprising lecture was given by the financial vice president of Harvard, not a man who has anything to do with the investments, but a man who is in charge of all non-academic expenditures, buildings and meals and so forth. What do you do when the inflation and the—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Very practical course.

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yeah. He introduced them just to a way of thinking about maintenance that they had—his funds were finite.

ROBERT F. BROWN: This proportion, say a third of each graduate class, was going to move into museum work. Was that proportionate—

JOHN COOLIDGE: No, they were going to—not necessarily. A lot of people thought they were going into teaching, and then, mid-career, would switch.

ROBERT F. BROWN: So a good deal of crossing back and forth?

JOHN COOLIDGE: There's a great deal of crossing, but this was a broad education in museum work, as much for non-museum people as museum people, for the kind of person who, in middle life, is asked to run an exhibition and has never done it before, or who is a professor and a collector.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You've mentioned several times now Eric Schroeder, who, I believe, is an honorary curator of Islamic art.

JOHN COOLIDGE: That's right.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Maybe that could lead into—we've not at all spoken of non-Western art, which there's obviously been some elements of the Fogg's collection which has been here for a long time. [00:18:00]

JOHN COOLIDGE: Major, major thing. Eric Schroeder was an Englishman, and he got in touch—he was one of—I don't know how to put this, but he was one of the associates of Arthur Upham Pope, who, in the plus or minus 1930, produced this gigantic survey of Persian art. I speak of gigantic advisedly. The volumes are this high, and fat.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Almost two feet.

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yeah. They're—I don't know, maybe 10 of them, and I think was the first survey, general survey, in Western—in English, certainly. I think he did the volume on architecture, but I don't know. He then became curator of Islamic art at the Boston Museum, and was not kept on, and Edward Forbes—he married a Forbes. He married, I guess, one of Edward Forbes's nieces, and he became honorary curator at the Fogg. I found him absolutely brilliant, fascinating man. I think he would have been, in 1950, the only inhabitant of Cambridge who owned a Cubist painting. [00:20:01] His was about the size of that print there. It was a splendid little Picasso. He also had a great, big, splendid, first-rate Italian Baroque portrait, full-size. If that was the size of the Picasso, the door space behind you was smaller than the size of his Baroque painting.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Full-length, or full-scale.

JOHN COOLIDGE: Full-scale, in any case. We could never afford—he was honorary curator. He taught a course here, but I felt very strongly that the Fogg had all kinds of drawing. We had seven Persian miniatures, and I encouraged him to buy—I guess he was honorary curator when I came, but I encouraged him to build up the Fogg collection, which he did notably. He also taught, and he had two outstanding pupils, John Goelet and Cary Welch. This—well, it's ended up—I think that the Fogg, now—oh, sure, now—has more people in Islamic art than any other institution in the world. Possibly the British Museum. [00:22:00] I don't think so. Because, of course, with Yaga Khan's [ph] thing. But this was something that

—Edward Forbes had bought the seven miniatures, brilliantly. Oh, then Mrs. Rockefeller died and left us her Persian miniatures. This was the kind of thing that sort of happened. John Goelet bought a collection. Cary succeeded Eric as curator, and we literally established this as a major Harvard—as a significant Harvard enterprise. Eric—we were running a deficit. There was no question of taking on somebody who, if he had taught, would not have received many pupils, though he was a brilliant teacher, and whom, operating the field that the department would probably not have been willing to contribute their limited funds to establish, so that a paying job was out of the question for him. Not slamming the door, but there just never seemed to be a way to work it. He also got discouraged in his great knowledge of Islamic art. There were practically no jobs in this country. Jann Fonteau [ph] who was director of a really superb collection of Islamic art, has never had a curator. [00:24:04] He said he could do it. It's been a neglected area. Eric then became entirely interested—not entirely, but his major interest moved from Islamic art into the study of astrology. He was writing a big book on that when he died. So that he diminished—his association with the Fogg gradually diminished, but particularly at the start, he had a wonderful eye. Anything, virtually anything I bought, I would consult with him, because he just had an eye for things. Went all over.

ROBERT F. BROWN: He did have pupils, or at least at the graduate level, or—

JOHN COOLIDGE: He had pupils at the graduate level, yes, and he was just a wonderful person, and a wonderful personality, and he did have pupils. We've turned out people in this field, one way or another.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did it much, or didn't too much, predate him? You said Edward Forbes had bought some miniatures and so on.

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yes. I don't remember now. I would have said—I don't remember when he came to the Fogg. I think he came to this country about 1930. I guess he may have moved over to the Fogg in the late '30s—by the late '40s, when I came in. He was a slight person, and I think he wasn't in the war. I don't think he—would not have had the physical energy in some ways. [00:26:03] I don't know.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What about Asian art? Hasn't that been—certainly, across the river, in Boston, it's way back, and it's very prominent.

JOHN COOLIDGE: Again, one inherited, there, Langdon Warner, about whom I did talk to you. When he retired, his pupil, Ben Rowland, was there. Ben would take on curatorial responsibilities. He put on—he was completely capable of doing it, but it didn't interest him. Those instincts for working with objects, with other people, lead to being a curator. With him, led to his being a painter. It was his pupils. He had the title, but the work was done by his pupils, of whom the most enduring was a third cousin of mine, Usher Coolidge, known as Bob. Bob—we had a sea [ph] once of Ben's pupils, and then got to Bob, who was the most mature of them, and stayed on until alcohol did him under, and he died after we—well, it was obvious, after a while, that he ought to—he lived in Ipswich, and it was—increasingly concerned, everybody, at his driving back and forth. [00:28:13] Then Max Loehr came, and he—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did he come from Europe directly, or he'd been around?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Max came more nearly—had a complicated career, the central fact of which was that he had lived something like 11 years straight, and possibly more than that—if you told me I was wrong, it was 20, I wouldn't be surprised—in Peking. That carried him through the war, and after that, he came and taught, briefly, at Michigan. I guess he—I don't remember the sequence here. Yes, he was appointed by the—was he appointed by the department? I guess he was appointed Professor of Oriental Art in the department. That, I'm no longer clear about. He did not play much of a role in the museum, though he wrote this outstanding catalog of the Winthrop bronzes. [00:30:02] He and Ben were the intellectual features in that area after Langdon—well, Ben before Langdon's retirement, and he and Ben. And then—

[Audio Break.]

JOHN COOLIDGE: —then, of course, John Rosenfield came in, or was brought in. We knew that we needed another person, or would need another person, and there was no one in the field, and Harvard did, in this case, something which I had never seen. He was an assistant

professor, and he got—he did his doctorate under Ben, in Hindu art. We brought him here, and paid him an assistant professor's salary, and he got something like a five-year appointment, in which he worked like a graduate student in—he had his choice, and he chose Japanese art. At the end of that time, he was clearly outstanding, so we appointed him. He didn't have a guaranteed appointment. He was competing like any other assistant professor for a permanent appointment, but had had a chance to study for five years. He then took over, after Ben's retirement, as a curator, which he still holds now, of Far Eastern art. [00:32:09]

ROBERT F. BROWN: As well as professor?

JOHN COOLIDGE: As well as professor, yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: I recall, when you came on, you made it a condition that you'd be given the title of assistant professor.

JOHN COOLIDGE: I wasn't assistant professor.

ROBERT F. BROWN: I'm sorry, associate.

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Part of the oligarchy, as you expressed.

JOHN COOLIDGE: That's right.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Thereafter, were curators given equivalent status, or professorship—professorial rank?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Agnes never had it. Langdon never had it. Jakob did.

ROBERT F. BROWN: So it varied?

JOHN COOLIDGE: It varied. I can't remember other people coming in—John did. On the other hand, there were—you had people like me, who were wholly on the museum budget and had professorial rank. You had people like George Hanfmann, who were wholly on the department budget, and took care of—made like curators, as it were. This was, I suppose, strictly up to me, but it was so obvious that there was no question of a decision, so to speak. Some people—Ben was already in the job when Max came, and Ben had it. Max wouldn't have been. Had very slight understanding of American life, and he wouldn't have made a curator. [00:34:00] George Hanfmann was the obvious person to be the curator there, and was a very active curator. This worked out on an ad hoc basis. Paul Buck said he thought there ought to be three curators at the Fogg.

ROBERT F. BROWN: This was the dean of—

JOHN COOLIDGE: The dean, the provost, when I came, who appointed me. We never quite made that, but we would have—if you could call Hanfmann a half-curator, you would have somebody else. Agnes was one curator, and then there was—Langdon Warner was a second. Other people made up for the third. We should have had another curator, but this was, then, financially beyond the—but you don't—I think three curators would have done it.

ROBERT F. BROWN: It would have given a strength, perhaps, in personnel?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Oh, yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Less divided attention of someone doing this part-time?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Less divided attention. Yeah, that's right. We had nothing in—the bulk of our active collections—we had people in drawings and prints. We'd had nobody in painting and sculpture. This was absurd. We made out on modern art, more or less. Everybody pitched in on that. But we didn't have any cataloging or that kind of thing. I think I will—

[Audio Break.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: You agree that, with Paul Buck, that this, in fact, would make it a—
[00:36:00]

JOHN COOLIDGE: This would have been a good arrangement, but it was not—you used the professors so much. Well, of course, for a while, we did have Millard Meiss as curator of painting.

ROBERT F. BROWN: This is fairly early in his career, or mid-career?

JOHN COOLIDGE: He came here as part-time curator of painting and teaching, and was here for, I suppose, five years, in, say, '49 to '54, something like that, and then succeeded Panofsky at the Institute for Advanced Study, and went on there. Played an important part at Harvard, because he was the prime advisor on I Tatti, which he continued to be after he had left teaching at Harvard.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Was I Tatti to be managed by the Fogg, or by the fine arts department, or directly by the university?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Like Dumbarton Oaks, it was to be managed independently. Harvard already had an observatory in South Africa, and may have had other such institutions that I don't know about. There was a garden, botanical garden, in Cuba that the Claflins ran, and I don't know whether that was under Harvard auspices or not. [00:38:03]

ROBERT F. BROWN: But there were some precedent?

JOHN COOLIDGE: There were precedents for these things, and it had always been a vision that it would be—that the fine arts department would be involved in it, in a sort of supervisory sense, but that it would be independent of the department.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You felt it was very worthwhile for Harvard to have it? For the library, for the location? Also built in was the idea of the fellowship of scholars.

JOHN COOLIDGE: I felt very strongly that it was a good idea that it should exist as an institution abroad, and since it was left for Harvard, this was the practical way to keep it. I am impressed by the—I don't know anything about this in detail, but I am impressed by the difficulty that American institutions abroad have if they have not an association with a university. The American Academy in Rome seems to be constantly struggling, not intellectually, but financially. [00:40:00] I don't know—I don't get any feeling that the American School in Athens, for instance, is so stable and so successful that one would turn to that as a model. I think, for America, that the universities have become the mother, the parent, for most intellectual things. The only one that I can think of that—well, there are obviously ones, but Institute for Advanced Study is obviously flourishing, but that's a particular situation, with one enormously rich patron family. Museums can exist independently, but academic or quasi-academic institutions, outside of this—I don't know—I just don't know. I don't—it's better to put it negatively. I don't know of any striking success in the humanities. That may exist in the sciences. I don't know.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Had you spoken with Berenson about this ever?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Oh, yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You would see him quite a bit in the 1950s, for example?

JOHN COOLIDGE: The Forbes, particularly, and Sachs, too, were—Berenson had the idea that this, early on, should come to Harvard, early on. [00:42:00] I did know once, and I've forgotten, but I think in the '30s. Forbes, then—sufficiently seriously, so that Forbes and Sachs talked to Harvard on his behalf. He was astonishing. I think the last time he came to this country was in 1923 or something like that, so that he couldn't come talk to Harvard on his own behalf. But the matter was discussed with Forbes and Sachs in the '30s, and my strong impression is that Harvard said, "We will not accept—we will not commit ourselves for the future, but we can say that we will not consider running such an institution unless it is endowed." They committed themselves negatively. I, as director of the Fogg, inherited this ambassadorial position, and I went to see Berenson the first time I went to Europe after the war, which I think was in '48, '49. [00:44:04] I forget. Thereafter, I was—he accepted me, and the university accepted me, as the person who was in touch with Berenson, and discussed Berenson's ideas at length with him. He became a friend, a real friend.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Maybe I can start this next tape.

JOHN COOLIDGE: Surely.

[END OF TRACK AAA_coolid89_8of11_SideB.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: —we were speaking of your friendship with Bernard Berenson.

JOHN COOLIDGE: The symbol of that is our daughter, who went and visited him with us, and whom he therefore knew. She was 13, I think, the first time we went there. Five years later, she was a freshman in Radcliffe, and fell in love with a sophomore at Harvard, named William Warren, who spent his junior year abroad in Germany. They decided to get married, and we—Berenson owned a—he owned quite a little property there, and across the road from I Tatti was a peasant's house that he had fixed up as a sort of guesthouse. A pair of retired retainers lived in it, and they would look after the guests who would pay for their services. He offered us the use—it was known as the *villino*. He offered us the use of the *villino* that summer, and our daughter was married in Florence, and the wedding party took place in the *villino*, where we were spending the summer, so that we knew Berenson really very well, and were very fond of him. [00:02:09] When Harvard took it over, they got—his name will come to me—I know him perfectly well—a senior Harvard professor to run it, who turned—took on the very difficult task of turning a private house with a private library into an effective academic institution.

ROBERT F. BROWN: This happened?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yeah, let me get his name.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Kenneth Murdock?

JOHN COOLIDGE: He was the first director, and he made a going institution of it. Then, since then, they've had Harvard professors. They've had a series of professors who have done it.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Had you first met Berenson in the '30s?

JOHN COOLIDGE: No, I didn't meet him until after the war. I didn't meet him until after I went there, as director of the Fogg, to see him,

ROBERT F. BROWN: How did he first strike you? What was he—he was about 80 years old at that point, perhaps, or almost?

JOHN COOLIDGE: I suppose. No, he was easily that. My memory, as I approach [laughs] he would have said he was older than that, but he didn't live to be too far into his 90s. I must have known him 10 years. [00:04:00] Oh, absolutely enchanting man. He was little, slight, elegant. Very quick-minded. Always operating on an intellectual plane. He had strong feelings on all kinds of issues, but you talked on intellectual things with him. An extraordinary interest in human beings, and gift with them. He was a wonderful host, and had a constant succession of friends to visit him. His wife had died, and he had a secretary, Nicky Mariano, who was a great deal more than a secretary. She ran the house. She was everything. Was a very warm, efficient person, in a way that—he was an administrator; she was a doer, so to speak. [00:06:01] Just wonderful. They were a wonderful couple. She was warm, and sort of direct and simple. He was friendly and intellectual and imaginative and complicated. Very, very, very wonderful people. B.B. had a vivid sense of you, and an imagination about you. When he—I don't know when, but I think it was before we met, and he knew I was an architectural historian, and he sent me a book, monograph on the great Turkish-Islamic architect, Sinan, S-I-N-A-N, who built the Blue Mosque, and so forth and so on. When the Turks moved in, Sinan was the great architect who built for them there. It was typical that he picked an excellent book on architecture, in a fascinating subject that I wouldn't have thought about. It is a very stimulating kind of gift to get. [00:08:03] Living with him, or near him, was a succession of that kind of experience. He lived right, in the sense that he was surrounded by excellent servants. He had a superintendent for the place. Been there a long time. Did a first-rate job. And it was a working farm, orchards and things, but it was an estate. He had an ancient car and an ancient driver, who drove it to his satisfaction. Those who knew—had longer experiences with him were less satisfied than I was, but he satisfied B.B., and he got us to where we wanted to go any time. [Laughs.] The food was good, and everything, in a daily life went beautifully, and Nicky was secretary and manager. Just kept everything going and everybody happy.

ROBERT F. BROWN: While you were there, was there already a stream of people coming in?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yes, very definitely. Very much so. He fitted them all in. Remember when we were staying there once, for some reason or other—I did not inquire—we were inconvenient, so he planned for us to be—he planned for his chauffeur to take us for the day. [00:10:08] Picnic lunch was provided, and we were to see something that I was delighted to see. I've forgotten what it was now, but it was a distance, and he had gone there frequently with this man. The chauffeur wouldn't take us, and he did take us, and we had a very happy time, and were not present when he was seeing somebody that he needed to see. But a man of devastating simplicity, practicality. I think, on my very first visit, his nephew came to pass the night, and his nephew was a man named Lawrence Berenson, who was a lawyer in New York, and who was a lawyer very much a businessman. Lawrence Berenson's chief client, or most notorious client—and a real client, not just for once, but regularly—was Fulgencio Batista, in Turkey, and he was a tough cookie. But he also was an able businessman, and took care of B.B.'s wealth. At B.B.'s instruction, he sat down with me and went right through B.B.'s American estate, so that I would know, could go back and say to Harvard, how much it was worth and what sort of things it was in, that sort of thing. [00:12:05] Harvard was worried about the endowment, and it ended up at [$]2 million. It was perfectly clear that that was the correct order of magnitude.

ROBERT F. BROWN: It was in order?

JOHN COOLIDGE: It was in order, with one surprising item. He owned the Hotel Victoria. He bought it very cheaply. This, Lawrence told me. I said, "That's an unusual thing." He said, "Yes. There are not many investments that pay 33 percent." [They laugh.] Harvard, I guess, got rid of it, and it was perhaps—I don't know, maybe be dead before that. But this kind of—to a stranger was a—you're dealing with a very, very real person in that kind of way.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Had Berenson talked at all about—comment on art and the art scene to any degree, or mainly more theoretically and intellectually? It wasn't a matter of gossip so much, or very much.

JOHN COOLIDGE: No, not much. He would deliver himself of generalizations, generally on things that you wouldn't expect. The warmth of his admiration for Degas would come out. Something about talking about Degas as if Degas was an old personal friend, but in terms of—based on his feeling for Degas's art. [00:14:05] I think it was he that persuaded Mrs. Gardner to buy her great Degas. I won't put my hand in the fire on that. He had, of course, several outstanding Chinese pieces in the house, as well as the Italian Renaissance. The intellectual thing that—most present, the most apt to come up, was language. He was an etymologist, and had command of half a dozen languages, I would guess. One is used to four, but he certainly had more than that. Oh, yes, more than that. More likely eight, because I think he probably knew the Greek—must have known Greek and Latin, and I believe he had fussed with Hindi. May be wrong.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Or Sanskrit.

JOHN COOLIDGE: Sanskrit, yeah. I said Hindi. I meant Sanskrit. A word would come up, and he'd say, "This is interesting you bring this up. Did you realize it had such and such a meaning?" Words, in that sense, fascinated him.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did he tend to lecture a little bit?

JOHN COOLIDGE: No. This would be a paragraph. It was a lecture of a paragraph long.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And then you were given ample time?

JOHN COOLIDGE: You were given ample time on that, and he would pick that up. [00:16:02] You could toss it around. I asked him about Mrs. Gardner, and he would talk about her. We'd talk about other people. I talked about collectors. One of the great early collectors was a man named John G. Johnson, who's—the Johnson Collection in Philadelphia.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Philadelphia. We spoke of your knowing it when you worked there.

JOHN COOLIDGE: Johnson was—or did I tell you this? I guess I—

ROBERT F. BROWN: You merely told how he lived, and the collection came to Philadelphia.

JOHN COOLIDGE: He was—

ROBERT F. BROWN: —a great lawyer.

JOHN COOLIDGE: Great lawyer. I think—the impression I got was that he was a man who was very conscious of the fact that he was not a mogul. He was not a great business executive. He was not a Frick or a Morgan or whatever, and collected as a bright man rather than as a great power. I asked B.B., "Did you know him?" and he said yes, but wouldn't discuss him as an individual, and simply said that the great American collectors were the most easily bamboozled people he had ever known, and the hardest to de-bamboozle. I've never forgotten that statement. [00:18:01] This is the kind of generalization he would make. He would also talk—I remember his—it was a stream of people there, and it always had been. He said, "I came down for dinner, and there was this dreadful little man, and I said to myself—if you pardon the expression—I said to myself, how did that appalling little kike get in here?" He said, "I couldn't imagine." Said, "I started talking to him. One of the most intelligent people I've ever known, and we got, in the end, to become very good friends. Had great admiration for him." It was Billy Rose. It was this kind of conversation, and the having been so wrong. He told me that—I'm sure I told you, but the story of Edward Forbes. He was full of pleasant experiences that he'd had with people. This was lively. I don't doubt with—yes, we were around plenty with other people. I first got to know John Pope-Hennessy there—well, not first. I knew John Pope-Hennessy in England. John was there.

ROBERT F. BROWN: How was he at that point? What was he—

JOHN COOLIDGE: Oh, he was very removed and detached. Obviously intimate and accepted, but not particularly involved, as K. Clark was not. [00:20:10] We met him there.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And he, too, was there, but not participatory?

JOHN COOLIDGE: He would be there for lunch. Either of them would have been there, but staying there, I don't remember. His secretary married—oh. British diplomat. Higher assistant. I mean, the head librarian, that sort of thing. One of them, who was a little older than we, married Harold Nicolson's son. Actually, the summer, practically the week, that Penny got married, she got married. So we met Harold Nicolson and his wife, who was Virginia Woolf's sister, wasn't she?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Vita?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Vita Sackville-West. Married Harold Nicolson, isn't that right? Any case, they were in the house, and we saw them on this occasion. It's this kind of world that was passing through. But also, he was in touch with his own contemporaries. He said, "Only last week, I had dinner with"—and then he mentioned the name of the Italian premier, who was head of the government when Italy was in World War I. [00:22:02] He was the Italian premier at the Treaty of Versailles. Orlando, wasn't it? I think so.

ROBERT F. BROWN: So the man—that's a tremendous-sounding acquaintance.

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yeah. Then got talking, he said, "You know, it was only quite recently that—maybe a year ago—that after all these years, I saw Santiana [ph] again," and he told us how Santiana was living in Rome, and so forth and so on. So you were in the middle of a huge acquaintance there.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did you feel you were on call? You were doing a job, I know, as director of the Fogg, informing him and learning of his plans in great detail. This was all unspoken, I'm sure.

JOHN COOLIDGE: It was unspoken. Every time I went—I suppose I got two letters a year—wrote appalling hand—from him. Would write. This was just friendship, keeping up friendship. Would not have gone to Europe without going to see him. That was more or less expected. Then he would have to take you—it would be—as we lived it, it was intimate. Maybe there'd be another couple staying in the house, or in for the evening. We would be staying there. He would take you for the cocktail period, and sit beside you and talk to you, and then would be somebody else. [00:24:03] Might be Polly after dinner. And he would talk perfectly frankly, or he would bring up, because it had been on his mind, the way he imagined I Tatti would work, and why, and you would bring up subjects related to this. "Do you expect the scholars who come here to publish? Is this, as you visualize it, part of the—you published when you were young. Would you expect this, necessarily, in so many of these new, trained—here—been trained publishers." He would take off on this as a subject. He

would take off on American education. He was anti-the PhD.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Oh, he was?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yeah. He was interested in broad humanness. I think K. Clark was his sort of ideal of the young intellectual, young humanist. He was the one who said to me, of K. Clark, that he—when I got to know him and it was clear he had three ambitions, to be—it was just at this time that K. Clark got his peerage, it seems to me. Maybe I'm wrong. His first ambition was to be director of the National Gallery. His second ambition was to be prime minister. Having gotten his peerage, he said, "I'm afraid that has knocked out his second ambition." [00:26:01] His third was to be archbishop of Canterbury. You will see how he, having given up the second ambition, see how he proceeds on the third. This kind of conversation.

ROBERT F. BROWN: It brought in a lot.

JOHN COOLIDGE: Brought in a great deal, yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did he comment on contemporary art world at all? Was that something?

JOHN COOLIDGE: No. Commented—no.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Except the personalities that he knew of?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yes, but—no. Not much on people that—I think those remarks on Clark were the only things that I heard him say about somebody in my generation or who I might know. You bring up a name like Sydney Freedberg. I said, "Oh, yes, how is Sydney? Do tell me." But then it would go on. This was not an area—he was happier talking about Orlando and the like, which is only natural.

ROBERT F. BROWN: That's good. You felt good about it? You felt that it had gone well, and that Harvard would have I Tatti? That was a source of some satisfaction?

JOHN COOLIDGE: I knew that it was perfectly clear that he had every intention of giving it to Harvard, and that it was now up to Harvard. He'd be terribly interested—you get the right question, and I haven't written this stuff down, so it's only talking to you that a lot of it comes back. [00:28:08] Once I said to him, "B.B., look, you weren't born in America, and in fact, you've only lived in this country something like 12 years, and yet, for the last 30 years"—whatever it was—"you have been determined to—you haven't been to America since 1923. It's changed a great deal, and you know it's changed a great deal. Why is it that you are determined to give this to Harvard, with which you've had no recent contact, and which, in the terms of the amount of time you've lived in Italy and elsewhere, you know little?" He said, "This is all true, and I indeed know it has changed very much. In fact, I don't believe I would like it. But," he said, "it was Harvard that gave me my trajectory." I thought this was a very vivid and illuminating comment on—that whole way of life had been formed by the barrel of the gun, as it were. A statement like that—he was prone—when he would get to something serious, you would get a brief statement like that, that, in some way, said it all. [00:30:04] That's enough on that. What was real to us, and a surprise, was his clear affection for his family. Lawrence was a businessman, but he had—I think two sisters were staying there at one point when we were there. One of them had been physical education instructor at Smith, I think, something like that. Terribly nice person. But nothing that I'd heard of Berenson before had led me to believe that he was so close to his—as proved to be the case.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Hmm. One expected that he had removed himself, somewhat?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yeah. But on the contrary. Mary Berenson had had some children by her first marriage, and he had remained in touch with that group of people, who included the [inaudible]. I got the distinct impression that this had become something of a burden. If one family came and stayed in the *villino* at Christmastime, another family would feel they had to stay there on Easter, and this kind of thing, that this was a very real obligation, that this—I have no way of estimating how close he was to them. [00:32:16] But certainly—or rather why he should have felt so obligated to them. But there it was, and it was just another instance of this family obligation. He was also very wary of Harvard. I think he distrusted the present world, and felt that this had lasted a long time, and his experience with it had much that he approved of, and doubtless could think of much that he approved of, and that this was as good a solution, as likely to work, as anything else that he could think of. It seemed

to me I had read the will. I can't now remember. I was certainly fully familiar with the Harvard statements, and knew even then enough about the way the university worked to be capable of criticizing it if it was necessary, but it wasn't. [00:34:08] It all worked out perfectly well. I don't remember that there was any alternative statement in the will if Harvard did not accept it. "Do this or that." That may have been—maybe I didn't see the whole will, and maybe that was there.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You say he felt wary of Harvard, but was he really aware of—he must have known of the power of the university to reject the gift?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Oh, certainly. And people, successive Harvard presidents, had gone to call on him, made a point of that. Conant, he had called on him, loud. That's how he didn't like Conant, as I remember, who was the president when I first went there. But this—he was tending to think in papal terms, shall we say. [They laugh.] So that, you know, he will pass—they'll get somebody else.

ROBERT F. BROWN: He practically did live—

JOHN COOLIDGE: Lived a good many of them.

ROBERT F. BROWN: So he was something of a factor—I mean, abroad, but still—during the first half, you might say, of your long tenure.

JOHN COOLIDGE: Oh, yes, definitely.

ROBERT F. BROWN: I was going to ask, unless we want to talk a little bit more on this line—

JOHN COOLIDGE: No. I think I've exhausted that.

ROBERT F. BROWN: I wanted—a moment—you brought up, through Fred Deknatel, the Busch-Reisinger, but it was physically a different plant. Handsome building of the early or mid-'20s, by a German architect, so forth. You had the general oversight of its program? [00:36:00]

JOHN COOLIDGE: That's right.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And Charles Kuhn was curator there?

JOHN COOLIDGE: That's the curator. In 1930, Forbes and Sachs, or rather, the director of the Fogg Museum, was given supervision—two kinds of supervision. First, he was curator of every work of art owned by the university. Whoever had it immediately. Then they were supervisor of the two other then-art museums, the Semitic and the Germanic. The Semitic was run by Robert Pfeiffer, and he did a good job. I had no contact with him. Then, after that, they got into trouble, and the director was—at least two senior members of the department had been, of the Semitic languages department, director in turn, and they seemed to be interested in excavations and other such activities, rather than in running the museum, and the museum had, per force, been—they didn't raise any money, and they didn't have much, so they were relegated to the basement. I finally wrote a letter saying, "Look, there doesn't seem to be anybody at Harvard who gives a damn about this thing. Why don't you work out a deal and turn everything you can, legally, over to Brandeis? [00:38:06] They have a museum. It would make much more sense for them to have this ancient Semitic material than to have it in a basement at Harvard, because nobody is interested in running it." At which point I got a curt note: "No, that's no solution." I think I ceased to be responsible for it [laughs] in their mind. I didn't regret a bit.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Just between them and the building and grounds at that point? [Laughs.]

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yeah. Then they found the present person, who has done an excellent job. I don't know what the legalities—what the legal restrictions would be, but it did seem to me to make sense. I didn't think—I thought Brandeis would give it a shove, in a way. I mean, would take over the collections and fit them in and make something of them.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What about the Northern, the Germanic, which Kuhn had been working at for almost 30 years when you came? No, 18 or so.

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yes. We became intimate friends. I'm going—the six o'clock thing is the

German government is honoring Ruth—no, Julia Phelps for the work she's done for the Germanic and so forth. He ran that entirely. He gave me advice about running the Fogg. He consulted me about the Busch-Reisinger, and I guess he showed—he sent the budget in via me, that kind of thing, but all the decision and the running of it was entirely his. [00:40:02] He was marvelously cooperative in every way.

ROBERT F. BROWN: That museum was perhaps the foremost Modernist Northern European museum of the day in the United States, wasn't it?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Oh, yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Modern art had a French cast and—

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —so forth.

JOHN COOLIDGE: Oh, yes. Tragedy was that—well, he kept growing, but—I haven't really thought this out. He never found a core of backers, the way people like Joe Pulitzer were for the Fogg, and others. It, therefore, just made out financially. One splendid—every now and then, a splendid gift would come along. Cash, I'm talking of. There were two of them, at least. But not enough—the second one was for acquisitions, and enabled him to purchase some marvelous objects—but not enough so that he could have had the staff that would have really made it grow more rapidly. In a sense, because of Hitler, he was able to collect this—make this collection amazingly cheaply. [00:42:02] In modern Germany, one needed a more reasonable amount of money to keep on collecting. He did collect, a little bit, German art since World War II, but never on the scale that he had done on the art of the interwar period, and that was too bad.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Somewhat earlier, there's a good deal, somewhat earlier, of Germanic art. Was that perhaps acquired before he was there? To a degree?

JOHN COOLIDGE: There's a good deal of—when he came there, he had the plaster casts, and two original works of art. One was a tapestry, and the only time that was taken out of storage was at some big party, and he used it to screen off the caterers. And he considered it, and decided that the back of it, which was a canvas lining, was more attractive than the front, so we saw the back of that [inaudible] the caterers. The other was a portrait of the kaiser. He bought, Gothic, and Renaissance, and especially Baroque art, in addition to contemporary German, modestly, but really—and this was the big purchase gift. Enabled him to buy a marvelous Sherna [ph] Madonna in full polychrome, and occasional big things like that. [00:44:04] That was in part—but also, once this got going, all the late—all the Northern Renaissance art in the Fogg, it was transferred there. So they were able to make a showing of Northern art of the 15th and 16th centuries. A bit of a showing.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Was there ever a—let me check—

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ROBERT F. BROWN: —of Busch-Reisinger, which, after all, was renamed only, perhaps, when he came in. It was the Germanic Museum.

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yeah. No, no, it was renamed—oh, I don't know, late '50s, I suppose. Maybe '60. I don't remember.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Were there political overtones? After all, there had been, first, the kaiser, you just mentioned, and then came Nazism. Did that—

JOHN COOLIDGE: No, they had recovered from that.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Wind blow through any of that, or not really?

JOHN COOLIDGE: No. Not that I could see. Anybody who mattered didn't think of Hitler's Germany as the real Germany [laughs]. It was an aberration. No, it was simply Mrs. Reisinger made a [inaudible] contribution to the endowment. I don't remember, but no, there was undoubtedly an initial Busch contribution, but thereafter—the Busch-Reisinger was the daughter—it was the son-in-law. Thereafter, it was the Reisingers that contributed, rather than the Buschs. When a capital sum came through from Mrs. Reisinger, he suggested

changing the name to Busch-Reisinger. Now, he may have sensed a—or may have suffered from the name "Germanic" in a way that I never knew during the '30s. He never referred to that, if that's the case. [00:02:00]

ROBERT F. BROWN: How would you have compared the Harvard Art Museum, the Fogg particularly, with other university art museums in this country? In thinking about that, what kind of direction did it give it, your plans for it? Or did you really think of comparing it with other university art museums?

JOHN COOLIDGE: There were only two that were comparable in scale. One is the university museum at Penn, and this was a wholly independent institution. It had nothing to do with—maybe it had something to do with the classics or anthropology department. Absolutely nothing—I think not. I think it was virtually a free-floating archeological museum, with its own staff, and only tenuous relation to the teaching faculty. Within its area, outstanding. Very gifted man was there when I was there, and very much a public museum, and on TV and this kind of thing. That was not the—was clearly not the path for the Fogg when I came here. I think it's the sort of direction that Peter Bowren [ph] might take it in, but it wasn't—just didn't come up. [00:04:07] It didn't cross my mind. The other was Yale. Yale, however, was as strikingly independent, and often in conflict with the art department, as the Fogg was dependent upon and in amity with the—so that Yale did admirable things, notably the buildings, and notably their collection of 20th-century art. I never had great respect for Tubby Sizer, but I was very fond and had great respect for Andrew Ritchie. But again, running a kind of operation that was very different from what we were. The quaint thing was that, of course, we supplied them with help.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Because they had no training program, particularly.

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yeah, and after Andrew, then it became—and people like Jules and Alan [ph], people we had trained, and they brought it more into the ambit of the Fogg than the other way around. I think the two—the situations may be reversing themselves.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But the museum itself at Yale, or at Penn, which you mentioned, was not only so tech—well, it was perhaps technically integrated at Yale, but in fact, it was sort of an independent little jewel of—[00:06:06]

JOHN COOLIDGE: That's right. Absolutely. The challenge at Yale was the work they did for the New Haven community. After I got out and got associated with—more active with the Boston Museum, I wondered if I hadn't made a big mistake there. I still don't know. I just didn't feel I could take it on. I had to balance the budget first, because there's no—this doesn't pay for itself, particularly in a city like Cambridge. Boston Museum is big enough so that the state gives them money, so that children can get in free and that kind of thing, but you couldn't count on any money in the city of Cambridge, and there's certainly no fortunes in Cambridge, independently—the people who are related to Harvard and would give it to you because of your association with Harvard. That just didn't come up, and I'm not sure that it should have come up. I don't know what my thinking would be on that now. I tend to think that I got—that we were right, we shouldn't have attempted to do much with it, though a little has been done since. The place that I think was the most effective, probably, was Oberlin, and that was not doing anything very different from what we were doing, except that their program in the practice of art worked as ours never did. [00:08:12] That worked very well.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Why do you suppose it worked so much better there?

JOHN COOLIDGE: I think one of our problems was that our standards, ultimately, are those of a graduate school. You expect the level of the teaching of art to be on the same kind of level that graduate teaching is, and I don't think it probably ever can be. I think that if you're in a situation where you're running a college, and where your standards are those of a college, you can match that, or—yeah, I think that's the answer. Because Smith had a very effective practicing—both Smith and Lehigh, where I've taught since, practice departments. In Lehigh, you were way off in the sticks, and anything you did was a good idea, so to speak. [00:10:01] They got people who were enthusiastic about teaching, and just got kids enthusiastic about making sculpture and prints and painting, and that kind of thing, and maybe that's enough.

ROBERT F. BROWN: They did that here, though, too, didn't they?

JOHN COOLIDGE: No. Oh, they did, but it—for one thing, the credit at Harvard for this is limited. It's not—neither at Smith nor Lehigh is it unlimited, but it is much less limited than it is at Harvard. I think you only take two courses for credit, and that's not enough to build an effective department around. So I think that is perhaps the answer in university terms.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Perhaps it's taken too avocationally by the students.

JOHN COOLIDGE: That's right. That works fine in the glee club, but there's no—this is a first-rate avocation, and it has a—has had. I never hear it, but there have been times in which it's been highly respected, and maybe it is today. I couldn't be more ignorant. There's nothing comparable in the visual arts would that there were, because I think that might work in Harvard terms. One doesn't expect graduate standards of the glee club, and I don't know quite what I am saying here, but that's—[00:12:12]

ROBERT F. BROWN: —puzzling. At least your—

JOHN COOLIDGE: It's puzzling, yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: It's not quite reached what you thought it—well, you didn't necessarily think it would, did you? [Laughs.]

JOHN COOLIDGE: No. No. In fact, I rather think it, without—I don't think I thought—I'm not sure I'm capable of thinking this thing through, perhaps because I'm not enough of a painter, of an artist, in any sense.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Why did you—I think you retired from the Fogg—when was it?—in '68 or so?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Two things. First, the boring things were beginning to take much longer. I remember that I used to be able to write an annual report in a day. Mind you, it was a hard day, but I could do it. I couldn't—it took two days and more by the end, and I said to myself, this kind of thing is only going to increase. It's a reflection of, perhaps, unconscious weariness in the job. The other was that—we've hardly mentioned this, but it was an important fact. I meant to bring it up. You know about the Hutchinson bequest?

ROBERT F. BROWN: The Archibald—

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: I don't know about it. I just know it's listed. [00:14:00]

JOHN COOLIDGE: First year I knew Hutchinson, came here, had [inaudible.] He left his fortune to three women, one of whom was certainly his long-term mistress. I think one of whom may have been a sister or something of that sort. When any one of them died, her share was split among the other two. When the second one died, the survivor got the remainder. Well, about '65, the last of the three died, and we suddenly had—we brought the budget into balance, and we suddenly had the income on $3 million. This was fine for a couple of years. I remember I was, for the first time, able to really do a job on the passenger elevator. [They laugh.] That took most of the spare—I mean, a lot of the income dribbled away on little things, but here, you could really go to something that you knew was expensive and do it [they laugh]. Then, the next year, I spent—there was an important research project, and I spent money on that. But this was sort of feeling, well, I worked damn hard, and now the money has come in. For a year or so, I don't need to make a great project out of it. [00:16:02] I'm just going to do a couple of things that have seemed urgent and worthwhile. I don't regret the expenditure. Now I was facing a change in the job, as it seemed to me, that having not been able to build, I was able to build, and I questioned that I had the imagination and drive to build, after 20 years, to do it well. As I thought about various things, one of the things that struck me was that I was training people who were going into the art world, or world of teaching art, by and large, because I continued to have graduate students in the history of architecture, and I thought, well, now that change is coming to the Fogg, it's going to involve your being much more involved in the world of art museums than you have been. The Fogg is more positive. You've got to get into that act much more. [00:18:00] Without—I think what I—I don't know whether I would have come to this, but it seems to me what has happened was overdue, namely expansion of building. I was certainly aware that this would give us a chance to think seriously about developing the collection. Get more space, and then you'll get more works of art. This didn't appeal. It was

getting further from my trade of architectural history, and plunging in deeper to the aspects of the art world that really didn't interest me as much.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Fundraising?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yeah. Well, I have done fundraising, but do more and so forth. I was then 54, and I figured if I shifted now, I would have 10 years doing something else, if I waited for a while. The idea that certain things were wearying, will keep on until you're 60, and then change, then you wouldn't have enough time to get anywhere. So that's why I—those two reasons together. I had a very unhappy experience. [00:20:01] Alfred Barr said—when he was chairman—"Why don't you write me a report on what the Fogg is all about?" I did, and it took me forever, and I wasn't satisfied with the job I had done. I'm not sure that that was as serious, in fact, as it seemed at the time. I think after you've been slugging at the thing for 20 years, maybe the bloom is off, or you need help in doing this kind of thing, that you haven't—that you've thought it through, but have said it so often, it no longer has meaning to you. Maybe it would have worked better if I'd sat down with Charles Kuhn or Agnes Mongan and worked it out, instead of doing it all by myself. I don't know. In any case, this was a job that I didn't perform to my own satisfaction, and he was polite about it, but I sort of felt—all of these things made a kind of cumulative sense that it was time for a change, and that I don't regret. The most I will say is that it—well, two things. It might have proved to be more fun than I imagined it would be. Had I not done this, I probably would have enjoyed staying on more than I thought, thinking ahead, I would. [00:22:08] The second thing, it never remotely occurred to me—never remotely occurred to me—that they would have as great difficulty as they did in finding somebody to stay with the job. I'm not saying—I'm under no illusion that I was indispensable, but the general situation, it changed enough so that finding a satisfactory new director was much more difficult than I would have imagined it would be. This is a statement of fact, and it's not saying the—I can accept the answer that somebody would say, well, this is partly Harvard didn't go about it right. But in any case, that was a thought that now I would think about, having seen how bad it went, but —

ROBERT F. BROWN: You also said that you were realizing that, not just at Harvard, but elsewhere, the museum world was—I think perhaps you were thinking—it was suggested—becoming more organized, more complex, more—

JOHN COOLIDGE: That's right, yeah. I think this is true.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —busywork.

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Isn't this—depends on the cycle of people with experience and who are available?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Oh, yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Agnes Mongan then held the fort for—

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yeah, three years. [00:24:00]

ROBERT F. BROWN: You did bring in—

JOHN COOLIDGE: —Daniel Robbins.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But he wasn't there very long?

JOHN COOLIDGE: No, he was only there for three years, and then you had two professors, neither of whom wanted—I think would have been—well, they were not unhappy to take it briefly, but they didn't find it much fun when they got into it, and one of them had to do it much longer than he wanted to, so that it became much more difficult in every way.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Robbins wasn't there long enough to really set too much direction, was he?

JOHN COOLIDGE: No.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You mentioned in the written that he urged curators to do more things

on their own, but—

JOHN COOLIDGE: No, he didn't. For reasons that I've never understood, because I've never had access to the information—I have access. I could find it if I wanted to. I left him with a surplus, which disappeared. An operating surplus. It disappeared very quickly. I don't know why.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Essentially, when you retired—on the occasion of your retirement from the Harvard organization in 1980, they did a series of these ephemeral, but wonderful, kind of happenings in sculpture. Mary Miss and so forth. Were these sort of your inspiration, or were these surprise—

JOHN COOLIDGE: Absolutely surprise packages. No, I had nothing to do with it. That was—Mary Miss and so forth was—

ROBERT F. BROWN: But with your architectural interest, your interest in sculpture, you had written, while you were at the Fogg—at least in terms of contemporary art, you had particular interest in sculpture. These two things converged, as it were, with—

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yes, with that. [00:26:00] It was very nice. I loved it. I loved that Mary Miss show, particularly. No, this was entirely unexpected, and I was very touched. The whole thing was very touching.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You continued to teach, then.

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You do now. Or you—

JOHN COOLIDGE: No, I don't. I found, after one year, that I was—one year at continuing education—I'd had enough.

[Audio Break.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: —been involved.

JOHN COOLIDGE: By history, I should probably begin with the Society of Architectural Historians.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You've mentioned being organized, or discussed, over a summer here.

JOHN COOLIDGE: The beginning. Thereafter, I wrote, I think, certainly one article for their magazine, maybe more, at the very beginning. Recently have done a fair number of book reviews, not enormous number, and have had a very modest association with the Boston chapter. The problem was that the graduate students at the Fogg were going into teaching, and that attendance at the College Art Association was, I felt, obligatory, and I went there every year for the 20 years I was director, and have been a bit since. [00:28:02] I was a trustee, and I was vice president, and all this kind of thing. I turned down some offers there, other activities. I was book review editor of *The Art Bulletin*. In any case, that was my main professional association. There just didn't seem to me room for two in an administrative job. I first came into contact with the College Art Association in Princeton, in the late '30s, and the College Art Association had been dominated, for many years, by Morey and his close associates. For example, the editor of *The Art Bulletin* had been—I think his first name was John, but his last name was Shapley [ph], and it became a magazine where Morey's pupils published articles on early Christian papers that they had written for him. In the late '30s, a group of younger art historians, people who were themselves in their middle '30s, people 10 years older than myself, by and large, moved in and took it over. [00:30:01] Prominent in this group was Sumner Crosby. Sumner Crosby, who, though in his middle 30s, was, I think, only a teaching fellow at Yale, and when he became president of the College Art Association, they promoted him to assistant professor. Along with Sumner, whom I knew, but not as well, was Millard Meiss, whom I came to know very well, and Rensselaer Lee. Parentheses on Millard Meiss. It was, of course—he was the first major appointment I achieved at the Fogg. He came to the Fogg—he only would work part-time as curator of paintings, and as a teacher, and we became really close during his Cambridge years, and then he left to go to the—to replace Panofksy at the Institute for Advanced Study. This was a complete transformation of the College Art Association, and one of the splendid, small things that took

place was that Fiske Kimball, whose stature as an art historian was universally recognized, gave his blessing to this change. [00:32:02] Fiske had very little interest in professional associations, but emerged, as it were, briefly, in support of that change, and he was the only person of Morey's generation who played a part in this, and whose presence was therefore—it was wonderful for this group of young assistant professors to feel that one of the—well, the grandest old man was backing them against the dominant power of Morey. Morey was perfectly graceful about this. That was typical of him. I've said he was a man of the greatest stature I knew in art history, and he showed it then. There was no resentment, but it did produce a complete change.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What form did that take, aside from—

JOHN COOLIDGE: Getting people who were in their mid-30s, and who were associated with other institutions except Princeton, to contribute to *The Art Bulletin*. They also, at the same time, started the *Art Journal*. As I mentioned, I was set to go—I could have gone—to the University of Indiana at Bloomington. I think I had been offered the editorship of the *Art Journal* and refused, and then when the—it was turned—I have to think on that point, because I don't remember too clearly. [00:34:09] But what was clear was that when Indiana came up, they had gotten Henry Hope to take on the founding the *Art Journal*, and the notion was that, since I would go to Indiana, where he was to be chairman of the department, I could help out on the *Art Journal* with him. This was, again, a different kind of—they saw it as, in no sense, competitive with *The Art Bulletin*, but representing the same dedication to art history, but at a collegiate, rather than a graduate school, level, having a broader appeal, which is exactly the way that Henry developed it, and of course, with a heavy interest in contemporary art, which had never characterized *The Art Bulletin*. Their transformation was permanent. It has—I think they realized that one should never let a single group dominate it again, and that has certainly never happened in the same extent. This was seen to by the nominating committee of the board of trustees. [00:36:09] One of the things that I pushed for was the expansion of the College Art Association to include artists, but above all, artist-teachers. It had, under Morey, been almost entirely an art historian's thing. This was, again, a tremendous success. The membership in the College Art Association, oh, tripled or something like that, quite quickly. It was all a little ironic, because by the end of my 20 years, I found meetings extremely boring, because you were acquainted with so many people. I found you'd go to these meetings all over the country, and your pupils or friends from the local neighborhood showed up, and you hadn't seen them for years, and it was a wonderful chance to get together with old friends. But this didn't work by the end, because you were always being interrupted by—you were talking to a friend, and an acquaintance would come interrupt you, so that—I think it's wholly right to expand the College Art Association, but it ceased to have the clubby attraction that it had had at its beginning, and which, of course, endured until the membership doubled, and then, again, it disappeared palpably. [00:38:09]

ROBERT F. BROWN: The artists, did they have any other effect on the tone of the meetings and the publications?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Oh, yes. They had their section of the meetings. They didn't get into *The Art Bulletin*. They played an active supporting role for the journal, but artists, in the nature of things, or most artists, don't write. Certainly they'll produce manifestos, but not magazine articles, so that there wasn't a direct expression of them there. The architectural historians also had their meeting at the same time that the art historians did, and this was too much. The last time I was on the board of trustees of the architectural historians, I pushed hard to have the architectural historians meet separately. That was voted down, and so I resigned. I was plenty old by that time. I don't remember when it was. But ironically, they, of course, then got a new board, or the board changed slightly, and about a year later, they voted to separate. Except something like two meetings out of three they would meet alone. [00:40:03] They always had the occasional possibility they would meet together. My principle won after I had left. [Laughs.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: And your principle was that it was just becoming too much of a—

JOHN COOLIDGE: Just too big.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —circus?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yeah. There was enough that the likes of me wanted to go to—in the

meetings of the Art Association, but to have that cut out meetings of the architects was just too rough. The thing that I had never realized about these organizations—again, I was on the nominating committee of the College Art Association—was to discover that, of course, it is the proxies which elect the board directors, overwhelmingly. We sat there and consciously appointed the board, so that it represented artists and theorists, and then, very heavily, people from all over the country, and from various—it had been really Harvard and Princeton and Yale, and occasionally Columbia, under Morey. I think, unconsciously, they simply didn't—there weren't many other art departments, and they didn't know the ones there were. But when we got in there, you made an effort to bring in places like Oberlin, which was first-rate department, but not one where the professors and the scholars of the East Coast often visited. [00:42:03] That whole thing has been a permanent aspect, and a very sound one, of the College Art Association. It also came to be very well-run, and principally—and started getting an endowment, which was enormously helped by Millard Meiss's will. He left quite a sum of money. I don't remember now how much, but it transformed—what had been a large club of poor professors became a national organization with its own endowment, and so forth and so on, as eventually the Society of Architectural Historians has become, to an extent. Want to shift—

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ROBERT F. BROWN: —urged the artists becoming members of the CAA. Was there much resentment on the part of art historians?

JOHN COOLIDGE: No, they weren't actively enough engaged. Sure, there were art historians who said, "No, that's a different—something else again." The ambition of the group, like Rensselaer Lee and Summy Crosby, was to make it a bigger national organization, and that overrode the desire of people to keep it a club.

ROBERT F. BROWN: There really weren't that many college-associated artists, say, in the '40s, were there?

JOHN COOLIDGE: More than you'd think. One of the astonishing things is that when Charles Eliot Norton was appointed—and I'm not speaking necessarily of a year, but if not the same year, the next or the next, but one—they appointed somebody to teach the practice of art at Harvard. When Seaver Hall was built shortly thereafter, Richardson designed a corridor—turned a corridor into a gallery, where the works of art that students had produced in connection with their courses could be exhibited. So that there was—well, I think, certainly starting in the middle of the 19th century, with the enormous influence of science and industrialism on American intellectual life, there came to be more concern for professional training of artists in both colleges and art academies than we realize. [00:02:25] I don't—I can't—I've never seen statistics on this point, but there was more of this than one recognizes. It was in the middle—it was in the '50s, wasn't it, that the state of Massachusetts passed a law that there should be instruction in drawings in schools? They developed the Massachusetts College of Art in order to train teachers to carry out this whole thing.

ROBERT F. BROWN: So, in fact, when this change occurred in the CAA, you found that there were some hundreds of new members?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Oh, yes. Yes, I think so. That came about. Mind you, one talks about all this, but of course the revolution took place while I was in Princeton, from '39 to '43, so presumably, it was in 1940, or thereabouts. Then most of us were in uniform, and the development of organizations like the College Art Association was transferred to the hands of people like Fred Deknatel, who couldn't—for reasons of health, was not in the armed services. [00:04:29] I, at least, had no knowledge of the details. One hadn't been involved in the policy, and the details of how it was carried out—when one came back in '46 or '47, the change had substantially been made.

ROBERT F. BROWN: The *College Art Journal* flourished?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Oh, yes, that flourished very well. They, as I remember, had advertising from the start. Henry Hope had some money, and how it was financed, I wouldn't know, but it was never a problem on—I don't remember it as being a problem. Certainly not a widely recognized problem.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You said earlier that it was to function as a collegial, or an intercollegiate, thing. Sort of communication and newsletter function to a degree.

JOHN COOLIDGE: Well, surely that. Basically that, but more that it produced articles that artist-teachers would want to read and have their students read, and developing—one forgets how limited was the interest in contemporary art at this period. [00:06:17] They became the magazine which paralleled the Museum of Modern Art, so to speak. All of this was much more new and unusual than we can now remember. As one instance, I can remember when I first started going to the dealers in New York, there were at least as many Old Master exhibitions—and by Old Master, I mean before 1850—as there were modern ones, and modern being after 1850. Even a small dealer like—oh, dear, the name escapes me—would put on a show of Tintoretto, and had half a dozen Tintoretto oil paintings from all over the country there. That kind of thing, which is unthinkable in New York today. Nobody except a museum would attempt it, and then only the largest ones would attempt it.

ROBERT F. BROWN: The vehicles for modern art were few.

JOHN COOLIDGE: Were few.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You've mentioned, in regard to your directorship of the Fogg, you thought that was an area you wished to strengthen.

JOHN COOLIDGE: Sure.

ROBERT F. BROWN: So that just to see the material was not easy, was it? [00:08:03]

JOHN COOLIDGE: Well, it had always been there. One of the remarkable things was that Sachs made it a principle to borrow major works of art from New York, which would be hung up as single objects. There is something that one rather staggers to think about. One of the major objects he borrowed was *Guernica*, which hung at the end of a big hall there. That was always possible, but it was exceptional. This whole thing affected the way that the College Art Association developed. Of course, very soon, all the younger generation were in favor of this. The popularity of modern art would be an interesting study to—when you had a department like any of the big ones, Harvard, to trace the enrollment in courses dealing with 20th-century art increase in the number, and they increase in the attendance, at those courses over the years. At Harvard today, 19th and 20th-century art is overwhelmingly the thing that interests students the most, and this is only, to a minor extent, a reflection of the brilliance as lecturers of the people who are teaching it. [00:10:17] That's about all I can think of to say on the College Art Association. As I say, I was on the board of directors. I think I was vice president twice, and I was on the board of directors a couple of times. Obviously maybe more, but I can't remember. It seemed to run itself a certain way, and there weren't very serious problems.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did you continue fairly actively with the architectural historians? You had to choose, you said earlier.

JOHN COOLIDGE: I had to choose. I was not active.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But your private research interests continued to be largely architectural?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Largely architectural. Though, there again, I published the—although I gave up the bulletin of the Fogg Museum, I replaced it, in effect, after a few years' gap, with a publication on—there was always an annual report, and that came to include articles on new acquisitions. These were often 20th-century, and I wrote up some of those. This was the balancing art of building up the Fogg's 20th-century collection, and I did, in the end, publish quite a little, particularly on sculpture, one way or another. [00:12:16] The Fogg bought an 18th-century French bust, and I wrote a long article on this, and then it ended up as a contribution to the Festschrift for Walter Friedlander. So I did publish in sculpture, once on—I did something on the Rubens's frescoes in the [inaudible]. So it wasn't elusively architectural in my publication. That was the outcome of being a director. I really think that it's probably better to put it negatively. The Fogg, effectively, or as I lived in that job, effectively prevented me becoming a specialist in a field of architectural history, and in any sense a, quote, expert, unquote, in one area of architectural history. Never wrote. Well, it astonishes me that the book—that since I've seen you last, I saw the page proof—I think it was last Sunday—and it's a tiny book, but it's 47 years since the poor guy [ph] published. [00:14:00] [Laughs.] A 47-year gap between books.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What is this current one?

JOHN COOLIDGE: I gave some lectures at the Amon Carter in Fort Worth, in 1980, and they were to be published. I knew that when I—on the designing of 20th-century art museums. It's just taken me all this time to turn that into a book. I've just sent off a manuscript of a lecture, which is going to be published as a pamphlet—just mailed that yesterday—on London in the third-quarter of the 19th century. A text to build around Gustave Doré's illustrations of London in 1872. Rather fun, because when I got into it, I discovered that, of course, Gustave Doré was one of a whole group of foreigners who visited London, and there's material I found fascinating on the comments of European writers on London. The book is really a study of how foreigners saw London at that period, which is a—they had a radically different view from the one that we have today. To me, I would have thought of London in terms of Gladstone and John Stuart Mill, and all that kind of thing. [00:16:00] They were impressed with the idle rich and the desperately poor, and there's almost no mention of the middle-class, and what mention there is is disapproving. We think of England at that time as, in some sense, the epitome of bourgeois values. That hardly comes out at all in the writings of, say, Hino [ph] or Dostoevsky, or Gaultier [ph]. Whole group of people that expressed very much the same vision that comes out in Doré's illustrations. Doré's book had 180 engravings of London, of, from his point of view, every aspect of London life, and in only two of these are people shown working. One of those is some half-naked men mixing the malt for beer, and the other is two sleepy clergymen confirming the boys from Westminster School in Westminster Abbey. That's the only work that you get [laughs] in this thing that we think of as the origin of the Industrial Revolution and people working hard.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Is this, to some sense, a spin-off from your interest as an architectural historian? You've also written about cities and—

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yeah, this was a spin-off. It started out as a lecture that—Mary Rose Maybank, at the Fogg, thought it would be a good idea to have a series of public lectures on cities. [00:18:02] We had half a dozen, on Istanbul, and Peking. She asked me to give one, and I chose London, because the illustrations were there, and then this turned into this little pamphlet that University of Louisville is publishing. They have—a nice episode there. The campus, University of Louisville, which was an urban university, and one of the few—other words, it was supported not by the state, but by the city. Along with New York City, it's one of the few in the country, and old. They had a bachelor architect who built their main campus in the '20s, in Georgian style, naturally, and he died and left them half a million dollars in order to start an architectural school. By that time, they had gone broke and merged with the state system, and the state system, which has half a dozen universities, but the major one at Lexington, already had an architectural school. Half a million is not much as an endowment for an architectural school, and they felt they didn't need two, and it was definitely tied to Louisville, so that Lexington would have had a hard time to convince a judge to transfer it to the architectural school they had. [00:20:07] So instead of that, they created a visiting professorship, one-semester visiting professorship, of architecture. I got involved in that after I was retired, I guess. I don't remember the first year I went there. They, having had a number of these, thought of the idea of having the visiting lecturer give a formal public lecture. Then, from that, they went as far as publishing it. After this had gotten started, they wrote me and said that since I had been there, though I had not given—when I was there, I was the second Morgan lecturer, and they didn't have any of these arrangements. I took this lecture I had produced for the Fogg and offered it to them, and it's coming out.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Can I ask, briefly, your last years teaching at Harvard, when you stepped down from Fogg, did you resume full-time teaching?

JOHN COOLIDGE: I resumed full-time teaching. There, I was struck by the fact that the department was oriented towards graduate students, and I felt that I should work with undergraduates. It seemed to me that that was the balance, and therefore taught a course on the history of modern cities. [00:22:09] That sort of every other year, and then a course on local architecture, feeling one thing one learns working in a museum is the importance of looking at originals, and the only original buildings you can look at are the local ones. So I developed courses around that. Those were the principal things I—my principal interests. I did do other courses from time to time. I did a joint course with a visiting professor on Italian Renaissance sculpture, which was one of the fields that I had gotten interested in when I was director of the Fogg. But principally, it was architecture, and principally the history of cities and local Boston architecture.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Were these subjects that became increasingly of interest to the

undergraduates?

JOHN COOLIDGE: History of cities—I started the history of cities with Longform [ph], so it was modern. It was 19th and 20th century. Went from Longform to Le Corbusier, really. That, of course, qualified as modern architecture, and there was a passionate student interest in things modern. Built up the attendance there over the years. The Boston architecture thing, no. [00:24:01] There was always a small group that went to that. Sometimes—I think I got up to 15 once, but it was more apt to be eight or 10 on that course. Boston was—we'd go to Manchester, New Hampshire to see the Frank Lloyd Wright houses and things of that sort. The interpretation of Greater Boston was—

ROBERT F. BROWN: —rather liberal.

JOHN COOLIDGE: Was pretty liberal.

ROBERT F. BROWN: I thought, perhaps, in conjunction with the growing interest in American field—although that's quite recent, isn't it?

JOHN COOLIDGE: That's quite recent. Since there was virtually no other teaching of American art, people who really cared about American art went elsewhere, notably and wonderfully at BU.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Ben Rowland was occasionally—

JOHN COOLIDGE: Of course. Ben Rowland did, yes, and he had a remarkable body of—he produced a remarkable body of historians of American painting. I'd forgotten that. I'm glad you reminded me of that. We were personally sympathetic, Ben and I. Very fond of Lucy, too. He was not a person—there was no thought of collaborating with Ben. He wasn't a collaborator, just temperamentally, and so this never arose.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Could I ask about your other involvements? The only ones I see that are quite long, aside from the Fogg, College Art, to a degree, is trustee at the Museum of Fine Arts, which I gather you assume ex officio—cause to be [ph] director?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yes, so to say. [00:26:01] I think I talked about Asa [ph] Gray and the great collection, and it being moved over to the Boston Museum. The real event that brought about the founding of the Boston Museum, the Athenaeum was the center for the visual arts in Boston, and acquired quite a little painting and sculpture, one sort and another. Then, in the 1860s, a Mr. Perkins left them his substantial collection of armor, and I guess plenty money to go with it. The art was starting to crowd out the books, and while they could see painting—busts of Ralph Waldo Emerson belonging in the Athenaeum, armor, they drew the line at. So it was arranged that the Boston Museum be founded, and that they would give the armor, or lend the armor, to the Boston Museum. With that in mind, and the idea that the Boston Museum was going to be built where Copley Plaza is, and they are where the New England Life and—who's moved into it now? Is it Conrad? No, it isn't Conrad. It's Louis—Louie. [00:28:00] Louie.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Retail shop.

JOHN COOLIDGE: Retail shop, but this whole area was cultural. They set up a scheme that Harvard and MIT and the Athenaeum should each appoint three of the board of directors. The practice was for Harvard to appoint the director of the Fogg as one of their three appointees. That lasted until the mid-'60s, when George—what's his name? The director of the Boston Museum. The energetic, modern director.

ROBERT F. BROWN: The director there?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yeah, the president of the board.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Oh, Seybold [ph]?

JOHN COOLIDGE: George Seybold, yeah. Went to the legislature and changed the charter, and now those three institutions only appoint one, and some of the recent Fogg directors haven't been interested in being on the board of trustees. I don't know whether Peter Bowren is or not. But any case, it was ex officio because Harvard was stuck with finding three people. When I was there, they retained Forbes and—this went on—Forbes and Sachs

with this. We had three, as it were, from the Fogg Museum. Subsequently, they got professors in related fields. Yes, I was, in the end, on the board for 26 years. They've changed the rules so that it's inconceivable today. [00:30:01] I can't remember. I think you can only be a trustee for 12 years now. Edward Forbes was a trustee for something like 40, if not more.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And quite an active one?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Came to all the meetings. No, because his real activity, and his generosity, lay with the Fogg, or came to lie with the Fogg.

ROBERT F. BROWN: How about you? When you went on, did you consider it a major responsibility as new director of the Fogg?

JOHN COOLIDGE: I considered it a major responsibility, because I knew nothing about museums, literally, except having visited them.

ROBERT F. BROWN: That was maybe training ground.

JOHN COOLIDGE: This was a wonderful training ground, and that's the way I did it. Of course—I forget. On one occasion, early occasion, I—been looking for this for months, and there it is. [Laughs.] Found it. I'm sorry.

[Audio Break.]

JOHN COOLIDGE: I was thinking that I was, I think, 25 years younger than the next youngest trustee. Or maybe it was only 20, but it was something like that. I was infinitely younger. It was old Boston, and was fun seeing old Boston. The president of the board was Ralph Lowell. The very active director was George Edgell, who had taught me as a freshman. I felt extremely junior. The trustees did very little, and so that I didn't get deeply involved. [00:32:06] My first personal involvement was when Edgell retired, and was a question of who the new director should be. Since I was, by then, training people to go into museum work, I was very anxious that Perry Rathbone become director, as indeed he did.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Had you known him at all?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Oh, yes. I first knew him as a junior in college, when he and Otto Wittmann came to ask me to take over the Society for Contemporary Art. I had seen—well, moment I got into being director of the Fogg, I saw him and Otto. Became really very close to Otto, though we saw him less often than we did Perry.

ROBERT F. BROWN: He had been at Toledo for quite a while?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Otto had been in Toledo, and Perry had been director at St. Louis since he was 29, I think. He had started out at Detroit, in the education department, and then moved on as director to St. Louis. So this was the real first time that my judgement was called upon.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You say you were going to learn a bit about museums by your association with the MFA. Had you learned, say, from Edgell, a bit, or from other curators there?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Oh, you learn from everybody, but above all, you learn from—since the trustees did nothing, but all major decisions were laid before them, they had nominal control, simply to see the kinds of problems that came up. [00:34:20] Two worlds that were wholly new were finance and all its aspects of the thing, you know. Running a restaurant. What's the practical thing to do to increase your membership and get them to raise the fees? Then when they started charging admission, what should it be? All that kind of question, which was new to me.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Edgell was quite an active man in all this?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Oh, yes, very active, but very much of the past. Curiously, as I told you, I became close to Fiske Kimball. Kimball and Edgell were contemporaries, and had even written a history of architecture together. I made the mutually embarrassing—well, the multiply embarrassing assumption that there was perhaps a certain fondness of one for the other, and the first time—the appropriate occasion, I mentioned to Fiske that I was now on the board and seeing something of George Edgell, and got no response. [00:36:08] [They

laugh.] So with Edgell, I said I'd had breakfast with Fiske after a trip to Philadelphia, and got no response. Learned to make my comparisons private, as it were. No, and Edgell was—he was lazy, and he was a grand man, and he ran the thing grandly, and knew how to do it. A very, very able man, but he—it's strange what survives from ability if it's combined, over a working lifetime, with laziness.

ROBERT F. BROWN: There are certain remnants.

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yes, the remnants, and it comes up quickly and astonishingly. A quick answer to a difficult problem, but no sense of policy. An instinct for whatever solution would be the least trouble for the director. At the same time, keeping everything on a pretty even keel. The whole range—and of course, acquisitions was something that—the Fogg had virtually no money, and their acquisitions came as gifts. Our acquisition policy developed. Then, of course, you got into the—more particularly with Perry Rathbone—into the problem of senior personnel policy. [00:38:15] Academic life is so rigid in its—well, above all, in tenure, and everything that follows from this, to get responsibly involved in an institution where this doesn't exist at all, and where—Perry was comfortably fixed. It paid a perfectly good salary. But the staff were miserably off, and one of the policies that I quickly evolved and pushed the trustees, because they were by no means exclusively businessmen—there were lawyers and others—that curators should get approximately the same salary as Harvard professors, and account likewise for junior professors. Well, that took years of doing, but eventually it got to that, and this became accepted as a thing. [00:39:57] But I think as promotion—the classic case being Robert Treat Paine, who wrote half of two volumes of the *Pelican History of Art* there, and was an internationally accepted, known, and admired scholar, and who succeeded to the curatorship at the age of 62. Had been an assistant curator, and in every sense an assistant curator. He couldn't make a purchase, because the curator stayed on into his 80s. I never got to the point of changing that. I felt very strongly it should be changed, but one looked after curators, in the sense of saying, "Well, hasn't he been here a good, long time? Don't you think we should raise the salary?" and deliberately, at appropriate trustee meetings, ask what the salary was. One thing about being a trustee is you can ask any question you want, and a question like that is not—don't do it every meeting, but a question like that doesn't impress the other trustees as something irrelevant.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And you can get the answer.

JOHN COOLIDGE: You get the answer. At the Fogg, where that—as I think I've told you, one of the things I made basic when I came to the Fogg was I knew that financing—Harvard would say, sure, they can be paid like professors, but you've got to raise the money, so that was all right. [00:42:08] But I said they've got to have professorial vacations, and that was accepted in principle. It doesn't exist in any other museum. Well, it may exist at other university museums. You didn't get a three-month vacation for Bob Paine or anybody else, but you could ask about these things, or bring up, and the trustees would be sympathetic. You'd say to the director, "I've been wondering about sabbaticals for some of your curators. Can't get very much time to go to Egypt if they spend all but a month in Boston." That kind of thing, you could push out. You learned a great deal about—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Was a good deal of this that it simply never occurred to these largely businessmen and lawyers who were the trustees, or no one had ever pushed some of these matters, really, before?

JOHN COOLIDGE: No one had ever pushed some of these matters before. You got satisfactory people, many of whom had private incomes, as Bob Paine had some. Weren't rich, but just enough so that it helped—well, it miserably paid, and they probably had as much in private income as they're paid. [Laughs.] They were paid half of what they ought to be, but the private income paid up the difference. This kind of situation. Then you gradually built this up. One of the—this thing cut both ways. [00:44:01] Professors give lectures around and get perquisites. They don't get $2,000 a lecture, but you get hundreds. This was true of the curators. Again, since they weren't getting well-paid, I resisted the efforts of the board of trustees to cut this out, and I was astonished—I was absolutely astonished—when a senior partner, who was a very good friend, in a major Boston law firm, one of the couple of best Boston law firms, didn't back me up. He said, "You don't seem to realize, John, that every penny I earn—but every penny—goes to the firm, and I don't get any perquisite. I give a talk for Cambridge Hospital, and they give me $100 for it, and that goes into the firm. The firm divides this up." This is, in a way—tends to be business thinking, in a sense. They find that more normal than the fact that on Saturdays and Sundays, you do all your work for a Friday

evening lecture the following week, and get the perquisite. As I say, you saw it was as broad as it was long. Thinking about it, it never became real. [00:46:00] I was thinking they ought to get—because one of the first things I did at the Fogg—well, an early thing I did—was to handle the problem of curatorial assistants, and then assisting curators, and insisted that the curators take on a new person with a definite limit of time. I didn't say, "You have to fire him after two years," or what—you say, "Here are all the qualifications. I like him very much. How long do you think he should stay?" Then they stated that, that time, and you'd bring it up at the end of two and a half years, if they had a three and a half, three-year appointment, "Have you told them that their term is—reminded them their term is running out? What should we do? Are they going to find another job? Have you thought of somebody to replace them?" I never got to the point with the board at which one could bring that up, but I thought it belonged in the museum setup, as I thought—you ended up with practical tenure. A person who had been there 20 years, you just never dreamed of firing them, which I thought was a very bad arrangement. I wondered and started asking people about—you'd ask a dean, "How do you feel about tenure?" and they all commented on the old people they couldn't—or the middle-aged people they couldn't get rid of. [00:47:59] I became convinced that you shouldn't have tenure, but you should have—

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JOHN COOLIDGE: —around for quite a long period of time. I could see giving a man of 40 a 15-year contract, for instance, and then at 55, you would really consider the situation, whether the next contract would be for five years or another 15 years. You can do it. But at least the institution would have a chance, and he would have a chance, to rethink things.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And you could talk in terms of that contract's expiration when it—

JOHN COOLIDGE: Sure, as it approached. Say to him, "You have been so interested in scholarship, and the burdens of the curatorship seemed heavy on you. Had you thought of going into teaching for the last 10 years of your life?" Which is perfectly possible. You can get that kind of job.

ROBERT F. BROWN: At the entry level, you tried to advocate—

JOHN COOLIDGE: Well, it would be shorter contracts.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Fixed terms. Shorter contracts.

JOHN COOLIDGE: Fixed terms, yeah, which would then—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Which you achieved at the Fogg. Did you get them at the MFA?

JOHN COOLIDGE: No, I didn't even bring it up. This is the sort of thing that you can encourage the director to bring up, but the trustees suggest or implicate, and that kind of thing. There were always other problems that were pretty heavy. We never got to the point of making those changes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: In Edgell's time, or your first year, what about acquisitions? Was there a policy? All I'm aware, there were a couple of very fine bequests in the late '40s. I think Spalding's and [inaudible].

JOHN COOLIDGE: Oh, they had more money—I was astonished to learn, total acquisition funds were larger than those of the Met. The figure that I remember when—and these all can be looked up—they had a million dollars a year to spend on acquisitions [00:02:03] There were things that went for Italian paintings, and there were things that went to the textiles. They were tied up. But there was considerable funds. Individual curators had policies which worked out with Perry. Then, of course, at the very end, they were willing to consider trading on certain things. Broad policies, like obvious need still exists to collect—well, the biggest gulf they have now are the classics of the 20th century, but Perry bought two Picassos. Built up—was working on that kind of thing from the moment he came.

ROBERT F. BROWN: He functioned, more or less, as his own paintings curator, didn't he?

JOHN COOLIDGE: That's right.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Because Constable retired.

JOHN COOLIDGE: Constable retired, and Perry functioned this way. The board, in general, came to recognize what specialists had recognized, that this was not a good arrangement. Yonfontaine [ph] was technically no longer curator of Oriental art. A long time until they found somebody else, and then somebody else proved to be rather a weak man, so that Yonfontaine made the decisions, but at least the policy was there that the director should not be a curator. [00:04:06] Which was a forward-looking aspect. Museums have always been rather backward in personnel matters. One of the things that staggered me when I realized—woke up to it—oh, starting in the '30s—I think starting in the '30s—museum directors, the Association of Museum Directors, built up a pamphlet which established the position of the director as regard to the trustees. This was a professional statement, and it came to be accepted by trustees, pretty much everywhere. There was absolutely no statement of the relation of the curators in relation to the director. Nobody else had this kind of statement of whether they had vacations or not, or—absolutely nothing, which again seemed to me very backward. I don't know how it works in business, but there are certainly practices that cover a lot of these things. So this was an area that you came to know. One pushed whole areas, like contemporary art. Perry was rather casual about that. But as young collectors came on the board, people like Lewis Cabot and Stephen Paine, who came on when they were 40 or less, you got a body of people who would push. [00:06:13] You eventually got a curator of 20th—art since 1945, something like that. You would get—the curator would build up a body of patrons, and you would get, in effect, a small department rolling that way.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Fairly, as pressure, as circumstances occurred.

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yeah, that's right.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You never did see things laid out in a more—

JOHN COOLIDGE: No.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —hard and fast manner?

JOHN COOLIDGE: One thing that was my idea, I'd say in the late '60s—I was operationally very close to George Seybold, and he was a very active president, much more active—astonishingly more active than Ralph Lowell had been. I suggested to him, "Why don't we form, or you form, a club, to which the directors and the presidents of the half dozen largest museums in the country belonged?" I can't remember how clearly one thought about this. [00:08:00] He bought the idea and carried it out. The way it worked out was that each museum, in turn, would have a good, full day, and everybody—the top command would meet and discuss common problems. I remember when Perry left, one of the things that I felt should be discussed, and we—the boys agreed, and we got rid of, for a half an hour or an hour, got rid of the directors. The presidents of the seven museums involved there discussed what directors should be paid, and we were about to start hunting for a new director. How did what we had paid compare to what you all were paying, things of this sort. The Museum of Modern Art had a strike, and when they were host, they got in the man who was directly negotiating, settled the strike, and he gave us an absolutely frank, down-to-earth discussion of how you handle strikes. Here we were, seven presidents, and I suppose seven directors. His remark, looking at the group of us, saying, "We had one great good fortune. [00:10:00] That strike took place during the summer. There weren't any trustees around who could shoot their faces off about the policy of the museum." [They laugh.] Well, he was absolutely right. An aspect that, being a trustee—

ROBERT F. BROWN: You never heard it quite before.

JOHN COOLIDGE: We never heard that quite before. So was a succession of discussion of these things. With absolute frankness, that enormously impressive, and really very nice man, Douglas Dillon, who was president of the Met, at a meeting—I think it was when he was host at the Met. There was a discussion of corporate membership, and Douglas Dillon—the subject was raised—I think one may have sent an agenda out, president's general—or certainly you were discussing things like salaries and directors, you would want the presidents to know how you planned to get rid of them, and the staffs, so that you didn't hear—the directors hearing what other directors were being paid. This was corporate membership, and Douglas Dillon, who was certainly nothing if not a great businessman, said, "I have worked terribly hard—but terribly hard—over that, and I have never gotten any more support. I don't think I've ever got as much support as a couple of hundred thousand dollars

a year. I think this is an idea that everybody is going for, and I don't think it's going to work worth a damn." [00:12:05] At which point, Otto Wittmann said, "I can't agree with you. When I came, the Libbey trust took care of 75 percent of the museum's budget. Now it takes care of less than 25 percent, and we have something like"—I don't know—"Fifty percent of our budget is contributed by the local corporations, period." You just simply never—the occasion where you hear two people, both of whom are first-rate and have worked hard, to know their business flat and be disagreeing, was illuminating for all of us. This was one of the things, the kinds of things, that the Boston Museum—that was obviously good for all museums, and the kind of thinking that the Boston Museum needed to get into. George was very good at breaking out the pattern of trustees, and certainly under his regime, the first Jews got on the board, and younger people, this kind of thing. All the obvious things that should be done, and aren't done. I hadn't realized, until I began to know some of them, the degree to which Boston institutions excluded Jews from their board, unconsciously. There's never been a Jew in the Harvard Corporation. [00:14:02] It seems curious.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Based more or less on inertia?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yes. You just don't—it doesn't occur to you, somehow. I don't think it would occur to me to say, "Well, how many gay people have we got on the board?" As it should [ph].

ROBERT F. BROWN: These are rather quotas without substance, necessarily.

JOHN COOLIDGE: That's right. Again, once you've started getting in the—change the financial picture very substantially.

ROBERT F. BROWN: By the active contribution and—

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yeah. There's the Remis Auditorium, which was not a minor gift. Henry and Lois Foster gave the gallery, and so forth and so on.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Was Rathbone, would you say, a very active director? You said Seybold was an active president.

JOHN COOLIDGE: He was a very active director, and a very effective director, in all kinds of ways.

ROBERT F. BROWN: He had many exhibitions, didn't he?

JOHN COOLIDGE: He had a great many exhibitions.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Beef up the program.

JOHN COOLIDGE: And beefed up the whole public relations of the museum. He didn't really care much about education. Strange, because he'd started in the education field, and had tried—

ROBERT F. BROWN: You mean that was department of working with schoolchildren and adults?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yeah. That has happened, and I think he saw that the only state money they've got is—or did have—I haven't kept in touch—was a small amount from the state to permit public schoolchildren to come in free. [00:16:02] The state gave them $100,000 a year, if they would do this. I mean, this kind of thing. Perry saw this as a way to get $100,000. [They laugh.] He didn't give a good goddamn what happened once they were in there. That sort of thing. And absolutely no interest in planning, or in formulating a policy. A kind of instinctive feel for things, but not profound at all. Again, one learned things that were astonishing. The thing that I find most fundamentally wrong with museums is they don't know anything about their audience. Again, under George, they got a remarkable man, named Mike O'Hare, who was then teaching at MIT, to make a study of the people who came to the Boston Museum. One of the things that museum staffs think about is that they think a basic visitor is a single individual. One of the things that Mike O'Hare turned up was that more people—no. There were more units, if you can call them that, of two—that could consider two people, or three people, who come together as a unit. [00:18:08] There were more of those units than there were single people coming as units. That has many implications, but one very simple one. If three people go to a museum, they go together

because they want to be together. But if it's grandmother taking her two grandchildren, she may want to sit down while they're investigating a painting, and you damn well ought to have chairs. You may think in the abstract, but if you realize that this is what your audience is, it becomes a necessity. You know the number of visitors, but I was astonished at the—something like a sixth—this was in O'Hare's figures—sixth of the people who came, and the individuals who came, in the course of a year, came more than three times a week. The number of people that just go frequently, and again and again and again, so that out of your total population, a number of visitors, an astonishing number of people, who come repetitively. You go on and on with this, which, the trouble was, we got an excellent survey out of Mike O'Hare, and the Met got a survey. Did one at the same time, and we had access to that. [00:20:00] But it was never carried out. The implications of this to the museum, completely ignored, and this is true today, everywhere, still.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Including just the simplest things, as more benches?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yeah, including the simplest things.

ROBERT F. BROWN: It would occur to me, more frequently changed minor exhibitions, or exhibits, for the frequent visitors.

JOHN COOLIDGE: A student of mine, wonderful gal who—remarkable gal—who had a little private money. I can't remember whether she started as a painter and went into art history. She was very competent. Had jobs, but had no need to earn a living, and so she would give up a job to get different experience, and eventually got her PhD from Harvard School of Education. She took a couple of months and sat in the big Impressionist gallery in the Boston Museum, and stopped every fifth visitor and interviewed them. Then, when the interview was finished, she would sit down again, count five, and pick the next one. This guaranteed that it was a completely random group of people. [00:22:00] She found that they divided into, as I remember, five groups, of very approximately the same. The range would be from 18 to 22 percent, among the five groups. The first group was the people who took one look in the door and said, "Oh, not more Impressionists," and turned around and left. Then there was the second group, who were the, so to say, Japanese, who came in there, read every label, looked at every picture, moved on, read the next label, looked at every picture. Just absolutely absorbing it. Then there were the people who knew the collection, and went and looked at the three greatest pictures, or would discuss it with a friend or whatever. People who absolutely wanted to see what was remarkable, or what had been cleaned, and so forth and so on. Then a group that completely fascinated me—I had never knew they existed—of a person who would come in and head for one picture, and contemplate it for a substantial period of time, just one picture, and then leave. They turned out to be—and again, as I invented the Japanese, so I'm inventing this—a professor of the flute at the New England Conservatory, who just wanted to get the hell out at three in the afternoon, between classes, and would go over to the museum and look at a picture that he was particularly fond of. [00:24:13] Well, I've given—I think there were five groups. I probably mentioned three. There were other two different ones. But the idea that your visitors have this kind of distinct character is something that's never been studied, and never interpreted. Obviously, for the flute player, you got to have your greatest masters up, and if they are, 20 percent of the people there—keep them up for them. She went on to find the person who said, "Not more Impressionists," what did they see in the museum, how long did they intend to stay in the museum, how long are they actually staying, things like this. Whole path of things that, it seems to me, should be—every five years, a museum should be checking on this kind of thing, and planning your whole program around it.

ROBERT F. BROWN: That person who said, "Oh, no more Impressionists," perhaps has a deep interest in something else, or something that's not really—

JOHN COOLIDGE: Certainly.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —yet revealed.

JOHN COOLIDGE: Maybe French 19th-century sculpture. There's a lot more there than ever gets into the policy planning. [00:26:00] Mike O'Hare turned up one thing. He said, "Boston is full of universities. There's no point in making any effort to get new assistant professors who are coming to a given university in that year to come to the museum. They'll come anyway." Assistant professors arriving from the Middle West, this is one of the things that they do. It's a waste of time to send them a little note. We get that. They're going to come

anyway. Again, I had no more—no knowledge of this. The other tremendously important fact was that, overwhelmingly, the largest group of people visiting the Boston Museum at that time were between 16 and 30. Now, the support of the museum, in terms of individuals, was people over 30, but they're not coming. As long as this is true, you ought to be working hard to get older people coming there, frankly. Have it mean something more to the people who can give you more than 25 bucks. Et cetera, et cetera. This kind of thing all developed out of my contact with the Boston Museum, and gave me—by the time these things were coming along, my time with George Seybold was evolved, and I became vice president, and then eventually president for two years, disastrous years. [00:28:00] I began to understand museums as institutions in a very different way from what—I can even say most directors do, because, as I say, this whole attention to the audience is something that is simply non-existent.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Was that survey done while Seybold was president?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But it was not implemented? The recommendations weren't?

JOHN COOLIDGE: It wasn't his job to recommend. His job was to find the facts.

ROBERT F. BROWN: The board collectively should have—

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yeah, the board wrote a report on the future of the museum or something, taking some of these things, but the board doesn't get into the details of that. The board's function was to—at this point, we were looking for a new director, and got into the miserable business of finding this man from Texas, who didn't last. You know, of insisting that a director—at least I would think a board insists that a director come up with—not the first three months, but fairly soon—a broad policy, and that this policy have some relation to what seemed to be the basic facts here, and that the relevant departments, like the fundraising departments, should be aware of these things and have their—it obviously doesn't affect acquisitions significantly, but it should affect the kind of temporary exhibitions you have. [00:30:01]

ROBERT F. BROWN: You had said that Rathbone was not strong on policy and planning.

JOHN COOLIDGE: No, not at all.

ROBERT F. BROWN: When he went to try to get the painting at the centennial and so forth, which I guess led to his leaving, was that just simply a response to pressure of the time? Someone saw what looked like a tremendous Renaissance painting? Or was it to put a capstone on the centennial in 1970?

JOHN COOLIDGE: No.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Because the Met, I suppose, was—you were in rivalry, because that was the same year, wasn't it?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yes, it was the same year.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You each wanted—

JOHN COOLIDGE: Well, yeah. Perry, from time to time, found single, marvelous objects. The great Mannerist painting, and then the wonderful German—Rousseau [ph], isn't it?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Rousseau, okay.

JOHN COOLIDGE: There's a really marvelous late 16th-century German painting. Isenbrand [ph], isn't it? Then there's a wonderful Flemish 15th-century triptych. So, from time to time, Perry would come up with these things, which were not cheap in terms of Boston's budget. They were ridiculous in contemporary terms, but they were in middle six figures, that kind of thing. He had to—well, and then the pair of the Elison portraits, a pair of Rembrandt portraits. He found what the two most competent scholars said was indeed an early Rubens—an early—[00:32:02]

ROBERT F. BROWN: —Raphael.

JOHN COOLIDGE: Raphael. This should not come out. I think all of this probably ought to be tied up. We can argue about that at the end. I don't know who else—other people may give you this full story. You talked to Perry. But I'll give you the full story as I know it. I'm not quite clear. I think the painting was found by Hans Swiczinsky, in the hands of a Genoese dealer. Perry saw it, and decided to bring it to Boston. Hans was actually responsible for arranging it, and Hans brought it to the Boston Museum. Now, Hans was unconventional, which is putting it mildly. Eccentric in another sense. He had a funny, erratic tendency to disregard expected behavior. [00:34:05] I believe, on one occasion, he simply refused to pay his rent. Not because he couldn't afford it; he could. But—oh, to make a stink somehow. He took the painting through customs without declaring it. Now, there's a rule that any object worth more than, I think, $10,000 must be declared, whether it is dutiable or not. Hans knew that rule, and deliberately—"The hell with it." So it arrived here. It was then announced, as Raphael had got into the papers. There was discussion of its price. The U.S. Customs Service looked up and found that it hadn't been declared, at which point the Italian government said it had been illegally exported, as indeed it had been. The State Department said to the Boston Museum, "Look, you are liable for having illegally imported it. [00:36:14] We don't—what the Italians say is no business of ours." Or I guess the Treasury said, "What the Italians say is no business of ours," but the State Department said that, "This is going to make a stink. So in this instance, the Treasury—the Customs Service is going to play it tough with you. Since you didn't announce it, you've got to return it, period, or have the whole thing go to court." The museum had no option. They couldn't go to court, because it hadn't been declared. They were clearly guilty on that point. If the government chose to play that they returned it, the better thing to do was to return it. That is the real legal background of the thing. Now, what the picture was, whether it should have been purchased—as I said, the two best authorities on it both said it was genuine. It was badly damaged and thoroughly repainted, in large part, a very large part. That was known. [00:38:01] I don't think it should have been purchased just on that background, though I was at the meeting where that fact came up and voted to purchase it. I'm not saying I wouldn't have done differently. I voted for it, and then, of course, it became increasingly likely that it wasn't a Raphael. One of the two people who said it was then said it wasn't.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Changed his mind, yeah.

JOHN COOLIDGE: This isn't very great help to a trustee who gets the two experts. [They laugh.] One of them changed his mind, and the other, apparently, is unique in the world on the thing. So it was a mess, and as Bill Coolidge rightly expressed it, we returned it, because we didn't think it was worth the money we hadn't paid for it. We hadn't, by any means, paid for the whole picture. There was a sort of deposit, to bring it here to study. This was the facts of the case.

ROBERT F. BROWN: That left your staff people—Perry urged Swiczinsky to get it, I guess. Did trustees have to decide—

JOHN COOLIDGE: The basic error here was—and Perry had never told, in any detail, where it came from. It was an Italian picture. We got it abroad. We believe that it was—the normal procedure here is for an Italian to smuggle it to Switzerland, and sell it in Switzerland, which is perfectly legal. When we voted on it, we had no idea that it had not come from Switzerland or some other country. [00:40:04] I think it had come from Germany, too, but Switzerland is—non-Germanic arts can get out of Germany.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And that's perfectly acceptable?

JOHN COOLIDGE: That's perfectly acceptable for the trustees to accept that, and so forth and so on. We were not—it was a surprise that the Italian government claimed that it had been taken right out of Italy by one of the museum staff, which, again, as I say, wasn't breaking any American rules. Hans couldn't go to Italy again, but that was not the trustees' affair. It was when it was discovered that the museum was going to be sued because it hadn't been declared, and this was carelessness of—but the whole thing was Perry's responsibility. The director is responsible for a thing like that, and he had known, and he had not insisted that Hans take it to—he hadn't said to the dealer, "Yes, we'll buy this from you when you go to Switzerland." He had taken part in something that was improper. Actually, Perry was retired. Hans was kept on slightly beyond his retirement stage, because—I don't know quite why. [00:42:06] I suppose it was a thing that—it was certainly the general feeling that he hadn't realized the importance of what he was doing in not—I mean, that he had violated what he thought was a meaningless regulation, if he knew about it, or he didn't

know about it, as he may have claimed. I don't know the details.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But you were convinced in general enough to keep him on?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Well, he was an excellent person, and he—I don't know, we kept him on for a year or two, briefly, like that. We didn't want to seem to penalize him for something that was basically Perry's fault, as a matter of principle. It wasn't up to Perry to decide—it wasn't up to Hans to decide whether the Boston Museum could take an object directly from Italy against the law. That was Perry's decision, and that's what he was fired for. The business of not declaring it was no basis for firing Hans, in the fundamental way.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Was there anything in Rathbone—you said he didn't formulate policies and the like. Was there any feeling, on your part, that this was—apart, let's say, from this incident—it would be a good time for Perry to leave? Or did most of you think, well, there were six or eight more years in his tenure as director of MFA?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Oh, no. He was—

ROBERT F. BROWN: If this incident hadn't occurred, would he have—

JOHN COOLIDGE: Oh, yes. [00:44:00] Well, it's funny. In all such situations, unless the—everybody has debits as well as credits, and unless the debits are peculiar, yet irritating to you as an individual, you don't think in terms of their having to leave. To me as an individual, the credits would more than justify staying on. I think it would have been splendid for him to stay on. But you also know automatically what the general point of view is, and if the thing is ridiculous, from a general point of view, you don't even begin to think how you feel about it. You don't even ask yourself the question, how would it be if—no. He was doing wonderfully for the museum. There weren't many people that—there weren't any people that one could see that you would prefer.

ROBERT F. BROWN: On most fronts, things had been going very well, hadn't they?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Membership had greatly increased.

JOHN COOLIDGE: That's right. He had come to see the importance of increasing membership. He'd hired good people to do this. [00:46:00] To say that Perry wasn't interested in policy doesn't mean that he wasn't interested in the evolution of the museum, and as issues became vivid to him, he met them. The way he met them was a very direct one, finding a good person and pursuing him, so that this was—

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ROBERT F. BROWN: —Perry Rathbone had pretty good staff relations.

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yes. This was a great loss, a very great loss. I found it—I can only say personally—this was a small body of the trustees. The word went to the president, and the president talked to, I guess, the principal lawyer on the board, and the principal lawyer went down to talk to the State Department, Treasury, and so forth. We held a—must have been a special meeting, and those two explained to the rest of us what this call was. I was driven home by another trustee, and my admiration and friendship for Perry was such that when the thing was explained at the meeting—I don't think it was particularly well-explained—I didn't take it in. The other trustee didn't stop the car, but stopped and said, "But John, don't you realize what's happening? [00:02:00] This has to be the end." I didn't. I don't know quite what I realized. I think I realized that the Boston Museum was perhaps involved in some serious unpleasantness, but the idea that this was a situation that we couldn't—the only way to cope with it was returning the picture and letting Perry go certainly didn't hit me, because I was too fond of him. I hadn't added up what I heard right, in an immediate sense. It was half an hour later. I don't say that I—I don't think I would have figured it out, no. The block that you feel towards somebody you trusted [inaudible].

ROBERT F. BROWN: He was one of the very top figures, professionally.

JOHN COOLIDGE: Sure. And particularly as the two people who were as remarkable, at least as remarkable, had both quit, Francis Henry Taylor and Dan Rich. Both went to Worcester.

These people, who were in that group, they were no longer—Taylor had died, and Rich was in a kind of paid retirement. Hadn't done very much, and then didn't do much. [00:04:00] So that he was a very outstanding figure. Of course, again, you don't add these things up when you live with them. I don't go around saying, "Well, how does he stack up, compare [inaudible.]" He's just terribly good. If somebody said, "Well, isn't somebody else terribly good?" Yes, he's terribly good. There's no way of measuring the thing.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Was there, following this, quite a few pieces to pick up? Did it become quite a bit more onerous being trustee for the next few years?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Oh, yes. Oh yes, oh yes, oh yes. The temporary—the acting director didn't pan out, and then we—the succeeding director didn't pan out at all, and it was a very messy—very messy—stage. And in addition to which—I can't remember quite how the—George went at about that same—I guess George went after—George Seybold went after the next director came in, or came in—yeah. I lived with—and he was president when the other man, whose very name I've forgotten, was there, and that wasn't a happy experience at all. Then, of course, I retired when he left, and so forth. [00:06:04]

ROBERT F. BROWN: But you said earlier, during your tenure as president, it was tough. You said even disastrous. You were mainly referring to this change, this instability, or was it—was it a rambunctious, bored, or what at that point?

JOHN COOLIDGE: No, it wasn't rambunctious, but he wasn't accomplishing anything, and what he did do—fired a lot of people, including some—I can't remember who. My impression was some curators. I know he wanted to fire one more, and I said, "No, I'm not going to let you fire another curator until you hire"—I think it was a question of getting somebody in the development department. He hadn't hired anybody. He'd fired some curators, and I just didn't feel this was good enough. As I say, he wasn't accomplishing anything, and was just very difficult, humanly, to deal with. I was very much a novice at being president. I never had that degree of responsibility, and didn't handle it very well. I didn't handle it at all well, so that it was—and I was not getting cooperation from the other trustees, because I wasn't handling it well. So that it was a combination, in the first sense, of it just being harder work than I expected, and more of it, or more [inaudible] than I expected, rather than harder, and things not going well, and then not—I don't know the extent to which I realized I wasn't doing well, until it became evident that I should retire. [00:08:27] I'm speaking very frankly.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Your predecessors have all been businessmen, probably, or lawyers, that kind of thing.

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yeah, that's right. Yes, that's true. And I think in all institutions

ROBERT F. BROWN: Even their sense of priorities may be different.

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Since then, have you not regretted being not a trustee of MFA or other things?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Oh, no. I remain—one, I'm not going to any meetings, because I thought, well—I forget how many ex-presidents there were around, and I thought, just doesn't—to have so many ex-directors of the Fogg I would show. Also, time has come for a change, and you don't want to—you shouldn't continue. If you stop teaching, you stop teaching, so to speak. That, I have done.

ROBERT F. BROWN: The MFA, in summary, is an institution. You've seen it go in various directions. Do you see it now having long-term purpose? [00:10:02] What do you see its role, for example, vis-a-vis the Fogg or the Metropolitan? Has it changed?

JOHN COOLIDGE: I found a vivid parallel to this situation. Plus or minus 1900, the director of the Boston Museum was a man named Putnam—of the Boston Public Library. He was a young man, and a brilliant man, and did a fabulous job. The Boston Public is, today, one of the—with the New York Public—the only member of the group—I don't know—let's call it association—of research libraries. It is one of the best libraries in the country. It was first or second best, and Putnam was clearly the man—clearly brilliant director. [00:12:08] It could have become, unquestionably, the greatest library in the country, only Putnam was offered the librarianship of the Library of Congress, and it was Putnam who essentially created the

Library of Congress. It had been pretty much what its name implied: a collection of legal and other books, for the benefit of Senate and House of Representatives. He made it into a great national library. He, had he stayed at Boston would have, or could have, done a comparable job here. My feeling in the '70s was that Boston was strong enough so that it could become the leading museum in the country, not in terms of its collection, which, overall, is, I think, second best to this day, if not—well, I don't know. If it isn't second best, it's so damn near it, and that situation could have changed dramatically. But it was—the budget was in balance. [00:14:00] You could have developed the great weakness of the holdings, which was the 20th century. I had a feeling that this could become as great an institution among public libraries as, say, MIT is, or Harvard is, among universities. I don't know if MIT is as good as Caltech, but so near it that it makes no difference. Had that possibility. And that an imaginative, driving director, somebody of the type of Dan Rich, could have done that. That's not happened. It has followed, instead, the path of the Boston Public, of having a remarkable collection, and being a respectable, but in no sense an outstanding, institution of its kind. I saw, when Perry left, I strongly had this feeling, that what we needed was somebody who would develop the Boston Museum as a service institution, much more vividly than Perry had done it, and that if that had been done, it could be of national standing. [00:16:00] Well, sure, it has developed in this way, but it is not outstanding, as it could have been.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Serving the needs—public?

JOHN COOLIDGE: Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Back to that survey you reported the woman made, targeting those [inaudible] from—

JOHN COOLIDGE: That's right. One of the things that one asks oneself, in what sense is the National Gallery a national gallery? Only sense in which it's a national gallery is it's paid for out of federal taxes. It's in no sense—has a good collection, sure, but it isn't as good a collection as the Met's, and except in the narrow field of painting, it's not in the same league as Boston is. And it doesn't do anything for the nation. The students who come to see the cherry blossoms—high school students come to see the museum, and it's a tourist attraction, but it is not making a national contribution, in the sense of changing national education or attitude towards art, or any of those things. Just as now, Conant declared that Harvard should become a national university. It wasn't a national university when he took over. The student body was heavily New England, and so forth and so on. Now it is. There's no implication, there's no reason it had to be, but this was something that could be accomplished. I think the right director could have made the Boston Museum a national university, in the sense that it was initiating ideas that others took up. [00:18:08] I don't think it had. I think it's gone on, as I say, as the Boston Public Library. It's done a respectable—it's A-minus, or without—well, put it this way. The operation is, at most, B-plus, and the collection is straight A, which gives the total a kind of A-minus level, if you want. I'm saying something of this sort. I feel that opportunity was missed. Now, the opportunity was missed for the—it's already well-taught this way, but you don't necessarily, at any given moment, have the Putnam that you need. Herbert Putnam, that was his name. There was no Herbert Putnam in the museum field. The Met hasn't done anything particularly remarkable. There is no national museum in that sense. On the other hand, Boston has relatively lost since Perry's departure, clearly. You had one of the best, strikingly best, museum directors. I don't think you would say that about—certainly Yonfontaine remains to be seen. Whether Alan [ph], who is certainly a good man, doing a good job, but doesn't seem, to me, outstanding yet. [00:20:03] Might be wrong. It's early days. So this is—I was very much involved in the search for Perry's successor, and we couldn't find an outstanding man. That's why we got—we ought to have been able to do better than we did, but there wasn't a clearly outstanding person. That's the way—does this answer your question? It's a good question.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah, yeah, it does. Very good.

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