



Smithsonian  
*Archives of American Art*

**Oral history interview with A. M. Adler, 1975  
September 13-December 3**

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

**Contact Information**

Reference Department  
Archives of American Art  
Smithsonian Institution  
Washington, D.C. 20560  
[www.aaa.si.edu/askus](http://www.aaa.si.edu/askus)

# Transcript

## Interview

**Interview with A.M. Adler  
Conducted by Paul Cummings  
At New York, N.Y.  
1975 Sept. 13**

## Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a tape-recorded interview with A.M. Adler on 1975 Sept. 13. The interview took place in New York, N.Y., and was conducted by Paul Cummings for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

The reader should bear in mind that he or she is reading a transcript of spoken, rather than written, prose. This is a rough transcription that may include typographical errors.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Okay the 13th of September 1975, Paul Cummings talking to A.M. Adler in his office in New York City. So you were born in New York City; correct?

A.M. ADLER: Born in New York City.

MR. CUMMINGS: In 1902?

MR. ADLER: Right.

MR. CUMMINGS: Could you give me some general information about family and background --

MR. ADLER: Well --

MR. CUMMINGS: -- and school?

MR. ADLER: My family was Russian origin but at a very early age had gone to England, lived in London, married in London, and then came here before the turn of the century. I was born in New York. I think it was about '85 we moved to New Haven and I [inaudible] and I went to school there, various schools: Hill House Academy they called it in those days but Hill House High. And I went to Yale and I was delayed going to Yale because I had an appointment to Annapolis and that didn't work out, so gave up a year for Yale class of '25 and graduated from there. And then went to the architectural school in 1927. I completed all the courses, so there was no sense in [inaudible].

Hi, Ann. That's my daughter. That might be a good idea. Then I worked for Thomas W. Lamb, the theater architect. I worked there.

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, before we get into all of that, how did you come to go to Yale? Because you were in New Haven or --

MR. ADLER: I was in New Haven and thought pretty well of it. I would have had no trouble. Actually,

at Yale I took two sets of courses. In other words, two years in one in every year I was there because I took the academic work as well as complete pre-medical.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, really?

MR. ADLER: At the same time, I had to work. I would earn livelihood for myself and for my father. My mother died when I was 12. My father wasn't very much at earning money, so I had that double thing. But I was interested in medicine and also interested in art because I was the editor in art of the yearbook, you know the graduating class and all of that. I was interested in that.

MR. CUMMINGS: How did the art interest start? Was that a parental influence or --

MR. ADLER: My father was quite good at it, yes and at the early age, the drawings and things that I did were oriented towards, you know -- perhaps going into the career.

MR. CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative]

MR. ADLER: I remember one time -- we would have current events and instead of going to a current event, you know I came into the class earlier and drew a large colored drawing with chalk of a parrot, you know. [They laugh.] Well, this is at the fifth or sixth grade you know, and all the laudatory comments. You know these were always encouraging and then one time I thought, you know I might go into architecture or medicine. I was interested in both phases.

MR. CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative] Did you study drawing or painting with anybody at any point?

MR. ADLER: Well, not until I got to the architectural school. Then we had, you know courses in drawing --

MR. CUMMINGS: Right. Right.

MR. ADLER: -- and watercolors and we used to go out on outings you know in groups and sketch, the usual syndromes.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right. Right.

MR. ADLER: So then after I got out of the architectural school, I studied some watercolors but --

MR. CUMMINGS: How did you decide on continuing in architecture though?

MR. ADLER: Well, it was a monetary consideration.

MR. CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MR. ADLER: Medical school would have required much too much of my, you know time, but economically I just found that it wouldn't be good. Actually, one of the reasons I wanted to go to Annapolis was that if you're fairly high in your class, and I got to Annapolis upon -- from [inaudible], now the statewide competition, so I thought I would do pretty well. But they send you, after graduation if you so desired, to MIT or one of the other schools to study ship architecture.

MR. CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] Oh, I see.

MR. ADLER: Yeah, and so that was one of my aims. I never thought I'd be much of a midshipman or

an admiral or anything like that. [They laugh.] So -- but at any rate, I did go to Yale Architectural School there and had some very good teachers.

MR. CUMMINGS: Do you remember any of them particularly?

MR. ADLER: Yes, there's Morgan who was the head of Schultz and Leavitt.

MR. CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MR. ADLER: And then there's the -- what's his name -- the head of James Campbell and Rogers who did the Yale, you know buildings there, and most of Hartford Memorial, you know the tower and all of that. So -- but what was his name now? I never have trouble with names but [inaudible].

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, we'll come back to that.

MR. ADLER: Yeah, yeah.

MR. CUMMINGS: How did you --

MR. ADLER: But we had very good instructors. They would come down from New York, you see, and we worked under the [inaudible] program. That's apparently been abandoned now. It was a competitive program in which on a given day you're presented with the material and you had to make an [inaudible] for, and you had to abide by that sketch --

MR. CUMMINGS: Right. Right.

MR. ADLER: -- within certain limits for your final project. There was a due date for that project and it would have to be in at 8:00 in the morning of a given day. That meant, of course, that most people were what they called A Charrette where they stayed up perhaps 72 hours without going to bed. You're nodding of course on the table but you worked feverishly because you neglected for such a long time actual work on it.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MR. ADLER: A lot of people who thought about it and interspersed with all of this were the regular courses one had to take, you know. But it was those -- having gone to the college itself, I had a great many of those courses and so it wasn't necessary to repeat those. So for a couple of years I was through with everything they had to teach me, including plumbing and all of the rest.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, with all the -- right.

MR. ADLER: -- you know that they --

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah, yeah.

MR. ADLER: -- engineering spaces, you know, and shearing and bending all this and stuff. But you know that was all part of the -- all the engineering used to be part of it.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah, yeah. Well, you --

MR. ADLER: They didn't have the specialist, you know, they have today. You wouldn't have to find your own steel and things like that, but smaller projects.

MR. CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] Did you lend -- you know plan to continue architecture as an activity or --

MR. ADLER: Yes, I'll tell you about that. I met my present wife, my wife there. During the summers at college I worked up at a camp, [inaudible] camp, and I became a camp artist and I did the large [inaudible] arch there --

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, right.

MR. ADLER: -- and some of the things there, and did their scenery, and the [inaudible]. My wife lived in New York there and I came here. We knew, you know -- we met up there. [Inaudible] was the -- that was the -- probably was one of their [inaudible] was one of the owners of this place. Anyways, but --

MR. CUMMINGS: Of which place?

MR. ADLER: This camp up at Kent --

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, I see. I see.

MR. ADLER: -- in Kent, Connecticut.

MR. CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MR. ADLER: Well, at any rate I was offered while I worked for Thomas W. Lamb an opportunity to double my salary and do a building for an art dealer, which wasn't a very happy experience, but at any rate [inaudible].

MR. CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MR. ADLER: They were not the most ethical of people, nor were they the most inspiring people, but I did the building at double the income and salary and they asked me to do the decorating.

MR. CUMMINGS: Where was this building done then?

MR. ADLER: This was on 56th Street, right next to Bonwit Teller.

MR. CUMMINGS: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

MR. ADLER: And I was -- we got in the building you know and redesigned it all, and in those days they had tapestries and all the -- the device -- devices for lifting the tapestries up to show them, you know --

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. ADLER: -- and they were all encoiled, and other things of that sort. And we did -- I did some pretty big places.

MR. CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MR. ADLER: I did the Bullet's [phonetic] house at 960 5th Avenue. I did Roy Chapman Andrews apartment in all Chinese.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh. Oh.

MR. ADLER: It was reproduced in the [inaudible] reviewer's section of the *New York Times*. The Bullet place, I think there is some sort of award, I think the best interior done that year in New York and it had all this gothic long halls and you know features, very well researched, and you know having been an architect you --

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. ADLER: -- do your details directly. You know where to go and all of that. So that was pretty good stuff and I did some places in Chicago and then these people went out of business and I went in for myself. I --

MR. CUMMINGS: How long were you with them?

MR. ADLER: Let me see, that would make it 19 -- good morning. How are you, dear? About three years.

MR. CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] So it was a busy three years.

MR. ADLER: Yeah, yeah. Then I went on for myself and I started an antique department and architectural and interiors at Todd Hunter's fire place people.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh.

MR. ADLER: -- the fireplace people on 119 East 57th Street.

MR. CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MR. ADLER: And then I met some people that -- like Dr. Oppenheimer, who was a great collector of gothic art and helped him form a good part of his collection. It's part of the McNay Museum now. It's in the Oppenheimer wing. It was the gothic art. And oh, I did interiors for him down at his place in San Antonio. I did the Erschel [phonetic] house, both in Oklahoma City and San Antonio. I was sort of consulting architect with the architect, their local architect, sort of the large paneled rooms and -- that we got in the first collection. Exodus College, I remember that large room; quite a task, you know an enormous room.

And then -- oh, I was one time the consultant to Paramount Movies for a while and they had me go out to -- it's bringing back a lot of --

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah. Yeah. [Inaudible].

MR. ADLER: They had problems in the cost of producing a movie. The scenery people all charged something like \$60 an hour or something like that and it would cause the background sets to be astronomical in cost. I had suggested that the -- one way to avoid that was to buy up these large paneled rooms, and then some [inaudible] set it up on -- brought a dolly, you know or things so they can put --

MR. CUMMINGS: Move them around.

MR. ADLER: -- [inaudible] on the Georgian Room, which was bought -- I had them buy from the Hearst people.

MR. CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MR. ADLER: They could use sections of it. It may be a palladium motif to be used from a shot for you know entrances to a club or --

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. ADLER: -- [inaudible]. In fact, I think the club in one of the movies had to use one room in about a dozen different places, including the club's bar, you know and all of that.

MR. CUMMINGS: Moving the pieces around.

MR. ADLER: Yeah.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MR. ADLER: It was used in many places.

MR. CUMMINGS: What years were they?

MR. ADLER: Oh, God that was --

MR. CUMMINGS: Roughly would you say?

MR. ADLER: During the Depression.

MR. CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MR. ADLER: The Erschel thing was the most remunerative. That's the -- they were in Oklahoma City then. I had altered their place and they for business reasons and tax reasons decided to move to San Antonio. But they decided they'd like some paintings, and I sold them in 1935 \$1 million worth of paintings in one sitting, at the depth of the Depression. And I wasn't into pictures or paintings --

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MR. ADLER: -- so I knew Howard Young who --

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, yeah. Yeah.

MR. ADLER: -- was -- and we sold a Rembrandt, a Franz Hals, and a famous Gainesville of the Guinness sisters. I think we sold it [inaudible] ago at a record price for Gainsborough.

MR. CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MR. ADLER: So there were a few Reubens and they didn't like those but -- you know \$150,000 for a painting and even the Rembrandt --

MR. CUMMINGS: It was a lot.

MR. ADLER: -- it's quite a price.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MR. ADLER: Today, of course, the same painting is over \$2 million so they go their money's worth.

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, how did you find those people or did they find you or was this just --

MR. ADLER: Well, Dr. Oppenheimer, he's a very knowledgeable man, you know of gothic art. He was the doctor who studied up here in New York but from the San Antonio, the DNA Oppenheimer Bank, the private bank. That was a private bank in the old Texas, formed before Texas became a state.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, yeah.

MR. ADLER: I think it's been 1846 I believe that bank was started. If I'm not mistaken it became a state in '48. And he walked in and I had just [inaudible] and struck up an acquaintance, bought a -- sold him a paneled room, a gothic room, went down to San Antonio and installed it as I did in Chicago for Chester Trip who was also a great collector, of whom I knew from the earlier days and I decided to [inaudible].

MR. CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MR. ADLER: So there were a certain number of people I knew from that part of the business and were a few people, a few carpenters and when I got to San Antonio, oh God, it was all so clannish. I soon got to know practically everybody there.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right. Right.

MR. ADLER: Many people used my services quite a lot down there.

MR. CUMMINGS: You know one thing that interests me are those great panel rooms that everybody was using and you had just mentioned you got some of them from the Hearsts.

MR. ADLER: Well, they had oh, I'd say a couple hundred rooms, including the Hamilton Palace Room, you know, and that sort of stuff.

MR. CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MR. ADLER: Such a great collector; they have their warehouse up on 149th and oh, Southern Boulevard, just an enormous structure there in which they house all these. They even have the cloister stone by stone and that was housed there --

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MR. ADLER: -- went up in a 30 foot ceiling or something like that and they had these crates by the thousands.

MR. CUMMINGS: That's fantastic.

MR. ADLER: Yeah, oh, yes then it was when --

MR. CUMMINGS: Who operated all of that for him?

MR. ADLER: For Hearst?

MR. CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]



MR. ADLER: Well, there was a Mr. Round was one of them and a fellow named McIntyre. It was probably a committee formed to take over these assets. I think he's gone into -- I mean financial difficulty.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, yeah.

MR. ADLER: They were disposing I guess all the international corporations.

MR. CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MR. ADLER: The international studio corporations, you know, they were part -- you know they published all these magazines.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. ADLER: There was a vast collection, you know.

MR. CUMMINGS: So that was marvelous to have all of that available though, wasn't it, in a way?

MR. ADLER: Yes, these are the days that will never come back again because there never was a collection as extensive as that.

MR. CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MR. ADLER: And having had architectural training, you know it was easy for me to see what could be used, what could be adapted and all.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah, right.

MR. ADLER: Which incidentally brings me back to a story. I got to know Mr. Stanford's wife and she wasn't very -- didn't have very happy memories about her husband.

MR. CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MR. ADLER: And she told me when he was doing the Morgan House -- and I could take up days with you [inaudible].

MR. CUMMINGS: Fine. [Laughs.]

MR. ADLER: No, but it's a very --

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah. Yeah.

MR. ADLER: -- interesting thing. She said he used that sort of device and doing the Morgan House he had previously gone to Europe and bought up [inaudible], bought up these paneled copper ceilings --

MR. CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] Right.

MR. ADLER: -- and they would be of a certain size and all, you know. They had these various places that they had demolished and he would design a room [inaudible], and then say, "Well, Morgan what we need for this room here is a copper ceiling. I think I'll take a trip to Italy for you and see if I can't locate a ceiling that's roughly that size and give it that," having the copper ceiling already in the

warehouse in New York. [They laugh.]

And then he cabled Mr. Morgan, "Found just the ceiling you wanted. \$20,000 or what have you. Should I buy it?" and then of course he'd cable back, "By all means." And they waited a reasonable time and out of the warehouse came this perfect ceiling. [They laugh.] But yeah, but this is quite different than -- our storehouse was the Hearst Collection.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, yeah.

MR. ADLER: If you're interested in those -- that phase of it, I bought up American rooms and doorways, and that sort of stuff.

MR. CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MR. ADLER: Even my apartment across the way has elements of that -- that room which I did on the house across the street.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, really?

MR. ADLER: Yeah, so it was a great opportunity. Then along the way I had also met up with -- I met and struck up a very great friendship with Francis Lanigan.

MR. CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MR. ADLER: He did the Williamsburg restoration in Maine. He also had architectural training at English, Burn, Lanigan and Moran headquarters in London. I believe they are part of Buckingham Palace and so yeah.

MR. CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MR. ADLER: And he did a good deal of that -- you know for Williamsburg, so it wasn't an innovative thing. It was those who knew enough about architecture who could use that device.

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, did you --

MR. ADLER: So --

MR. CUMMINGS: Did you find that, you know, there was enough activity through the 30s to keep all this --

MR. ADLER: I made most of my money during the 30s --

MR. CUMMINGS: In the Depression? [Laughs.]

MR. ADLER: -- when everybody was starving

.

MR. CUMMINGS: That's fantastic.

MR. ADLER: Very interesting, yeah.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah. Oh. So the Depression was --

MR. ADLER: I made \$100,000, for instance, on the Erschel sale, 10 percent commission on \$1 million --

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah, right.

MR. ADLER: -- nearly overnight, and all the people in Texas were not affected as much as people here.

MR. CUMMINGS: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

MR. ADLER: And so I did quite a few places there.

MR. CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MR. ADLER: No, it was a very exciting period for me, yeah.

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, that must have been marvelous with a lot of travel and work and --

MR. ADLER: Yeah, well, I was a lot younger.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah, yeah.

MR. ADLER: I'm not interested in making money today, you know.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughs.] Did you have many people working for you or with you at that point?

MR. ADLER: No. No, when I had [inaudible] we had a special shop and all and I was doing the interior and architectural things, but when I went out for myself I always used contract --

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, I see.

MR. ADLER: -- help, you know.

MR. CUMMINGS: So whatever you need -- yeah. Yeah.

MR. ADLER: There were the old firms that -- and one firm that -- I forget their name now -- two Germans who were probably the most skilled workers I'd ever met in my life. I can't recall. And they could do anything. Give them a sketch and they could work out the details themselves and in these period rooms, you know, they're various styles. And then there was a firm of Robinson -- I can't think of who it was. They were on Madison Avenue and they would -- Devine had brought them over here to do the Frick Library and the Frick House and all of that.

MR. CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MR. ADLER: And I got those men and I'd go in when they gave up something like four panel rooms from [inaudible].

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, when you did a panel room for one of these people, would you do the room and the furnishings and the furniture and carpet.

MR. ADLER: Everything.

MR. CUMMINGS: All the way through?

MR. ADLER: All the way through, yes, including the paintings and like that.

MR. CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] Oh, that's fantastic.

MR. ADLER: So I had enough know-how by that time.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah. Yeah. So the paintings came in as a kind of adjunct to the architecture?

MR. ADLER: Well, just it was cut short because otherwise, I couldn't take the --

MR. CUMMINGS: Fine.

MR. ADLER: I couldn't give you the experiences and all you know. I could write a book on them really. I've often thought of that. In this field, you know you get to meet so many --

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. ADLER: -- people and I remember just getting out of the -- when I went out for myself I was very much interested in tapestries and --

MR. CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MR. ADLER: -- gothic and medicine.

MR. CUMMINGS: When did you start your own business then?

MR. ADLER: Well, when I was at Todd Hunter's then of course I broke away from them after a couple of years, and went in for myself at 724 Fifth Avenue, right next to the theater and went along quiet, you know, hugging the boss and all. It's been a happy experience of mine to pair up with various people one place after another, with specialists in my particular field.

One of my earliest ones was with a man by the name of Storer, Rafael Storer [phonetic]. They're an old French firm dealing in gothic and Renaissance art. The Storer's when the 1st World War broke out had to -- no, this would be the 2nd World War -- 2nd World War, had to leave France and the business. And so, didn't have [inaudible] a lot of money and I said [inaudible], and so I would do financing. In the meantime, we bought things together and I got to know a great deal about gothic and Renaissance art.

MR. CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MR. ADLER: And we made some very fortuitous purchases, one of these great [inaudible] in the Cleveland Museum we bought for Mrs. Whitney and she had died out in a house in Long Island. We paid \$75 for that and I wouldn't have paid that much if it weren't for the fact that Mrs. Miller was the -- was sitting right next to me and that's why I noticed it. I said, "Oh, wouldn't that look cute," or whatever the words she would use, "on a fireplace shelf." But anyway, I bought it for \$75. We sold it to Cleveland I think for \$10,000.

But two days later I met [inaudible], you know, you know him.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, yeah.

MR. ADLER: And I said, "I hear you sold a head of Borobudur." That's an island in Java. Are you familiar with Borobudur? That's the temple where --

MR. CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MR. ADLER: -- these heads, you know, "What did you get for it? Do you mind telling me?" I said, "Yeah, \$10,000." He said, "You're an idiot," he said, "CT Lou had one there for \$20,000 with a broken head and they were about to buy it but you offered yours." I said, "I'm still very happy." [They laugh.] I think I recalled that story to Sherman Lee not long ago.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah. Well --

MR. ADLER: Well, anyway --

MR. CUMMINGS: I think it's fascinating that all this -- you know that during the Depression when all of this was happening --

MR. ADLER: Yeah, yeah.

MR. CUMMINGS: -- that you were doing so much business. Now, one thing that also intrigues me is because that was also the end of the period where people did these large rooms with all of this. I mean it's not done so frequently anymore.

MR. ADLER: Well, that's why I suppose that Texas would be a very natural place. These people made their fortunes without any real effort in the sense that it came out of the ground.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MR. ADLER: The Erschel family -- actually the Slick family, the great wildcat of Oklahoma --

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. ADLER: -- they opened up the Fresh Fields there and Mr. Slick died, and his [inaudible] -- was good man Friday was the Erschel, Charles Erschel, and then when Charles Erschel's wife died, five weeks to be married to Mr. Erschel.

MR. CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MR. ADLER: And Mrs. Slick and Mr. Erschel so they're the combined --

MR. CUMMINGS: My that was --

MR. ADLER: Now that ran into a couple of hundred million dollars, the [inaudible] Slick of the family and Erol Slick of the Slick Airways and all. I have -- I found that in my place that was founded in --

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, really?

MR. ADLER: Yeah.

MR. CUMMINGS: And -- and how did that happen?

MR. ADLER: Now realize at that time it was 595 Madison Avenue, corner of 56th and Madison. It's now at 724 and expanded just to -- no, there were places, large places. The Erschels built an enormous house in San Antonio. The ceilings and the -- the ceilings were [inaudible], built the house there. I think that they probably paid no more than \$85 to \$100 thousand to build this house, which today would cost a couple of million dollars.

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, [inaudible].

MR. ADLER: They always take advantage --

MR. CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MR. ADLER: -- of the time --

MR. CUMMINGS: No.

MR. ADLER: -- and the cost.

MR. CUMMINGS: And they have the money, so they really got their money's worth.

MR. ADLER: Enormous, these -- even the furniture, you know since you'd do an English room, a Elizabethan room or Jacobian room, you'd like nice oak furniture and all of, you know, the period and heck, sold them tables for \$80, \$75 which cost you know [inaudible], and today they're so rare that you'll pay thousands of dollars. So these people really got the -- when the Erschel stuff was sold I was away at the time. I hadn't seen them for a few years.

The [inaudible] sold it down in San Antonio. Everything was double their estimate but the -- their estimate was far, far beyond what the actual cost was in those days. It -- there were very happy, a lot of people. [They laugh.]

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, have you had pictures come back to you that you had sold say, in the 30s and --

MR. ADLER: Well --

MR. CUMMINGS: -- before that come through again?

MR. ADLER: No, no, no. Most of the things, for instance the Oppenheimer things, I sold him great [inaudible], better than this one here which is about \$140-150 thousand. I sold them for \$3,500. Sold them to [inaudible] for you know the *Route to Versailles* which was part of the thing and I bought it for him for \$4,000 off of the [inaudible] in those days. So no, those paintings would find their way into the museums and things up there.

MR. CUMMINGS: So they disappeared from the market?

MR. ADLER: Yeah, from my getting them back again.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MR. ADLER: Well, anyway, let's jump way ahead now to late 50s.

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, but before we go so far --

MR. ADLER: Fine. I've --

MR. CUMMINGS: -- you were at the Institute of Fine Arts at one time?

MR. ADLER: I registered there. I thought I'd give up work and teach.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, really? When did that --

MR. ADLER: Oh, back during the Depression but again, a company very friendly with Walter Cook, you know the head of the institute -- this is the institute started you know, Bobby Lieman and a group of people. In order to bring over refugees --

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. ADLER: -- with professors and raise the level of our scholarships here.

MR. CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MR. ADLER: Oh, I know Mohada Kingbush [phonetic], the great armor collector and became very friendly with him and then with -- oh, what is my dear friend's name? He is president of the armored club. He has a -- Douglas, George Douglas. He took courses with me. He's an elderly man who took courses at the institute --

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, really? Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MR. ADLER: -- right after it was started and I got to know him quite well. Met Mohada Kingbush and we -- I raised some money for the institute and all of that sort of thing. So at any rate, I thought I'd give up the commercial end of it and get my doctorate and I worked for a bit of time, but I found that my children were growing up, and prices increased, and it wasn't that easy to give up.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. ADLER: You know their demands are increasing all the time, so I -- yeah, so I just took haphazard courses and didn't do any organized way. Yeah. But it was great fun. I got to know all the people at the courses and after at the Martin Library. I took all his sculpture courses, the history of sculpture and Walter Cook, his seminar on Spanish painting. [Inaudible]. It was a sort of, you know, hit and miss thing [inaudible], but it's always accumulating.

MR. CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MR. ADLER: And then during this period, I accumulated a great library of over 10,000 art books. It's one of the very important libraries. I kept it across the street there and they these are just new books.

MR. CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MR. ADLER: I gave the whole library to the Jerusalem Museum.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, when did you do that?

MR. ADLER: For one reason --

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh?

MR. ADLER: -- I meant to keep them until my death because you know it's an asset to the business.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. ADLER: But Axel Spring had given them \$1 million to build a library onto the entrance building

to the museum and they had very few books. I had gone for the first time [inaudible] at that time and was very much taken with it. And Carl Katz --

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, yeah, right.

MR. ADLER: -- was then director of the museum. During this time also I became involved with the UJA.

MR. CUMMINGS: This is more recent though?

MR. ADLER: Oh, this further goes back --

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, really?

MR. ADLER: -- almost 18 years.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah, but --

MR. ADLER: I mean that about -- I had been involved in the UJA.

MR. CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MR. ADLER: I'm chairman of the art division. I haven't got any kind things to say about on the art division.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughs.]

MR. ADLER: They are [inaudible] when it comes to charity that I know of.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughs.]

MR. ADLER: At any rate, I ran an auction for the UJA and raised about oh, \$300,000 at that auction [inaudible]. And when I got to Jerusalem, Carl Katz berated me, "A lot of these paintings should have been given to the museum," you know and I said, "Well, survival in my opinion is much more important than your having a few more paintings."

MR. CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MR. ADLER: But at any rate, my wife looked at me and I at her and I said, "But I'll tell you what I'll do is after my death I'll give you my library."

MR. CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MR. ADLER: So that's how that came about. And then when they got this new building that [inaudible] they gave them, but -- yeah, that put some pressure on me and I succumbed and sent the whole library down there.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, that's fantastic.

MR. ADLER: Yeah, also had probably 10,000 art catalogs, which I gave them as well.

MR. CUMMINGS: Plus the books, yeah.



MR. ADLER: Yeah.

MR. CUMMINGS: That would be expensive to rebuild that today.

MR. ADLER: Yeah, yeah. Well, I've been you know doing a lot of that and I've -- that's all filled with books and the other room is filled, too which I'll get perhaps a little smaller one. I have given a lot of paintings to Morgan State and the colored college.

MR. CUMMINGS: How did that come about?

MR. ADLER: -- [inaudible].

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MR. ADLER: What?

MR. CUMMINGS: How did that come about?

MR. ADLER: Well, I met James Lewis who is one of the professors there and they also had a new building that was given to them and 32 paintings. I did that in connection with the gallery [inaudible].

MR. CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MR. ADLER: But we gave them about 35 paintings of each period, one of each, you know, school painting and all; give them a little study sort of collection, nothing great, but they're --

MR. CUMMINGS: A start, yeah.

MR. ADLER: -- still a collection.

MR. CUMMINGS: That was terrific.

MR. ADLER: Yeah, and then I came honored by Amherst when Bob McIntyre died, and he suggested before his death that they have me as their advisor, and I got to know Charlie Morgan.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, yes.

MR. ADLER: He [inaudible] museum very long and we became good friends, and so he convinced me to giving a lot of things to Amherst.

MR. CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MR. ADLER: Associations always build up --

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, one after another, yeah.

MR. ADLER: -- [inaudible], but that's almost like the flow of water, you know. Whatever level you accommodated to them, that's the -- good morning.

MR. CUMMINGS: It goes on.

MR. ADLER: Yeah.

MR. CUMMINGS: One thing that interests me is -- you know again, all the activities in the 30s, you

really were not interested in dealing in pictures then, were you? I mean it was mostly --

MR. ADLER: Well, frankly it was the Erschel sale, about a million dollars worth of paintings, and getting \$100,000 seemed like an awfully good idea.

MR. CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MR. ADLER: And that's when I got hold of Herschel, who was then working for John Leavy, not doing very well. He owed money to everybody under the sun and I doubt if he would make anymore than \$100 a week off of his net, so and that sort of stuff. Yeah. And I suggested to him my present premises, which is 270 Park Avenue, we'd start a subsidiary business that would be the paintings. And I called it Herschel and Adler, rather than Adler and Herschel because most of my income was A.M. Adler Antiquarian --

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, right.

MR. ADLER: -- and I didn't want any confusion --

MR. CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MR. ADLER: -- so I reversed the names. I was president of it and stuff, all the capital, and paid his salary for two years, helped him clean up his debts and all of that. Well, that's a long bitter story after that.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MR. ADLER: But I try to avoid that. It's --

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah. Now, when did that start though?

MR. ADLER: Well, that was past the Depression. That started I think about '53, in 1953.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah. Well, but there are a lot of things that happened in '53.

MR. ADLER: Oh, yes. Yeah.

MR. CUMMINGS: How did you find the advent of World War II? Did this affect people putting rooms on and [inaudible]?

MR. ADLER: I was at that time just actually out for myself and I was on a train going to Denver when we heard that -- about Pearl Harbor and when I got to Denver in the client's house, the new client that I was selling things to, tapestries, she was fairly odd. I do forget her name at the moment. But they were bankers in Denver. We both sat down and listened to Roosevelt addressing Congress asking for a declaration of war against Japan.

MR. CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MR. ADLER: So I was in the early stages doing business, you know in the war then. But that already was in the 40s.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah, how --

MR. ADLER: We had already gotten out of the Depression up to a point by supplying arms to

Europe and the war had already started there, you see.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right. So how did that affect your business? I mean did it slow things down or --

MR. ADLER: Don't forget, I had had money already, you know by that time. I certainly had \$100,000 in '35 and very little taxes in those days.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. ADLER: But as I said, did business in Texas and all. I would go to Europe and did some buying. I went there in 1938 to buy and it was on the last trip of the Normandie by the way.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, really? Yeah, yeah.

MR. ADLER: That was when they were calling it remote -- you know keep the mobilization and all. And no, I had no troubles doing business. I did it with the -- oh, it was a lot of the Texans and most of my business was in Texas. They didn't seem to be affected so I had this constant flow of business with all of them.

MR. CUMMINGS: How long could you draw on the Hearst Warehouse? How many years did you buy things from them?

MR. ADLER: Oh, that was not the only place. I'll give you one great example. There was a -- one of the Rockefellers in Greenwich, they had a sale, the newly formed Park Bennett, which started at the corner of 57th and Fifth Avenue where the tailored women went.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, right.

MR. ADLER: That was their first headquarters. I remember buying a credenza, custom credenza oh, about eight feet long, one of the purest pieces of furniture I ever saw; lion feet you know and just a marvelous piece. I paid \$300 for it. No one wanted it at any price. I sold it for \$3,000 and years later it was worth \$25,000.

MR. CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MR. ADLER: So that has been the history of American art anyway, which is a wide swing of your pendulum --

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. ADLER: -- either you can't get enough for it or you can't get anything for it. And that's --

MR. CUMMINGS: Nothing in the middle, yeah.

MR. ADLER: -- the way that it is; nothing in the middle.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah. Well, did you start handling work by Americans or were you mainly involved with European art?

MR. ADLER: I was involved in every form. I've always been interested in aesthetics and I can find those aesthetic qualities in about anything that's quality.

MR. CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MR. ADLER: So I never cared particularly. I -- when I was at 724 Fifth Avenue I once tried an experiment. I had some very large space. I did a room in which I involved every style that I knew and everything, you know every period that I had, and how homogenous that room was. It had everything: gothic, Renaissance, Art Nouveau, French 18th century, English 17th century, oak. It embraced everything. It had tapestries and paintings.

MR. CUMMINGS: Do you have photographs of any of those things, records or --

MR. ADLER: No, I somewhere along I have some photographs. When I [inaudible] out across the street I lost a lot of that material.

MR. CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MR. ADLER: It wasn't a very friendly thing, but anyway. I don't have much. A lot was thrown out. I didn't have the space anymore coming here.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right. Hmm, but you know during the war you obviously couldn't go on buying trips or anything, so you had to use what was --

MR. ADLER: Well, it became necessary to buy only here after '38. I didn't take another trip until right after the war in '47 or whenever it was. There were a lot of good sales here. Don't forget there was the Christian Homes sales, the Spurns [phonetic] sale. A lot of the Hearst material was sold over here.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. ADLER: And the [inaudible], this [inaudible] art that they had and all this great stuff there. There was more than enough to buy here.

MR. CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MR. ADLER: But the competition stiffened a bit because we had a great influx of European dealers.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. ADLER: Up until then I would say Star, myself, and Brommer were about the only ones that knew much about gothic or Renaissance art and it was easy. But as the dealers came in, fled from Europe, they offered a lot more competition.

MR. CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MR. ADLER: And one of the greatest [inaudible] of all was the Baron Kessel, who bought millions of dollars worth of things at the auction and he bought it mainly to the European dealers that he had known previously. And so where -- and I sold a lot to Baron Kessel and so did many others.

MR. CUMMINGS: What was he doing with things?

MR. ADLER: He bought this house right across the river here in Englewood. It was sort of a chateau kind of thing. He was a banker in Belgium and came here with all of his money in tact.

MR. CUMMINGS: Wonderful.

MR. ADLER: I remember selling him a pair of Druet's and I had gone on a trip and my wife worked out

the details. He gave her two \$10,000 bills and he said, "That's all. You go down into the bank house and pay the owners of the painting." And that was the famous estate there. And these bills are registered with the Treasury Department. Have no fear.

MR. CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MR. ADLER: But she was afraid to go and ask somebody to go and to the deposit to the -- out of the Hague or whatever it was. [Laughs.] But a number of these people came with a great deal of money and these various dealers who did very well.

MR. CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] Would you buy things for stock or would you buy them [inaudible] --

MR. ADLER: I would buy various stock or buy it -- buy knew the way I like it so --

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MR. ADLER: -- [inaudible]. I mean --

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MR. ADLER: Later on I merged -- bought out Kirkham of Kirkham and Hall.

MR. CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MR. ADLER: Which was an old firm. Kirkham was -- Bill Kirkham was an Englishman and Hall, Glen Hall had been an opera singer. He had -- I think they lived out in Greenwich, and yeah. And I bought out Kirkham. He wanted to go back to England so I have his firm, but we call it -- still call it Kirkham and Hall. And they used to be on Madison and then we went on to Park Avenue between 58th and 59th. I think that's what we did. We had a large place there. But Glen, I think he's gone as well. He's quite a drinker and all, and just nothing at all and we split up that.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah, yeah. Was there much dealing with other dealers around the country or there weren't many?

MR. ADLER: Well, it was very interesting because the people that I -- the dealers that I could do business with were -- well, one name I will not mention because he's one of our great citizens, one of our great philanthropists, but I'll leave him out, but horrible in those days; terribly dishonest and all.

MR. CUMMINGS: Hmm?

MR. ADLER: But they were mostly European who were dealing with the area of things and their ethical code was not as rigid, let's say, as ours would be. And so when someone I gave something to the dealer to sell and we agreed on a price in terms of what we could get for it, come back and say, "Oh, I can't get that. I can only get this much and I need the business so badly and all," and you would actually give it to him at cost. And then later you would find that they sold it for about three or four times what you asked for it, so I stopped -- started being so rigid and not doing business with these people. And then at the end of a period of time I realized there was nobody to do business with. So you had to relax your standards and just keep your own nose clean while I let them do them do what they would.

MR. CUMMINGS: Did you do any business with dealers say in Boston or Chicago or Philadelphia or

places like that, or weren't out there very much?

MR. ADLER: Yes, yeah, yeah. Basically I would go to buy.

MR. CUMMINGS: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

MR. ADLER: I would go to -- I'm in Philadelphia quite often. One man had an early Florentine [inaudible] piece, 15th century. You knew a little more about these things than they did and so you would buy and buy things. Then by that time, there were other European dealers who were good.

MR. CUMMINGS: Hmm, right.

MR. ADLER: You could resell to them and like Baron Kessel and there are others like him with their purposes. So that was a pretty good business during that time. Now, paintings were always included in this and not that I hadn't handled many paintings before. I always bought paintings.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MR. ADLER: There were sales all over and you could -- we went to so many of them, to various estates.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. ADLER: I have pieces of furniture upstairs in our apartment [inaudible] cupboards, credence tables. They're very, very rare and I have a clock. The William and Mary clock, tall case clock with the [inaudible]. I think in these instances I paid \$75 for these. They're worth thousands.

MR. CUMMINGS: Now you can hardly find those.

MR. ADLER: Can't find them because nobody thought anything about an old piece of furniture. That was looked at with disdain. Or a William and Mary clock, who wanted that?

MR. CUMMINGS: What do you think causes the shifts in taste like that?

MR. ADLER: Well, what I was saying the influx of the European dealers and with them some of their clients came here before.

MR. CUMMINGS: Uh-huh, right.

MR. ADLER: A lot remained. For instance, the Rosenberg and Steeple --

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. ADLER: They I would say had their origins here in America. They were a firm -- they're not known abroad --

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. ADLER: -- because they had the Rothschild collection to sell and there suddenly you had pieces of consummate quality offered on the market, taste increased, the [inaudible]. A man like Jack Linsky is not generally known.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. ADLER: I remember meeting him in about 1929 or so buying things. He was financing French and Company in those days. But he had a slim line business and doing quite well. And [inaudible] buying tapestries in Paris for French and Company. The next time I met him he was in Baltimore at the swap -- what's that great collector in Philadelphia? Stotesbury.

MR. CUMMINGS: Stotesbury, yeah.

MR. ADLER: And he bought a Meisson figurine for I think \$3,000. This was in the depth of the Depression. It was just unbelievable. So there you are. You were getting a new group of people, very discriminating, had the means to indulge in it, and then you get competition.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, right.

MR. ADLER: I remember when we first went into business with Herschel, I insisted on buying the best American things we could find.

MR. CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MR. ADLER: And all these people like Harold Milch and Crasher thought I was a villain, in asking prices that I did, and I tried to point out the mechanics of that. For instance, a Hassen, I had old documents and all showing that when Durand-Ruel represented him they had prices that were far, far more than we were asking now so that -- and they raised the level for everybody, and that's what competition does. It brings a vogue to things because more people having it, you know, that's -- they begin to say, "This must be a good thing," and in competing and buying at market and auctions and things like that --

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, right.

MR. ADLER: -- it brings inflation.

MR. CUMMINGS: Now even back in say the 30s and say the 40s, there were not very many magazines devoted to decorative art and fine art. Were they of any use to you, the ones that did exist?

MR. ADLER: Oh, yes. Yes, they were -- those are the sales sheets really.

MR. CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MR. ADLER: I think you'd be far more interested in [inaudible]. Incidentally, I want to tell you something about things like this.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, yeah, the Antiquarian.

MR. ADLER: Oh, yes. I do want to show you a drawing that I did for an ad for this firm.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, I see.

MR. ADLER: But I did the -- how stupid I am. Look at the time I spent on the drawing would you?

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, yeah. That's what, page 63 of the Antiquarian for December of 1929.

MR. ADLER: Yeah.

MR. CUMMINGS: How fantastic.

MR. ADLER: Who would ever take the time to do a thing like that? Practically up all night doing that work.

MR. CUMMINGS: It's marvelous. Well, but they were useful. I mean this was a useful --

MR. ADLER: It's useful because it is. If I was looking for a tapestry and saw that ad there --

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. ADLER: -- and saw the size and said, "My God, I can use that on this and that."

MR. CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MR. ADLER: So there is a great deal of advertising and practically everybody did.

MR. CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MR. ADLER: Now this -- so to this day Apollo and --

MR. CUMMINGS: Antiques connoisseurs?

MR. ADLER: Yeah, there you go, the connoisseurs. Dealers all get them. They constitute the bulk of the subscribers because they have things think that get their attention.

MR. CUMMINGS: They are looking for.

MR. ADLER: Yeah.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah, but you didn't do exhibitions or anything like that, did you in the early days, in the 30s?

MR. ADLER: We did when I started Herschel and Adler in '75.

MR. CUMMINGS: But before that, I mean?

MR. ADLER: No, no. No, there was no need, no need at all to do it.

MR. CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MR. ADLER: I don't think there were very many dealers that had exhibitions of anything other than paintings.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. ADLER: There were these exhibitions held by the art dealers, the various art associations. You know they first started I think in the old Madison Square Garden, in the first of those, which all the dealers did like the east side housing thing.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right. Oh, yeah, right.

MR. ADLER: Well, they did that in the Madison Square Garden and they went to great dealers, Charles of London for --



MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, yeah.

MR. ADLER: -- would put up a whole paneled room, set it up completely with the furnishings and all with the ceiling and all of that business. They put out thousands of dollars. It was sort of a trustee -

MR. CUMMINGS: Would you find clients through those?

MR. ADLER: Oh, yeah.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah, I mean they knew they could come and see a lot of people's things.

MR. ADLER: Oh, yeah. Yeah.

[END OF TAPE 1.]

MR. CUMMINGS: Side 2. But we were talking just momentarily ago about the exhibitions the dealers would organize. When did that start, would you say?

MR. ADLER: Well, that started perhaps in the 20s.

MR. CUMMINGS: Uh-huh?

MR. ADLER: Oh, yeah. They were doing very well and business was very good and there were a lot of people. The business was quite different than now.

MR. CUMMINGS: In what way?

MR. ADLER: Well, just take some of the dealers, Charles of London, specialist in early interiors, basically you know paneled rooms and all of that. You had Eddie Farmer who was specialized in lamps, the greatest lamps, using -- very important you know to -- well, today would be very important, jades and those [inaudible] and whatnot. You had -- well, let's go through some of these people here. You can see the list.

MR. CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MR. ADLER: For one thing, the style was towards earlier things. Those -- then simultaneously this was the development of Florida --

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh.

MR. ADLER: -- Mice [phonetic] and those people --

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, yeah, right.

MR. ADLER: -- were building these enormous homes, you know, for extremely wealthy people. So there were homes with basically Spanish -- Spanish Renaissance, Rococo [inaudible].

MR. CUMMINGS: No.

MR. ADLER: And therefore the furnishings were in that direction.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, right.

MR. ADLER: Generally speaking, you had earlier forms of art, not that there were collector's items or anything like that but the style was --

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. ADLER: -- that way. So and they were easy to understand. You go through that compare with today's things, you don't see anybody advertising a gothic chest --

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. ADLER: -- and tapestries. You don't see that advertised anymore. Even your paintings, you notice the style really of paintings -- look at that.

MR. CUMMINGS: But do you think that's partly because of taste or partly because of --

MR. ADLER: Oh, yeah this is -- this -- you know this will probably give you a better idea. Here, Antiques Exposition at the Statler Hotel --

MR. CUMMINGS: In Boston?

MR. ADLER: -- in Boston.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. ADLER: While they have them today, there are much more extensive exhibitions and so much more was spent on them.

MR. CUMMINGS: But do you think because a lot of those paintings and the decorative arts have gone into public collections that there isn't enough to make markets in or has the taste shifted so much?

MR. ADLER: Well, of course, as time goes by in every field there's going to be a shortage.

MR. CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MR. ADLER: It's inevitable. The collection stays in the museums --

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. ADLER: -- and never taken out they won't be shown again. And then the other factor is the tax situation.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. ADLER: You cannot afford to hold onto the objects of art.

MR. CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MR. ADLER: Henry Pearlman just died --

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. ADLER: He -- what did he have, about 30 Cézanne's in all.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, incredible.

MR. ADLER: His wife Rose can't in any way hold onto these things. They've got to go either to an institute and -- or she's got to raise enough cash to meet the government's appraisal of an estate like that --

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. ADLER: -- which could run into quite a few millions of dollars.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, wow.

MR. ADLER: They can't do it. The Backlin collection, they've got to sell their things. They paid very little for their paintings, but --

MR. CUMMINGS: Right depreciation.

MR. ADLER: -- what the value is today. I've been consulted by the government many times to go up and look at people's remains, as it were and some of the appraisals were idiotic. In fairness I had to say these are under valued. So that you either have to give it away or just throw it on the auction block and every time you do that you've got a collection that's dissipated.

MR. CUMMINGS: Do you still buy from auctions? Do you still find that they --

MR. ADLER: Oh, now I don't do much of that.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MR. ADLER: I devote most of my time now to charitable enterprises. We do just -- my daughter really owns this business. We do a certain amount, you know, to make her a little happy but I get no salary or anything. I sold things across the street, you know, a few million dollars and paying out over a number of years, so that is the income and capital and --

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. ADLER: -- devote it to good works.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MR. ADLER: You approach 74 I'm not going to take a damn -- realize I'm not going to take a damn thing with me. I might as well devote it to good works. No, we -- I do a great deal of that now.

MR. CUMMINGS: But you know one of the things that interests me, and I guess is apparent in the magazine, is the great shift in pay, you know, and I think also the enormous new number of dealers.

MR. ADLER: Yeah, well, in the earlier days you had very narrow base to work on. There was comparatively a handful of collectors. There were even more in the [inaudible] crowd, you know, various department store people. They were the people that were used to handling [inaudible].

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. ADLER: But it was a very small group of people who did the buying. Then there's -- our prosperity expanded and you had more rich people, you did a much greater base, and then I think

the influx of European dealers, Europeans into American life also stimulated interest in art. It's almost a necessary part for a rich man in Europe to have an art collection.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MR. ADLER: It was always only monies that they could get out of profits out of extra monies that they earned, whereas in Europe they would take capital and bonds.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. ADLER: And that's a fundamental change. Here people will sell stocks today to buy a great object of art, but they never did before.

MR. CUMMINGS: When did that start?

MR. ADLER: [Inaudible] would you spend money. I would think the whole big change in American art tastes came with the influx of the -- the beginning of the 2nd World War. I think art tastes changed. I think the educational system changed. Art is now included in all schools, you know art courses and art majors in colleges and are multiplying. There were few before, now they're very vast. It's a growing up. We've been growing up with the people.

MR. CUMMINGS: Do you see that reflected in the market then, the increased number of educated people who --

MR. ADLER: Well, don't -- oh, yes, of course, but don't forget now that you have a limited amount of material that's being offered. True, that you think that there is a sale and there's millions of, you know art that's sold. But what are the objects?

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. ADLER: When Newman started including Art Nouveau, Art Deco and all of that as part of the art scene, of course you've expanded the amount of material available, but in the old days, these were things you laughed at.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, yeah.

MR. ADLER: Galle glass, Tiffany glass, we laughed at those things. They were just, you know, what - - how can you compare that with a great piece of Roman glass or a Persian vase of glass or that --

MR. CUMMINGS: But don't you think you also -- you can't buy the Persian things today --

MR. ADLER: Well, that's what I say.

MR. CUMMINGS: -- as you would then?

MR. ADLER: Those are practically gone.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MR. ADLER: Those markets are gone.

MR. CUMMINGS: So people look for something else?

MR. ADLER: So they always expand to a new design and those who feel they are jumping on a bandwagon by buying it.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MR. ADLER: I think the same thing of art, paintings. There are those who follow the latest artists, art dealers that have them, sponsor them. They feel like they're getting in on the ground floor or something, and they have in many instances. Well, and Jackson Pollock would be an example of those who followed the trends.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. ADLER: Heller was very -- you know a great deal of [inaudible]. There is always exploring a new phase, eastern art was there -- the -- that important ally, but here they're tapping on entirely new --

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, right.

MR. ADLER: -- source of things and before you know it, prices are very high. And Chinese art, porcelain -- I have porcelain upstairs. I give them way -- used to give them away as gifts, little vases and things like that, [inaudible] pieces, little -- some plate you'd pay just a few dollars for -- in the Depression for these things. Today they've gone up to thousands of dollars.

MR. CUMMINGS: Like the Ming pieces.

MR. ADLER: Yeah, oh, I have this little Tang bowls I used to have, some with covers and some just regular bowls. And some friends or some people would come in, interested in art and had a young child with them, I'd say, "Here, take that and start an art collection." So I have hundreds of these things and I paid \$5 for each of them.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MR. ADLER: The Barye-- not the -- yes, the Barye bronzes, we used to buy -- when we'd go to Europe every year with the children and we'd want to bring gifts to our family and all of that. I used to buy Barye bronzes oh, anywhere from \$10 to \$15 at the flea market and any number of them, and we'd come back and instead of giving somebody a stupid little things of perfume, we'd say, "Here's a little bronze."

MR. CUMMINGS: Wonderful. [Laughs.]

MR. ADLER: So you see how --

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MR. ADLER: -- I thought so little of these things. They were considered, unless it was Renaissance or gothic or -- it was trash.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, right, right. Well, what was the influence of you know the big art critics who wrote about things, like you know Berenson [phonetic] published a book? Would you see a reflection of that influence in art trends?

MR. ADLER: No, because what Berenson discussed paintings, Renaissance paintings, which in those days ran into many thousands of dollars and there you had a limited market per se.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, right.

MR. ADLER: In other words their influence was the -- I studied with [inaudible], you know, and he was disdainful even of Berenson techniques and study. He did this office of Florentine paintings, which you analyze ad nauseam the eye or the arm or the hand and things like that. Yeah.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, yeah.

MR. ADLER: Scholarship improved enormously since. You'd get the earlier books on Vermalis [phonetic] books or the Venturi *Storia dell'arte italiana* you know.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. ADLER: That's not looked on with very great favor. Valentiner's *Rembrandt's in America* --

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, right.

MR. ADLER: -- is almost a discredited book today because you get along -- Gerson comes along and says that half these paintings are not by Rembrandt. So I think you are getting greater reader scholarship now than you did ever before.

MR. CUMMINGS: Do you find that useful in terms of the market influences?

MR. ADLER: Yeah, in fact, it's a necessary thing. I wouldn't dare sell an important painting for a large sum of money without being sure that it meets with the approval of the latest --

MR. CUMMINGS: Scholarly journal?

MR. ADLER: -- responsible scholar.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MR. ADLER: And even then you're stuck. I don't want to go into it, but I'm having some difficulty about an object of art. Before buying it I had it examined in our foremost laboratory and they say, "It's okay. Buy it." I bought it, paid for it right after they said that -- the conditions on the --

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. ADLER: I don't sell anything out of my house but this man came along and wanted one of my -- that object and I said, "Well, it's all right. I've known him and I've had quite a few affairs with him." He gave me \$25,000. I gave the \$25,000 immediately to charities because I got it fairly reasonably. And I put down on this little bill that I gave him that it was examined by this and this lab, and he was going up in that direction and he took it in there. They apparently overlooked it and said they had their record of this and said it was a fake. The very people that I depended on --

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. ADLER: -- so you see there is a how do I say, a chancy situation at all times.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah, right.

MR. ADLER: There are Rembrandts that I told you I sold in 1935 in Valentiner's article, you know *Rembrandt's in America*. It's in [inaudible]. It's all over there. It is now considered by one of the

students and instead of being worth over \$2 million, I doubt if he'd get \$75,000 for it. That's because Gerson came along and said it was not a Rembrandt and then he also said half the Rembrandts in the Metropolitan are no longer [inaudible]. So there is no absolute quality and yet, unfortunately, the market is predicated on the resale value of something.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, right.

MR. ADLER: It's become an investment big time thing. In the old days a collector bought because he liked it and wanted it, and it didn't make too much difference. He never thought in terms of reselling. Today, people buy with that in mind.

MR. CUMMINGS: Keeping them three, four, five, ten years, sure.

MR. ADLER: Yeah. I think they're --

MR. CUMMINGS: What do you think of the --

MR. ADLER: They're the toughest sellers, too. They say, "I don't need the money."

MR. CUMMINGS: Right. That's right.

MR. ADLER: I don't have to sell it.

MR. CUMMINGS: They wait for their price. What do you think of that now with quote "collectors", you know becoming desperate?

MR. ADLER: Well, I see this as very -- as a disquieting element now. A lot of people -- well, it started like with Sidney Janis and all. They were in all the different fields, and shirts or whatever they say he was in. He -- very good mind, good businessman, and he sees a good thing in something, studies a bit, and suddenly it's a dealer and probably a better dealer than the other less aggressive dealer who [inaudible] all his life would be. I know a recent case of a man who was in sort of -- some merchandizing. He decided that art was a good thing and he starts buying one of these -- buying a package.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah, right.

MR. ADLER: He's buying a Renoir and perhaps a Reule, another painting, and he bought the package.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. ADLER: And then he takes a plane and goes out to Europe seeing if he can't sell it abroad. So it's -- that's changes. They're not qualified as far as art training is concerned.

MR. CUMMINGS: Do you think that has affected the prices of things?

MR. ADLER: Oh, of course. You know --

MR. CUMMINGS: The fact that all this money is --

MR. ADLER: I remember being at the -- at a sale, sitting right back of Henry Ford II, you know the -- what is it, the 2nd, and he bought his wife a Renoir. What was that first grade sale in -- it was the first of the big sales at the department -- at -- at any rate, he bought this Renoir and he was a

successful bidder, \$200,000, the one outdoor scene with the hothouse and --

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, yeah, yeah, right.

MR. ADLER: -- and he turned around and said, "Thank you, dear," you know it was a great, you know, sentimental thing.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MR. ADLER: Look how far that's going. That same picture's worth \$1 million at least today and why? Because it's become a commercial auction. There is no collection that people won't buy to resell [inaudible].

MR. CUMMINGS: No.

MR. ADLER: It's -- they think of it in terms that way and that's why I suppose they're so awfully careful about getting profit on these things, guarantees, and --

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, mm-hmm.

MR. ADLER: I would say there is less of a love of it, more thinking it's the monetary value of everything.

MR. CUMMINGS: What do you think of the proliferation of all the art tip sheets, you know with art market ideas and this and that?

MR. ADLER: Well, what about the stock markets, look what you have there.

MR. CUMMINGS: It's the same thing.

MR. ADLER: The same reports and all this and --

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. ADLER: -- and whatnot, so it's the same thing. It shows that it's become a larger business and more -- there was this man who advised people some years ago about buying gold, buying art. You've heard of that fellow?

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, yeah, right. Right.

MR. ADLER: [Inaudible] his name and he said he would charge \$100 for a lecture or whatever to the in people and they included art now as they hedge against inflation and whatnot; just commission today.

MR. CUMMINGS: Have you found though that European pictures are going to Europe now or are they still coming here?

MR. ADLER: Well, depending on the economic situation. Now Spain is having a great flurry of economic affluence and they consequently were buying like mad here. Any Sorolla they can put their hands on, it could be sold instantly there. As a group I keep tab of Spanish artists. I come across one of these, would I please get in touch with this man here. He's interested in buying artists here. And this is also the same with my fellow from South America.



MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, my, yes.

MR. ADLER: See the names. Any of these artists, they have instant clients for all of them. So that you -- I sold a very important Spanish painter -- painting as an agent without ever having seen the painting. I bought them through a museum man and we'd talk about some of these and he says, "Do you know anybody who might be interested in something like this?" "Yeah, I do."

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MR. ADLER: I said, "Hold it now, what do you want for it and all?" I called Spain and he says, "Oh, yes, I know this painting. Now how can I get the money? We have to get a permit from the government and it will take some weeks. I'll give you \$5,000 extra if you can do the financing for me and get the painting. Within 12 hours the painting was purchased and paid for and arrangements made for it to go to Spain.

MR. CUMMINGS: Wow, that's fantastic.

MR. ADLER: It's unbelievable.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MR. ADLER: But this is what I thought that depending on the country's prosperity, you know state of finance at any given time is -- Italy had an enormous Renaissance and purchasing old art.

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, they always want things of their own country.

MR. ADLER: They follow their own country. They're chauvinistic manifestations.

MR. CUMMINGS: And what about South America, what you were just saying that --

MR. ADLER: I knew Mussolini by the way. The great art they wanted was the 19th century Italian art and [inaudible] and you know [inaudible] and all of those people there. Under this regime we'd buy this -- they want the earlier Italian art. Incidentally, tied up with that there's an insecurity on the part of these various countries, the people in these countries, as to the worth of their own money and I think the purchase of art is done while they can still find their currency interchangeable.

MR. CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm, oh, I understand.

MR. ADLER: And they would rather have a work of art than their currency. So if you find that where there is great prosperity there is also fear about how long that's going to --

MR. CUMMINGS: How long it might --

MR. ADLER: -- last.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MR. ADLER: Yeah, it's a great hedge for them.

MR. CUMMINGS: I often wonder if --

MR. ADLER: No, it's become a commodity. You might as well trade it on the stock market.

MR. CUMMINGS: You mean Rembrandt's up today four points or something.

MR. ADLER: Yeah, depending on the trends of things. And certain painters see trends. You will find that one period -- within a given school and I'm not talking about different periods, but the Barbizon school maybe going down and the Impressionist school is going up. It's just that within the Impressionist school there is still activity.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, right.

MR. ADLER: And people are just suddenly looking for Renoirs and not for Pissarro and not [inaudible]. It just goes --

MR. CUMMINGS: What do you think provokes those?

MR. ADLER: Money. Money. It's the -- you may have one man who has been buying some Renoirs and that word spreads like a ripple and everybody thinks there's a great, great demand for Renoirs. If you find there's a lot of something of one or another, it always starts with the same man looking for a single Renoir.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah, yeah.

MR. ADLER: I know when I got a call for something of particular importance, I'll ask a number of people, "Do you know?" I don't ask them to go and ask anybody else, but they in turn, thinking they might sell that painting ask all that they know --

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, yeah, there's a ripple effect, yeah.

MR. ADLER: -- and then it's spreading by the ripple so there may be a call for Renoir and maybe 1,000 people will be looking for a Renoir.

MR. CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm, but you know I -- one thing that has interested me is did you have in the 30s and say the early 40s a number of runners and all sorts of people around that aren't around now?

MR. ADLER: Well, there's an entirely different way. They probably did it because they were unemployed and would find something and come and tell you about something. Now these -- some of these runners, especially in France, I know some in Italy, prosper enormously.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, yeah.

MR. ADLER: They are now buyers on their own. You start a business that way. These great merchants that came here were peddlers. There were the -- you know our crowd -- who was that? The Manchester story about their starting with a pack on their back and they got a horse and later on, and opened up in some little town --

MR. CUMMINGS: And grew and grew and grew?

MR. ADLER: -- and grew and grew and grew this thing with art. I don't think it's any different in development than any other business really because whenever you deal with dollars and cents, you're going to get the same motivations and the same practices -- well, as they say in the movies, these MOs.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, right, yeah. Well, do you find though that paintings are now going back to Europe or going to South America, which is almost sort of a mysterious market I think particularly?

MR. ADLER: Well, at the present moment I think art is pretty much at a stand still. In Paris things aren't that --

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. ADLER: London experienced a great deal [inaudible]. Up until now, you could sell certain English paintings by telephone call. Now they're not buying because they're needing --

MR. CUMMINGS: Their economy is --

MR. ADLER: -- they're not as healthy as --

MR. CUMMINGS: -- sort of bad, yeah.

MR. ADLER: Yeah. So well, at the present moment I think things have sort of quieted down. But usually, depending as I said before on the state of -- at one time look at how Germany was the source of --

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, right.

MR. ADLER: They bought like mad. They were making so much money and their profit increasing. Now they've quieted down and you don't hear that much about their museums are buying and all of that. That's the east end. It just sort of goes from one scene to the other scene. I don't know what the next country is. They thought Venezuela might be a --

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, yeah, yeah.

MR. ADLER: -- a new source. My daughter has a gallery there, the best gallery down there, and it seems like she would be doing it and suddenly that's quieted down.

MR. CUMMINGS: Where is that?

MR. ADLER: Well, the government is putting all its money into expansion of its social programs.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, I see.

MR. ADLER: It's a sort of socialist --

MR. CUMMINGS: Where is your daughter's gallery?

MR. ADLER: In Caracas.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, really?

MR. ADLER: Yeah.

MR. CUMMINGS: What's it called?

MR. ADLER: It's Galleria [inaudible] and now she's changed -- she has a partner with a man who used to run the [inaudible] Castillo. So it's called Adler-Castillo --

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, yes, mm-hmm.

MR. ADLER: but yes, she's -- she's had a number of exhibitions all over the -- she's having one now in Texas. Various modern artists, she deals in 20th century art: Christo, people like [inaudible] and all of those people, Soto and --

MR. CUMMINGS: What do you think of all of that new manifestation?

MR. ADLER: Well --

MR. CUMMINGS: I mean it's very different from what you started.

MR. ADLER: -- you know you can't -- I was going to say having been brought up into the earlier forms of art, I just don't -- but I'm certainly willing to recognize and I think I can tell within its own parameters what's good and what is not good. But you know I've already had my taste about this. I certainly would love a Greek piece any time.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, yeah.

MR. ADLER: -- to a 20th century. Excuse me.

MR. CUMMINGS: Do you think that your architectural training was useful or that it influenced your taste a great deal or --

MR. ADLER: Well, it did make me --

MR. CUMMINGS: -- formed it in some way?

MR. ADLER: -- more flexible.

MR. CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MR. ADLER: I can give you a great example here and this was Edward you know, what is it, Durell Stone?

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, yes, right.

MR. ADLER: Some years ago he had a house to do in -- was it Oklahoma City? Yeah, Oklahoma City. A man name of Jones, he had a state agency for [inaudible] and this house was a modern house that they had bought from the Hearst collection curiously enough, these people. An enormous Georgian room and they were very fond of it. They wanted to install it into this modern room. Well, I got a call from I don't know how they -- what the connection was, would I go down to Oklahoma City with Mr. Stone and make suggestions as to how this room could be incorporated. And of course, there was nobody in his organization who knew anything about the Georgian order, you know, and the Georgian style, and details and all. So I said, "Yes."

I went down with him for the weekend, spent time going over this thing, then went back to his office. I think he was then on 62nd Street. You know he bought the building here. And I indicated how I thought I ought to be done then sent him a bill for \$1,000. He never talked to me again. I thought they ought to pay the price for them not knowing anything about styles, being an architect.

MR. CUMMINGS: How peculiar of him?

MR. ADLER: Yeah, well, he wasn't bothered with it of course, but I mean his men.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MR. ADLER: They were probably all MIT men and I saw the stuff. It didn't do much about the orders, certainly didn't know enough to do anything responsible.

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, that's fantastic.

MR. ADLER: He never talked to me.

MR. CUMMINGS: That's terrible.

MR. ADLER: Back when we went to art school we had to learn all the orders, be able to draw them, you know, sketch them.

MR. CUMMINGS: Have you seen the Bozar exhibition at the Modern?

MR. ADLER: No, I haven't been to it yet.

MR. CUMMINGS: It's really quite something to see. Do you think though that you know, was it an aid in any way in studying architecture --

MR. ADLER: Oh, I think --

MR. CUMMINGS: -- and doing all that drawing and --

MR. ADLER: I think it's an enormous thing. It teaches you aesthetics more than anything else. You know in studying Renaissance art you had, you know, your bays that you developed and then these Italian palazzos. You would find there would be a little double column or double pilaster but then there was space. Then there was the single one over there. Then there's a little larger space and you have two or three columns and because they emphasize the center and so on, you know. But - - and in our days they thought it was sort of a form of music. You could almost play it, da-da-tada-da-tada-da-tada.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. ADLER: You know, in other words, it had a rhythm and certain amount of relationship and I think that carries over when you -- as the golden rectangle, the golden, you know --

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, right, right.

MR. ADLER: -- [inaudible] of fortune, you know. That is pleasing. If you vary from it, it's not pleasing. These are the general aesthetics I think which you sort of get to appreciate it innately without even being conscious of it. And I think training in architecture was just a deliberate shear choosing of proportion and style and all of that is a great help in judging a work of art that's already been done because within the -- your own sense emanates a judgment of that object by your training. I don't know. I think it's just a marvelous thing.

MR. CUMMINGS: You know once you, you know you formed Herschel and Adler or maybe even before, had you had people who were collectors who bought fairly exclusively from you or how was - - the American collector bought [inaudible]?

MR. ADLER: No, the people that I had were extremely loyal to me, bought everything from me, sought my advice in everything. One client never asked the price and that bothered the hell out of me.

MR. CUMMINGS: Really?

MR. ADLER: Because, "Yes, I'll have that. It's lovely. It will look awfully well in the dining room," or whatever it is. Now I didn't know they had the slightest idea of what the value was and that if I charged them my normal price, I might lose them as a client. If they think it's only \$1,000 item and here's a \$25,000 item. So I would just cut that price down to actually cost so that I could always say to them, "I'm sorry. Here it is. I paid that," but I added so little on whereas normally I could get a fair market value out of it. So that -- they got the greatest bargains in the world by just saying, "I'll have that."

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, that's fantastic.

MR. ADLER: You know there's the old story that Dawson -- that was a generation -- he died, Edward Dawson. He hadn't -- he was the first partner of -- he came and opened up Devine's here. Then Lord Devine made him join his brother. That's the -- you know Charles --

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, yeah, Charles of London, yeah.

MR. ADLER: -- of London, yeah, and then Charles went out for himself and Dawson went out for himself. But at any rate, he was with Devine in London first and the story was that Morgan came in and saw a set of tapestries. And he asked the price of it and Dawson said to him, "Forty thousand." So he -- meaning \$40,000 you know in American. He says, "Pounds?" and Morgan said, "Oh, of course, of course, of course." So you see price in those days didn't really -- that's a very apocryphal story. I don't know if it made its way in those days, how carelessly people bought and had no idea of value.

MR. CUMMINGS: Do you find there are collectors though who really study the artists or the designers --

MR. ADLER: Yes.

MR. CUMMINGS: -- and really know what they're --

MR. ADLER: Now, because of the monetary considerations, they study it very much more than we would study it then.

MR. CUMMINGS: Hmm.

MR. ADLER: They -- many of these people -- well, there was -- let's say people in various business, mundane businesses, they ran their business here with an iron hand and got quotes on the material and all of that sort of stuff, and their production costs were carefully analyzed. They applied the same technique, you know, to their buying of paintings.

MR. CUMMINGS: To their collections, yeah.

MR. ADLER: They could call Sotheby's from here in London, "What is this picture there? Is it -- how good is it? What do you think of that?" then call another dealer, "What do you think of that?" They had every book on this stuff and yes, the even left at home at night -- I mean when they went

home at night they picked up that book, and changed their ways of life, you know.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. ADLER: Instead of being playboys, the Cadillac, all this stuff, the gambling they then went in for paintings and they changed their pattern of life enormously. Also it brought them great respectability because as their buyers, they went to openings, met new people, went to museums, met new people, and their whole pattern of life changed. It's amazing. The people that I've known over the years how they've become entirely different people.

MR. CUMMINGS: What is --

MR. ADLER: Well, let me give you a great example.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah, that's marvelous.

MR. ADLER: You know the Horowitz's?

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. ADLER: The Horowitz collection, you know, there's a great collection there. They bought their first painting from me. I think as a matter of fact it was our little Robert Enright Museum on the beach there. So they became interested in buying and did a great deal of buying, and went to exhibitions and studied it, and read books and all that. You know their life pattern is so different today than it was in the days when they first started collecting.

MR. CUMMINGS: Really?

MR. ADLER: They are known everywhere. They have this show in the Met, they're invited to everything, and they've become important people because they're the collectors and they knew a great deal about it. They -- on Saturdays they would go to every place. You could count on them like clockwork appearing you know at 2:00 at your gallery. From there they went to this gallery, to that gallery, bought well. I think they've increased their capital enormously in value.

MR. CUMMINGS: Wow, that's incredible.

MR. ADLER: And it's a whole way of life for them now. It's all -- you know Margaret is very close to us. Yeah, she would bore the hell out of me because she'll say, "Now let's talk about art."

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughs.]

MR. ADLER: And so there's nothing else in the world, you know. There's a whole wide world outside of it.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MR. ADLER: And here she wants to talk about painting and what is involved, yeah, this and that, the school of you know around the [inaudible] or Chase or somewhere in that area.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah, all Impressionists, yeah.

MR. ADLER: There are other things people like to talk about.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah, but I think it does change the collector's life.

MR. ADLER: Completely.

MR. CUMMINGS: In incredible ways.

MR. ADLER: Great effect. The new friends that they -- well, how about the dealer's life? Now I'd meet people -- we had an opening last night. There was David Rockefeller was here and of course the Blums were very prominent people financially and socially up to a point. And they had Mrs. Lawrence Rockefeller here. They had the Strauss's here that were related or something like that. Now these are new people that I met. I met some of the Blums children. One is a lawyer up in charming Lakeville, very well read in points of view. I find they're great friends of the Gilbert Harrison and because of all the New Republic and I had had dinner with him just days before.

Well, this opened new avenues, expansion, your new way of life, new facts that you never knew before, new relationships you never knew. So that the art world is an entirely different world I would say than any other world. It's man that his aesthetic best. When you meet a man, a tycoon, who can be the [inaudible] or Norton Simon.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, right.

MR. ADLER: I wouldn't want to be a man who would do business with him on the industrial field, but when you deal with him in painting, he'll discuss every facet and study. He's called everybody under the sun and then he's so sure about a painting. Well, he's a different person entirely when he's involved in an art discussion then he is as a man in the business world.

MR. CUMMINGS: What do you think the appeal to a person like that is to collect art? Is it -- does it -  
-

MR. ADLER: Well, we all have aspirations within us, I think, philosophically speaking to better ourselves, to make a better life. You start into the business world, you're cutthroat, you're ruthless, you do a lot of things that -- just to make money, and suddenly you get into another field where you can talk about the fine points in one's life, the beautiful drawn lines, the beautiful composition of something, the arrangement of color. It's like love vis-à-vis business, you know.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. ADLER: You're much more tender than you would be in your business [inaudible]. Well, it's the same thing. It's breaking away from the every day world into another world. Why does one have religion or why does one have a sense of morality? It's your -- it's a sort of some ennobling of the human being and I think art approaches that. Why did you have so much in the early days that there's no -- practically art -- art is practically all -- are you going, dear? All right, good.

Early art, the church picked up on that almost immediately. All the paintings of saints, there's very little other art than religious art. That helps to promote the, you know, the emotional religious feelings.

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, how -- one of the things that is interesting is when you had the Herschel and Adler organization, you started representing living artists sometime soon there.

MR. ADLER: Well, we never were very --



MR. CUMMINGS: Not very many though but there were --

MR. ADLER: I suppose for the simple reason that we stayed a representational school and oh, we did so much in the old painters, you know, not non-living. In fact the [inaudible] on our walls, the paintings that -- of the new artists wouldn't bring the returns, I guess that would be the thing. Later on we began to get qualms of conscience you know and devote space to living artists. We never quite hit the right ones. We just weren't innovative enough. We didn't have the organization to spend the time in developing them and doing justice to them. In fact, if there was anybody real good I would say to them, "Look, I think you're in the wrong place with us. We just can't devote the time into promoting. You need somebody to promote you."

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, right.

MR. ADLER: And you'll notice that those galleries that do best with the artists are those with living artists exclusively.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, right.

MR. ADLER: Rosenstein really couldn't represent. They'd get a few people and did it very fast --

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah, it doesn't work, yeah.

MR. ADLER: -- for them and any of the other artists. Knobler's [phonetic] the nearest to it, the old Knobler's --

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. ADLER: -- because they had a bigger organization and secondly, they never had a stock of their own really in the last number of years. Ninety percent of their things were on consignment and others they sold on a commission basis so that they could devote more time and to these -- and they have a very good name and could attract rather important artists, or steal an artist from another gallery.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah, I was amazed at how small their stock was when Hammer bought it.

MR. ADLER: Yeah.

MR. CUMMINGS: There really is very little.

MR. ADLER: Well, that has been going out for many years. I'm very close to Bill Davidson, very close to him for many, many years and I would know what their policy was, that they would have huge offers, \$10,000 for a painting. He could come along and say, "Well, I think if you consigned this we could get you \$20,000 for it." Now mine was a cold cash offer. His was, "I think we can get you \$20,000." Well, that's -- 10 to 20 appeals to that person an awful lot and, "I can afford to wait." And then they'd get somebody and perhaps have an offer of \$12,000 or maybe even \$10,000 and say, "Well, I thought we could. We showed it to all of our people. That's the best we could do." In the meantime, he took a little piece of it.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughs.]

MR. ADLER: So that was a maneuver they used over the many years and it was very successful. Well, then there was some very interesting quarrels there. I know all about it.

MR. CUMMINGS: That got very sticky.

MR. ADLER: And it got very sticky there. I know it broke up in the factions and it had to be inevitable.

MR. CUMMINGS: What do you think -- you know there really are no large firms like with Marlboro might be one of the few international art firms these days.

MR. ADLER: Well, there is series -- well, Wildenstein of course, they're the largest by far.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MR. ADLER: They have branches -- not -- don't have to but they're an international money organization. I would say Wildenstein is a billion dollar corporation.

MR. CUMMINGS: Really? That big?

MR. ADLER: I'm almost willing to wager.

MR. CUMMINGS: With their different offices and agents and --

MR. ADLER: Their stock.

MR. CUMMINGS: Their stock, yeah.

MR. ADLER: I remember many years ago it was estimated their worth was about three or four hundred million dollars. Now, you just think about the increments of these things that they have, all their [inaudible] and --

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, yeah.

MR. ADLER: -- all this and money. And then they have the maneuverability more than me.

MR. CUMMINGS: Let's not get into that.

MR. ADLER: [Laughs.] I think it was shown in this Marlboro trial there recently. Well, you know about the --

MR. CUMMINGS: The Rothkos.

MR. ADLER: Oh yeah, the Rothkos, yeah. Incidentally, he's a classmate of mine at Yale, Mark Rothko was.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, really?

MR. ADLER: He was -- and [inaudible], you know.

MR. CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MR. ADLER: You saw how they worked those things.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, yeah.

MR. ADLER: So I'm sure -- no, it's big business and there are big business firms dealing in art, yeah.

MR. CUMMINGS: Do you think the money has become more important than the art [inaudible]?

MR. ADLER: A while ago, by the way, you couldn't tie [inaudible] down to anything, in the [inaudible] or anything --

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, I know.

MR. ADLER: -- to anybody; completely judgment proof or whatnot. Poor boy.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, he'll survive I think.

MR. ADLER: Yeah.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah. But do you think though with some of those international operations, the money becomes even more important than the objects?

MR. ADLER: Well, I think it is a completely banking business.

MR. CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

MR. ADLER: Oh, sure. What puzzles me are these funds though, the [inaudible] you know --

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, yeah.

MR. ADLER: -- where they bought [inaudible] and these funds that Modaco [phonetic], whatever the heck his name is and these firms are, with almost unlimited money, what their modus operandi is. They buy things at times when you wonder why the heck they would buy that much and whom they sell to.

MR. CUMMINGS: And pay those prices.

MR. ADLER: Yeah, pay those prices.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MR. ADLER: I just don't understand that. You can surmise a great many things, you know. Illegitimate money can be put into the art world that way and a painting doesn't talk and you know. I don't know. I just don't know what it's all about.

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, it certainly is become enormous amounts of money involved.

MR. ADLER: I imagine these people, they're just -- they hear that as some commerce have always maintained that the value of money goes down constantly. The dollar of the revolutionary times in America is quite different than dollars today.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, that's true.

MR. ADLER: You can now buy 100 to 1 and they feel that the course is going to continue as time goes on, and perhaps they're right in terms of \$100,000 you pay for a painting today. The million dollars would be just the value of money had changed so much.

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, it's interesting you know that American paintings have become million dollar paintings.

MR. ADLER: Yeah.

MR. CUMMINGS: Resell.

MR. ADLER: Well, that can only be because as I said before the competitive nature of the art dealers and adopting it as a wampum --

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, right.

MR. ADLER: -- yeah, pretty poetic all at -- it's a commodity of exchange.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah. You know one of the things that -- well, many -- I mean there are so many things here. You did a number of exhibitions using American paintings once -- I mean after the Herschel and Adler.

MR. ADLER: Yeah.

MR. CUMMINGS: And I remember thinking how 18th century, 19th century paintings didn't ever --

MR. ADLER: Oh, yeah we -- well, we spaced it. Altogether we had two departments later on when we got hold of Stuart Feld.

MR. CUMMINGS: That magic name.

MR. ADLER: There was an emphasis, and this is one of the reasons I -- complete let down of the European market and emphasizing anything on the American, which I suppose made some good business sense. But the money factor isn't everything you want in life. It's that American can be bought cheap and sold very dearly; a great deal of profit can be made. A lot of people don't even know what they had. They would sell something to you for nothing and you get an enormous price, you step ahead of them in your scholarship --

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. ADLER: -- and that sort of stuff. But we've had some very important European shows. I think we had the best Dupree show held in America. We had probably the best Boudin show ever held in America. We've had a great Durand show, the first time ever that the moved the pictures to a business firm --

MR. CUMMINGS: How did they do that?

MR. ADLER: -- and out of the country. Madam Voltaire; very good friend of mine. That's part of the pictures she gave to the Louvre. She [inaudible] to have them lend us the things, yeah. Yeah, we're very close friends. She was the first madam of Paul Guillaume.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, right. It -- you know, did you observe something about the market to start handling American work --

MR. ADLER: Yes.

MR. CUMMINGS: -- to the extent -- I mean there were indications that this was --

MR. ADLER: Well, because this was the time when the European things began to skyrocket and get scarce.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. ADLER: Whereas the whole wide world of American paintings, the museums didn't have -- so many new museums started.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. ADLER: They certainly wouldn't have enough of that. Yes, so I saw it and that's why I brought Stuart Feld in. I was the one who brought him in, much to my later -- I had no idea about him. But at any rate, I don't want to get into that part of it there. But I did that deliberately and thought eventually that we'd have a younger man to take over the business.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. ADLER: It was my intention to do it, but it's where you've got --

MR. CUMMINGS: Exploding --

MR. ADLER: -- [inaudible] kind of a story about it.

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, we've only got a couple of minutes left on this side.

MR. ADLER: Yeah.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MR. ADLER: No, yes, I did foresee that American thing would go. But that also will achieve its ends soon, too. As you sell enough of it you give representation to the museums, they'll stop buying them the same as any other. You know all the great examples will become scarce. There certainly -- I mean there are a limited number of Churches and the Cohens and things like that.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, oh but then another period will rise up, don't you think?

MR. ADLER: Well, that's when you're going to run into the --

MR. CUMMINGS: The same thing?

MR. ADLER: No, the abstract American art, abstract and Impressionism, Impressionists, anything you want but it will be a new school which they're not conversant with. They don't know anything of these new trends, not at all.

MR. CUMMINGS: You did an exhibition though as I remember in the 60s at some point that was of modern, very modern paintings.

MR. ADLER: Well, we -- I thought I'd try that and there's another thing. We had a man whom we thought would be good for us who would try for a series of exhibitions, see if we couldn't get into the 21st century art.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. ADLER: -- art and we spent a considerable amount of money. As a matter of fact, prior to that, I had a friend, the head of the Whitney. It was before that. What was the name of that --

MR. CUMMINGS: [Inaudible].

MR. ADLER: Yeah, [inaudible] came to us and said, "There's a group of artists," they wanted to act as a group, about eight of them I think, would we be willing to take them on and go into the [inaudible]. I think each and every one of them has made his mark since then. But they were very demanding. They wanted to alter the premises and make it a much more modern looking structure. And there were various other conditions and all, which I suppose could have been done. But then I asked him something that I -- and maybe I'm naïve. I said, "Before we go ahead any farther, could I see examples of any academic work that you've done that would tell me that you have the" -- they were comparatively unknown then, "that you have the proper disciplines to do what you want to do, that it isn't a gimmick?" and they turned me down cold and I was adamant about that.

You know most of these modern artists, Picasso if you want to go overseas, they could do a Dufy [inaudible]. He could do a drawing that rivaled a Michelangelo. In fact, he copied -- two days before he died he did a drawing, a copy of a Michelangelo old Moses or something like that with all the intricacies a drawing. He did that and almost you can hardly tell them apart.

MR. CUMMINGS: That's fantastic.

MR. ADLER: They had these technical disciplines that they could do this. So they refused it.

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, I --

MR. ADLER: You know or they could study a man like Paulo Ochelo [phonetic], wherein profile by thickening the lines ever so much there, you suddenly felt the roundness of the nose. You felt a plane develop, just by a mere thickening of a line and letting it go a bit. Picasso had that gift, you know.

MR. CUMMINGS: What he could do with a line was incredible.

MR. ADLER: Well, that's right and I thought that heck, if these people were serious artists they could do that, too.

MR. CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

MR. ADLER: Are we about through now?

[END OF TAPE 2.]

MR. CUMMINGS: It's side three. It's the 26th of November 1975, Paul Cummings talking to A.M. Adler in his office. Which is a very interesting point and I think --

MR. ADLER: Which is -- that's when American became sophisticated in art I think. I think that's a real turning point. Up until then, you can gather through books like Berman's book on Devine and those, you know.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. ADLER: How all these firms were European oriented and with the American emergence, sort of collectors like Morgan, Alderman and people like that who went abroad to seek these paintings, you had very little Europe -- or America -- European influence on America directly. It went to -- everything was oriented towards Europe, so that when Devine came here, went down on the 23rd

and Fifth Avenue, also several Durand as well I noticed were in that 23rd and Fifth Avenue, all down in that area. They came here to exploit the American market because of the few people that were buyers.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, right.

MR. ADLER: Mary Costano also you see is going to Europe to paint and got into the whole Impressionist group. Then she came over here and tried to sell the Europeans to see if people up in Boston --

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, yeah.

MR. ADLER: -- or those people down here in -- her own family in Pennsylvania, Philadelphia were introduced. Mrs. Habermeyer, people like that started collecting, so that the general tendency was to go abroad to buy art.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, that was probably the grand tour kind of thing.

MR. ADLER: That's right, more [inaudible]. Now with the emergence of American money and power and a little greater awareness, some of the dealers came here. But that was just in the isolated cases and in cases where the demand was very much, you know, established at this time in some Impressionist paintings, Chinese porcelain, and various collectors of that sort of thing, old masters.

MR. CUMMINGS: How did you find to -- up to the time of World War II, the arrival of these dealers, did they open the market up for you or did they --

MR. ADLER: What they did --

MR. CUMMINGS: -- offer competition or --

MR. ADLER: -- basically was -- well, of course, that's the whole idea and until then, I may have mentioned that we bought a figurine -- figure head at Borobudur --

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah, right.

MR. ADLER: -- for \$75 and I got the composition from Mrs. Miller, the daughter of Mrs. Whitney. They thought it would look cute on the fireplace.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. ADLER: That was the type of accounts that you had. There were very few people who knew anything about Renaissance and gothic art. They were mostly general antique dealers, rug dealers, tapestries or looms at this time. It was entirely different oriented art directed.

MR. CUMMINGS: What do you think caused the shift in taste?

MR. ADLER: Well, the shift came about -- that's when -- war, just prior to 1938 let's say, when a lot of these people left, especially France being menaced -- the French dealers, and then the -- a lot of the German dealers, a man like Fleischman from Poland.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, yeah.

MR. ADLER: These were people who had quite a bit of knowledge. A lot of them had a great deal of

knowledge, like the Rosenberg and [inaudible] crowd. You had these people from Italy who came in, Bacci and Gurand and D'Señ i [phonetic], and also from France came Helft, who was once president of the syndicate there, the silver -- French silver experts. You had others who were interested in like Mrs. Thor, who I already mentioned, who were here prior to this and there was a -- was somewhat my mentor. You had many people like that in Europe who came here.

Now these were experts in their lines. The main source of their goods and all was in Europe because it --

MR. CUMMINGS: Right that --

MR. ADLER: -- had all European art. And they have great collections, many of these people, three, four generation dealers. So when they came here naturally the only field open the them was the American field and what you -- they could get out of auctions for the Hearst stuff or whatever was there, that's where the activity began. And being concentrated in a much more limited market, the rivalry, the bidding became more intense --

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, right, right.

MR. ADLER: -- and also you had to know your stuff. You had to do a little more research and all. You just didn't buy it for \$50 and you'd take your chance and maybe it would turn out to be a masterpiece because you could not longer buy it for \$50 and you'd have to pay \$800 or \$1,000.

MR. CUMMINGS: Because there were more people out there? Sure, yeah.

MR. ADLER: So you had to know -- exactly right because they knew. So that's why I say that not only did the dealers have to become more sophisticated, but with the rising prices and all I think people had to become more sophisticated. I mean it put greater pressure -- and here's another thing. A great many Europeans came here who left with some -- with money like Baron Kessel with a great deal of money, stimulated the market way beyond all proportions, and others came and made fortunes in real estate and all. They've continued collecting or recouped by buying and replacing that old stuff, lost or confiscated or what. So that I would trace the whole development of -- the art expansion of the art trade to the --

MR. CUMMINGS: To that period.

MR. ADLER: -- the influx of the European dealers and collectors.

MR. CUMMINGS: What do you think caused the shift in taste from, you know the tapestries and paneled rooms and things like that?

MR. ADLER: Well, I think I mentioned that to you before. For one thing, tapestries and Renaissance furniture and all that called for large spaces, high ceilings and all.

MR. CUMMINGS: And so apartment life mitigates against that?

MR. ADLER: So -- and even apartments here were eight or like nine 65th Avenue when the Dr. Saddlewhite [phonetic] who was -- had a great collection. I think he gave it all to Louisville if I'm not mistaken. But he had duplexes. It was all, you know, highly possible to have and that's one thing. The other thing is that it's like your clothes, you know, it makes a whole cycle in style. The building in Florida --



MR. CUMMINGS: Right, with the [inaudible].

MR. ADLER: -- with all the -- I mentioned that before --

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, right. Yeah.

MR. ADLER: -- with all these just Spanish, Italian Renaissance, certainly Mediterranean type of art called the tapestries, the Wallach furniture, the Renaissance, the majolicas and the textiles of all sorts, the Ispahan rug or the Ferahan rug, or whatever you want that went -- paneled rooms, all of that went together you see. So then, of course, the changing of architecture taking over --

MR. CUMMINGS: Do you think Bauhaus influenced the --

MR. ADLER: Well, undoubtedly.

MR. CUMMINGS: Important there?

MR. ADLER: Undoubtedly, undoubtedly because I remember in the earlier days we'd see -- I used to do some earlier interiors. You know I told you about it.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. ADLER: And I had a -- some of the people would be Europeans with some money and what they had with them was what I thought the most atrocious -- those kinds of furniture imaginable: the heavy pieces with little strips of wood, which was really in a sense the modern Bauhaus influence they had. Today, of course they'd make it less cumbersome and they're much more accepted style, but there again, these new people came in and brought an influence with them. They're already attuned to Bauhaus and to the Expressionist, you know, movement and all.

MR. CUMMINGS: I was wondering, you just mentioned Mrs. Thor who you said was a mentor of yours, what kind of advice or ideas would you offer to somebody who wanted to become an art dealer? What would you say they should do?

MR. ADLER: Art dealer of what, of paintings or of --

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah, yeah.

MR. ADLER: -- or in -- I think, and this is what I find at fault with most of the people, that this is an age of specialization. You get to know one artist better than the others, you're catapulted to fame, everybody comes to you and all, and yet I find it surprising how little they know of the whole rest of the field of art. It's true when you go to the Institute as I've gone here, they try to make you all [inaudible] with other endeavors. But the darn thing, once you go -- like if you're studying anatomy when you studied medicine. After you've taken that course you've forgotten all about where the nerves are and all of that, and each bone, and each articulation. It's the same in art.

There is this tendency to focus on one little facet and that ends it. My advice is to really get to know the ropes. In England, the old days where the man was going to be an antique dealer, he very often started working in a shop. He learned how furniture was made. He learned how the finishes were. That way, knowing technically your material, you were then able to tell, "Well, this thing was made in the 18th century because of the dowels or the mortars or the nails or the construction," this and that. There was no electric saw. It was sawed by hand so also you can tell by the serrations and all of that. And I've asked young people who come in here, "Get as much schooling

as you can." I know it's an old cliché now. It's a way of scaring them off, but it is true. There isn't enough adequate preparation there and I think they ought to get to know something about all of the fields.

I remember the store -- going to the store. We would go to the Morgan room. Well, today they found that the Morgan wing was obsolete. I think they eliminated it. But there was an in extensive Renaissance jewelry, Venetian bronzes, San Savinos, [inaudible]. I'll bet that very few of these dealers could name these, Ritchie or -- you can go on, you know Il Briasco, you can go on forever and name because you know these. Well, they have influence on things as well. There's always an interplay.

So I would say get as much education or go the opposite extreme. If you can get in with a very well-established dealer, come in as a packer, become in as a floor sweeper. It doesn't matter and grow up that way. It's like studying medicine. There are two ways: you go right into the hospital and you know learn through apprenticeship, or you go to the school and then finally become in contact with the hospital at the end.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MR. ADLER: So I think it's the same thing. You either get yourself thoroughly educated or you go in as an apprentice somewhere. Bill Davidson, you know knows that. He got his first job at Nordler's [phonetic] as an errand boy. Then he went to the training department and then of course became a salesman, and he became a sort of -- somewhat of a partner, so that he started that way without any education at all.

Others came in as -- one of the men who was -- went to Yale. I think he graduated a year after, the Russian, what was his name? Barber had -- he came in the easier way with some social connection and so there is -- advice is a very difficult thing to give because it's depending on each person. So I mean some people are so natural that heck, they walk right in and take over.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah, yeah.

MR. ADLER: Yeah.

MR. CUMMINGS: You know you touched on some of the collectors over the years that you've worked with and I was wondering, have you ever been able to define what factors or qualities it is that stimulates a person to become a collector? I mean is it their own interests? Is it through a friend or through a dealer or through a museum or books or --

MR. ADLER: You know that's about as varied --

MR. CUMMINGS: As art?

MR. ADLER: -- as the individual and I'll tell you why. One of the most amusing experiences in my life, a man from Detroit -- they were manufacturing accessories for all the museums, and they had plants in various places, Buffalo and all. And one of his children got polio and they could have been [inaudible] and he was stricken, you know with the great loss of his child. And he was on the verge of a nervous breakdown. Well, he went to a psychiatrist and the psychiatrist said, "Why don't you -- you've made a lot of money. Why did you take up collecting paintings?"

So this man who was fairly illiterate, his wife was equally so, they started, you know at the very bottom, he proceeded to learn this business. He questioned every dealer, went in and looked at

everything they had. He got hold of every catalog. He -- I don't think he could read very well, but he could purport something about the illustrations. He learned what the best period of the artists were, what the best price -- where you could get the best price. He would call up the auctions in London or the auctioneers in Paris and he did the same sort of -- he exercised the same tactics that he did in conducting his business. That was a very amusing story.

I had sold him a Boudin and --

MR. CUMMINGS: Did he build a good collection?

MR. ADLER: What?

MR. CUMMINGS: Did he build a good collection?

MR. ADLER: He built up -- yes, what he bought was good. We had at that time a bust of -- by Renoir -- well, actually Renoir himself never did it, but Coco did a thing [inaudible] --

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. ADLER: -- you know, right, yeah. Gabriel, she sees this and she says, "Who is this by?" and it's a fairly large one standing on a pedestal. I said, "That's by Renoir." "Oh, Renoir." So I said that to her -- and she said, "Who are the people represented?" and I said, "His wife and child." "Oh, he married a colored woman."

MR. CUMMINGS: Because of the bronze?

MR. ADLER: The brown bronze.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, fantastic.

MR. ADLER: As she was walking out she said to my wife who had come into the gallery to see me, and I introduced her to her, she says, "Are you interested, Mrs. Adler in this business, too?" and Mrs. Adler said, "No, really I'm not very much interested because my husband has, he's been exposed to it, but I'm not, you know directly interested in it, no." She says, "You know," she says, "it's a very blind article." [Laughs.] Now there's one extent, you see, of collecting and yet a good collector. On the other hand, you have the Norton Simons who -- it became an obsession with him and an integral part of his life. There's the collector who collects purely because he's doing an apartment.

MR. CUMMINGS: Wants to fill it up with stuff.

MR. ADLER: I went to an apartment recently, the man would perhaps to his charity organization but he was going to use that as a vehicle to catapult himself into some -- I was going to say notoriety but exposure, self exposure. I went to his place and all the things, two buffets, the Louise Nevelson and all looked as though it was all bought over night, and I found out that it was practically so. He had a small interest in Pace Gallery. All the Pace material --

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, so --

MR. ADLER: -- almost instant as my daughter, that instant collection. So then why -- when you ask, you know, what about collectors, you -- some people do it for social reasons. Others do it because they always wanted to have it. It just -- there is no pattern, you see. Of course, a man with means always lives up to his means. In the old days he used to -- especially to the people who were in like

the garment industry or who made a lot of -- would have a mistress, a Jaguar, or whatever or a Cadillac --

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. ADLER: -- and gambled. Well, when art came along as the fashionable medium he gave up most of that and then it became obvious, you know, you go along and there are -- get some of our best collections that way.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right. Do you think that there is, say in the last decade, more collecting as investment than before, or do you think people who bought expensive pictures were always there?

MR. ADLER: Well, the great difference prior toward this time that I'm telling about, the advent of the Europeans, a man bought art only out of his income. He did a deal on the stock market and made some money.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. ADLER: He bought some art. He never would sell his stock or anything like that to buy a work of art. That changed radically. The various financial people, Wall Street, you get the man who is in charge of all that money for -- to collect -- collector to the financial community. Pick is someone who --

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, yeah, Pick yeah.

MR. ADLER: Pick, yes.

MR. CUMMINGS: From Chicago.

MR. ADLER: To advise people to buy or go into gold --

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. ADLER: -- and art was the second most important item, so that now people will sell. And the proof of that is people have bought these things, you started to think -- you'd think that they'd hold on forever more. They're very propitious times, you see. They appear at auctions and they've made enormous profit so there again, some people love it. Others it's just money in [inaudible]. I mean you can't generalize.

MR. CUMMINGS: There are so many specifics that there is no generalization.

MR. ADLER: Some people can't resist the profit and other people won't take a profit on anything because they just want it.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah, yeah.

MR. ADLER: How can you say?

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, I think that the war years are interesting because you no longer could travel to Europe to buy things. You had to deal with what was here at the sales or private situations. Were people buying works of art then or did the war so collar their activities?

MR. ADLER: Well, don't forget that things were changing.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. ADLER: Prior to that, even when you get to the 38s and all, if it weren't for the fact that the Europeans came and the few collectors like Baron Kessel, they was very little business anyway having no recovery from the Depression.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. ADLER: There you reached the low tide, you know of art dealing and they stimulated as I say, these people, and the field, the sources of the material were the old collections that, you know the estate --

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. ADLER: -- compared to the auctions became a very important part of it, so was the whole dissolution of the Hearst estate which was --

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. ADLER: -- vast.

MR. CUMMINGS: Enormous, right.

MR. ADLER: So that also you must remember the demand wasn't that great yet, so that it was adequate for these people to trade here that -- fine treasures. There were people like Brommer, you know, Brommer had an enormous collection of gothic and Renaissance art.

MR. CUMMINGS: Now where did he come from?

MR. ADLER: Brommer I think was Viennese. Some say he was one of Rodin's models, but he was a thoroughly educated man in ancient art, not so much Greek or Roman as it would be the gothic and Renaissance, you know. They're the ones that sold the tapestries, the [inaudible] --

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, yeah.

MR. ADLER: -- the [inaudible] and all --

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, yeah.

MR. ADLER: -- to the Metropolitan. They sold all sorts of collections that they would find. He was a very queer loner as it were, had very few friends, and massed quite a fortune. That's where the Galiera is now, the [inaudible].

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, yeah. Right.

MR. ADLER: The back part of it was where he bought the building [inaudible]. He used to be on 57th Street where there was little [inaudible] people. He -- his business primarily sponsored the museums. They all know him, all respected his opinion, never would contradict him, and he had a few private clients who collected gothic and Renaissance and all. So he was an outstanding man and he had a large collection. There was very little else available in that field.

Fleischman came into the field, you know, after the -- when the war was over and there was Blunka, who came from Vienna, who had a good idea of the fields, prospered very well; very few of them.

MR. CUMMINGS: Now, what -- what period was it where you really shifted into the picture business?

MR. ADLER: Well, as you can understand that I was always a lover of the paintings that I bought --

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, right.

MR. ADLER: -- and when we came in contact with Impressionist art and this interloper -- this --

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. ADLER: -- this introduction into bad taste to the art world, you know, so I shunned all of that. But perhaps you can say I grew up, too or maybe I lost my sense of value, but only time will tell that. The --

MR. CUMMINGS: But I mean wasn't there a tapering off from doing these large rooms and that kind of [inaudible]?

MR. ADLER: Oh, yes, well, I did these large homes like Oklahoma City. San Antonio, I did oh, a half a dozen big houses there; pretty well-known then. And but it went the whole hog with them, you know put in paneled rooms with all those --

MR. CUMMINGS: But when was that kind of over and you really made changes --

MR. ADLER: Well, when I deliberately made up my mind there was one family that I used to do a lot of business with, my business with, and I felt -- there's some incident that came about where they -- well, no sense in burdening these. It's just an incident of a very distasteful thing. I vindicated myself completely with them by actual truth, and they're willing to go on, and I deliberately cut them all off. That's one of the reasons I went into the pictures and paintings. I decided I wasn't going to be dependent on one family for my existence.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. ADLER: So I just deliberately -- but I wanted to continue in this field --

MR. CUMMINGS: When was that?

MR. ADLER: -- as did A.M. Adler antiquarian, you see.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. ADLER: And the reason I remained -- and then I got hold of Herschel, brought him in, supported him for two years, cleaned up his debts, put up all of the capital for this other business and started Herschel and Adler. I was the president of it all until the time that I just gave that up there.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

\

MR. ADLER: So it was a deliberate move on my part, but I wanted to continue and it was something I bought. You have to come into our apartment and let me show you Renaissance art, gothic art, I had --

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughs.] Yeah.

MR. ADLER: It just collected. I did have a great love for all of these things. You'll find all these around some little Renaissance piece or a little piece of Coptic tapestry there or what you will, you know in the room. There's a little Goya and there's love for all of this stuff because I think it's all a common denominator, good taste and the good ability. I mean I think that's a very important thing, moving in the abstract art world. You've got to have the disciplines and the controls to create good art.

\

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah, it's not easy.

MR. ADLER: No, because sometimes gimmickry takes over --

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. ADLER: -- and it's hard to tell. So that's how I did get started in paintings, although to this day I still buy sometimes an object of art.

MR. CUMMINGS: So you still have --

MR. ADLER: Oh, yeah.

MR. CUMMINGS: -- a continuing interest in antiquities?

MR. ADLER: I've never given that up, never gave it up, yeah.

MR. CUMMINGS: How fun.

MR. ADLER: What I've given away now -- or I've been giving a lot of it away in anticipation of the inevitable and I just gave my Egyptian obelisk, the 25th century bronze, great piece and I gave that away now. I gave a Cyladic figure away now, you know a large one, 21 inch one. Oh, I've given of excavating -- excavated materials and all. No, I've always maintained my interest and commercial contacts --

MR. CUMMINGS: Do you find that --

MR. ADLER: -- pre-Columbian and --

MR. CUMMINGS: -- the people who are interested in objects like that are also interested in paintings?

MR. ADLER: Well, that's the point that you know we tried to make before, that there are so few people who have a broad knowledge and interest in all of the arts, and that's a pity because there is so much pleasure to identify one thing with another and the relationship, the development.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. ADLER: When you study architecture, especially in the early days, the theory used to be that no style evolves by itself. It was always the result of preceding influences and you always trace the, you know, influences. And there's a great deal in knowing how the [inaudible] developed and that sort of stuff, so that when you see them backward there's a better understanding of it. And the same with art; a lot of people will just know only about an Impressionist painting or --

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. ADLER: -- modern painting without anything of the genesis to the painting.

MR. CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] Do you find that -- you know after the war and say during the 50s when the economy was moving around again and things were changing that more people, more collectors were coming into the art life?

MR. ADLER: That's we have practically in the -- well, the beginning of an explosion.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. ADLER: People began [inaudible], and museum attendance and all of these things, and new museums spread up all over the country.

MR. CUMMINGS: Didn't the museum boom, you know in the 60s --

MR. ADLER: Oh, yeah.

MR. CUMMINGS: -- and the late 50s, mid-60s about when they seemed every week a new museum was opening.

MR. ADLER: A new museum.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MR. ADLER: Each -- there may -- the nucleus may have been one collector in town who gave his collection or it may have been --

MR. CUMMINGS: Universities, everybody was [inaudible].

MR. ADLER: Each one had to have his own. There was lots of money being made. Of course, one thing that has to rise through all of this and why American -- art in America has boomed more than any other place really, is the tax deductible phase of giving it.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. ADLER: That's proven enormous boom. I notice it in -- it had been in Venezuela and my daughter has a large gallery there. But I've made a lot of friends and all and they have asked me to form an organization called the Friends to Venezuelan Museums to see if they can get tax free funds.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. ADLER: I'm the treasurer of the American Friends of the Israel Museum and for the Jerusalem Museum who are instrumental in getting a great deal of art and project money for them.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. ADLER: And these countries have no tax exemptions.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.



MR. ADLER: The Venezuelan National Museum depends on certain handouts literally from the government. It's collection is -- for a national gallery it's so poor it wouldn't match to one of our fourth rate museums, and I attribute all of that to the fact that it isn't worth their while to give. In America, you get these tax exemptions and especially if some people are strapped for cash at any given time, they'll give away a great treasure in order to save that money --

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. ADLER: -- and the museums have benefited enormously.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, yeah, it's incredible.

MR. ADLER: And that's the one thing -- I don't think Americans are any more generous than any other people or any more chauvinistic or what would you, if it weren't for the fact that these tax laws dictate it. You can't hold on to a great collection, pass it on to your next generation. I would say it's almost impossible --

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah, it's very difficult.

MR. ADLER: -- because the tax valuations very often will exceed the cash and the other properties of that estate.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, yeah. I interviewed a collector last year and he told me that in his well, from 20 years of collecting that the value of his collection has grown to exceed all of his other --

MR. ADLER: Well, Henry --

MR. CUMMINGS: -- his business, his real estate, and everything.

MR. ADLER: Well, it may be the man you're talking about. I don't know. But I've known Henry very well. He used to borrow to buy a Cezanne all to bank the money. His love was so great and his perspicacity even greater.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah, yeah.

MR. ADLER: Now that estate -- there's Rose who you know very well there is beset.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, yeah.

MR. ADLER: They don't know what to do. He just -- another just about -- he paid \$200,000 for Cezanne's last watercolor that's sitting with him at the park but that's when he bought that, not too long before his death. And the Bakwin family is another example.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, absolutely.

MR. ADLER: They collected when these things were peanuts and today they're worth a fabulous amount and they've got to solve that problem. Dr. Bakwin died and his wife Ruth has been [inaudible]. They've got to solve that problem and on -- J.P. Morgan sold many of his works of art during his lifetime until the end of his lifetime through Nobler in anticipation of death to raise the cash necessary to hold onto the rest of it.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah, yeah.

MR. ADLER: So it's -- it is a very severe problem.

MR. CUMMINGS: You had mentioned one thing before, which I think is worth talking about again, and that is how collecting art can change the collector's life and how it affects his social position in a way? What do you think --

MR. ADLER: Take, for instance, our friends the Horowitz's --

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. ADLER: -- how they're completely -- had a complete change of life. Well basically --

MR. CUMMINGS: Have you found at all --

MR. ADLER: -- I'll tell you that they can only -- and they have tried to get into some kind of a social swing because they're forced into it. The museums and they know about a collection start to -- Edith Halpert, who had a personal collection, you know of American art, folk art, paintings and all, I doubt very much if she had to buy a meal for Hearst. I remember [inaudible] would come up from the Corcoran or somebody else from the other museums, each one thought they were getting her collection, and they wined her and escorted her. She had a great time. When she died of course, she left none of that to any of them.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. ADLER: But there she obtained a social life merely by her possessions. There are others who join, become Friends of the Whitney or they get an early entrée to the Met. They have those summer shows, you know.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, yes, right.

MR. ADLER: Yeah, they loan paintings there and they would learn about their collections and go after them. It's a sort of a wooing for all.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. ADLER: So a person who could be very modest person suddenly finds that he's --

MR. CUMMINGS: In demand.

MR. ADLER: -- in demand at these parties or whatnot organizations.

MR. CUMMINGS: Do you think that collecting like that -- because some collectors I know really study the works and the artists' lives and read criticism and all that stuff. Do you think that tends to change them greatly as a person, too?

MR. ADLER: Enormously so. What I was telling about the -- this used to be a popular story. That's the only reason I quote it, but he used to have a mistress, a Jag --

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, right, yeah.

MR. ADLER: -- you know like kind of gambled, and very -- oh, you know I have this showy top. That man would now stay home. He would be proud of his library.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. ADLER: You walk in this entry -- he ushers you into his library and there are all the latest books, you know, and there are all the Abrams, Askira [phonetic], whatever books there all on the subjects of painting and what they always tried to boast about is when they went to Europe they had dinner with Mark Chagall, and he -- Mark Chagall took them there or there. Well, they were buying from Mark Chagall and --

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. ADLER: -- Mark Chagall was returning their favors by entertaining them, you know, to a point there. They'd have an autographed photograph, you know and all of that, "To my dear friend," their two names, and all of that.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. ADLER: So as you can see, it changed the flux of their lives from this other sort of vulgar former life into the aesthetic. And here's another thing. I don't know whether [inaudible]. There are people who have reputations in business [inaudible], which were very bad. When I would come in contact with them in that showroom and selling paintings to them or discussing art with them, they were an entirely different personalities.

MR. CUMMINGS: Really? That's fascinating.

MR. ADLER: They were at their aesthetic best. They forgot these sharp practices, the haggings and all in their businesses, and now they were in a field which was ennobling and they were different people. Better instincts came out and all of that.

MR. CUMMINGS: But some of them still when they would buy things would --

MR. ADLER: Oh, they would --

MR. CUMMINGS: -- argue about the money and all that?

MR. ADLER: Yes, it was -- yes, there was a great deal of that. Well, because as I said before there's every type of individual. They wanted to buy it as cheaply as possible because they knew eventually they'd get a bigger profit on it.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, absolutely.

MR. ADLER: There were clients that I have had who never asked the price.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, yes, you mentioned those.

MR. ADLER: Yeah, there were people that -- and you know I -- as time went by and the dealer became more affluent, he became less tolerant to that sort of practice. They were almost not willing to sell to certain people.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. ADLER: Why sell it to him when I can sell it to someone who would appreciate it and love it, and we became more discriminating as dealers.

MR. CUMMINGS: I think probably --

MR. ADLER: [Inaudible].

MR. CUMMINGS: -- a lot of that happened.

MR. ADLER: Oh, yeah.

MR. CUMMINGS: I mean there are many phases of the art dealer.

MR. ADLER: Well, you know when you're very, very hungry you're going to do a lot of things that you won't do when you're sated.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, right.

MR. ADLER: And so that -- perhaps that's the reason certain collectors almost begged you, "What have you got hidden in the bins, something really good?" you know.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah, oh, yeah. It's always something valuable.

MR. ADLER: They always felt that there was, you know, a preferred client that they were saving it for.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. ADLER: So well, the whole field is very much parallel to human behavior in any other field.

MR. CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] You know during the years after Herschel and Adler you did a great variety of exhibitions and would a theme show, or something like in 1954 you did the "200 Years of American Art Exhibition", would exhibitions of that nature attract new clientele or would it reinforce the people you had or --

MR. ADLER: Well, as art galleries had a --

MR. CUMMINGS: -- how did it work?

MR. ADLER: -- an exhibition for various reasons. One is institutional advertising.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. ADLER: When Wildenstein has a show here for the benefit of --

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, right. Right.

MR. ADLER: -- they bring in their rather important people who may turn out to be perspective purchasers, or they will get these newspaper exposure and all of that. And so it's worth their while to lend their place to -- for that purpose, even at some of their own expense. I mean sometimes you do the champagne; sometimes you do the catalog, and all. Then of course there are shows that you do because you -- you need to find a collection. For instance, we did -- incidentally I did all the European -- most of breaking in America [inaudible]. But my contacts with -- all the European contacts, every one of them [inaudible], you know, Boudin, Dufy and all. I knew the people anyway. Madam Voltaire was a great friend of mine at that time and she was [inaudible] the Boudin show. I was a very close friend of Robert Smith. Yeah, he's a Boudin expert and he helped arrange a show

for us.

Well, we sold -- [AUDIO BREAK] -- he sold a great deal of -- a great number of things. It was a commercial event and at the same time very prestigious because about the -- about the best Boudin show we had in America. We had the Raoul Dufy show -- MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. ADLER: -- that I worked on with the executor of the estate in the south of France and we did extremely well, probably the best Dufy show ever held. The -- certainly the most extensive, had choice. We had a Durand show, which for the first time the Louvre lent us -- lent a dealer -- and that's only because I was friends with Madam Voltaire, who was -- this is Paul Guillaume [inaudible] you know. She's the one who gave all those -- the [inaudible] now --

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, wow.

MR. ADLER: -- all the -- gave all those [inaudible].

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, right, right.

MR. ADLER: Let's see now.

MR. CUMMINGS: I think that in the years of the great museum boom that -- from I guess mostly during the late 50s and through the mid-60s, how did you find the developing museum curators and directors that you came in contact with?

MR. ADLER: That's a very touchy area.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. ADLER: I've gone over that with Perry Rathbone many times. I'm particularly friendly with him and various other museum directors as we meet them.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. ADLER: There are in -- they're in a very peculiar position. They never have security.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. ADLER: They're in touch with conflicting interests within the museum, especially as reflected by the boards or the trustees.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. ADLER: The backbiting and all of that is very, very bad. Now they're very often beset with other problems. They have to be the -- an art expert. They have to be a business manager.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. ADLER: They have to be an educator. There are so many other things that, you know, that are required of them that in most instances, there aren't enough adequate men in this field to handle these multiple responsibilities. As a result I would say you don't have more than a half a dozen really good museum men. Museums like the Metropolitan can solve it because they can have a dual administration --

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. ADLER: -- like one would take care of all the business management, finances, and whatnot. The other would take care of the curatorial staff and --

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. ADLER: -- art policy, acquisitions, and that sort of thing. But when you expect some man in a money-pinched environment to perform to the satisfaction of everybody it's a miracle that they --

MR. CUMMINGS: It's very difficult.

MR. ADLER: -- survive.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MR. ADLER: I've often said to them, "Why the heck don't you fellows get together and form a union." I said, "Don't be so damned proud."

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughs.]

MR. ADLER: You know there's -- just in a frivolous moment somebody can be discharged --

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, they are frequently, yeah.

MR. ADLER: -- and where are they? They have no other place to go.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. ADLER: So there's all that money floating around. The poor museum director is very often a victim of --

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, of the whole thing.

MR. ADLER: -- outlandish happenings.

MR. CUMMINGS: But do you -- do you find that you know with all the new museums do you have a lot of people who would come through and not afford things, but would look at things or try and raise money for acquisitions or --

MR. ADLER: Well, I would say every single one.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah?

MR. ADLER: In one way or another. The Metropolitan Museum will try and buy a painting. It will go through its various trustees and ask them to contribute towards the purchase of this thing, or use this fund or that fund in order to get that together.

MR. CUMMINGS: Put the money together.

MR. ADLER: Right, so it's a matter of degree. When they bought the Velázquez, they had to do something like that.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. ADLER: Well, the same with the small museums, they will -- have favorite patron or they would get a group of patrons or sell and change things in order to buy that which they want. And that's another area where I find museum people derelict. Many of them don't have the clear idea of the value of art.

MR. CUMMINGS: In terms of --

MR. ADLER: But I'm speaking --

MR. CUMMINGS: Or do you mean the markets?

MR. ADLER: The markets, yeah.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah, yeah.

MR. ADLER: And will, in order to get something that they like, give up inventory, things far in excess of the value of what they're acquiring for the simple reason that the things that they already have have been paid for, it's been in their stock, they don't particularly want it. So no matter what it's worth, they'll give up what is requested -- and that's that Marlboro deal, you know.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. ADLER: Yeah, they're missing something. There is no chicanery. It's just that they don't know enough about the value of the things they -- that's another facet of a museum director. He's got to know so many things.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, right. It's a terrible job.

MR. ADLER: I know. It's awful.

MR. CUMMINGS: You know?

MR. ADLER: I think it's awful. I think it's an awful job and the abuse that they put up with. The Perry Rathbone incident, that's one of the most outlandish things I've ever heard, deliberate planning, you know the man that became friends with him only by default because no one else would take the job at the time. That was when they were raising [inaudible] at their 100th anniversary --

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, yeah.

MR. ADLER: -- and the Brahmins wouldn't touch the deal so they had this man who would, and I suppose did a fair job, but he moved right into the museum. He felt that his president, Perry Rathbone, as president of the museum would -- could take over all the duties and everything. [Inaudible], not that it was Seacliffe or Seagal or Segal or whatever his name is, and there he just started usurping the office or the staff right in the museum, directly interfering with his director's work. And now here was probably -- he and Sherman Lee are probably the two outstanding museum directors in the country and how you can undercut a man like that who was loved by the staff. To this day, you know they worship him and there is no security, nothing.

MR. CUMMINGS: No.

MR. ADLER: You're under pressure. You resign or get disgusted and resign or -- it's a pity -- pity.

MR. CUMMINGS: I don't know --

MR. ADLER: He was the backbone of the museum.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah. Are there other museum directors that you find exceptional or interesting because they --

MR. ADLER: Oh, there are, of course [inaudible]. Trick Brown felt he was a very experienced one. Then you start thinking of the next echelon of people, you know. People love museums. Charlie Cunningham, he is very good but he's out of that now.

MR. CUMMINGS: Do you find that the museum people are sometimes an aid in developing the collector?

MR. ADLER: Very often they do. They're responsible for the whole thing. I think certain great collections were form

ed by the director in the sense that he called attention to the object, went with a man, had the museum staff, curators check something out. Oh, they can be a great asset in forming -- and it's to the -- it's to the interests of the museum that they do that because the chances are that those things eventually find their way in the museum --

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. ADLER: -- and they might as well know what they have. I used to like very much to have a museum involved in an art deal. It made the sale easier because where people have doubts and suspicions about certain things, they get reassurance from the museum in the sense that they feel they have nothing personal to gain out of it. And so it facilitates that, oh, yeah. Museums are a -- well, the -- what's the -- what's the man who died, my old pal, before Hobing [phonetic]?

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, Rormer.

MR. ADLER: Rormer had various people who just depended on him and set up great personal friendships and all. They're all great collections and they depended on his okay. There was an understanding completely and incidentally, in connection with that is that [inaudible] historian and --

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, yeah.

MR. ADLER: Yeah. He was an enormous collector and --

MR. CUMMINGS: Was he a client of yours on occasion?

MR. ADLER: Oh, I -- oh, yes, yes. Those go back many, many years ago. He used to collect bronzes, porcelains, earlier things and quite a man.

MR. CUMMINGS: It's an enormous collection, isn't it?

MR. ADLER: Yeah, that's all going to the met.

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, that --

MR. ADLER: I think he was at 960 Fifth, too.



MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah, yeah.

MR. ADLER: And yeah, had this great paneled rooms, Jacobian rooms and large oak tables, wall strewn with all -- you know bronzes and whatnot. There's a story it may be apropos that his wife when she died left oh, \$15,000 to buy a bronze for his -- so you know think of it, that's all his life was worth anyway [they laugh], bronze or a piece of porcelain or --

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, fabulous. Do you find that -- I think with the proliferation of the university museum it increased activity in that part of the art world?

MR. ADLER: As a matter of fact, yes. We're tied up -- my daughters went to Wellesley and we're tied up now with -- retied up because I've given them over the years a great many of their paintings. But now they reactivated a new museum building and renewed interest -- my daughter -- we were up there just around two weeks ago to see what we could do to help the design, and one day she comes in, [inaudible] Hodge, quite frequently and we direct her and all. We're tied up the same way with Amherst. Frank Trap comes down regularly. In fact, we've put them up across the street. We have a little apartment there to help with expenses. Now they seek gifts and all. You'll find that is true in many colleges now and they're making an effort to increase their own collections. And with that, there's a very peculiar setup.

Now the women we know control the wealth, supposedly you know they live longer than their husbands.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. ADLER: Yet the -- if a woman's museum would have a heck of a job getting a work of art, that same woman who's graduating from college starts seeking her things will give to her husband's college very generously.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. ADLER: Now a place like Wellesley has a heck of a time raising money and they keep getting --

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, Finch College is a classic example. They went bankrupt because they couldn't do it.

MR. ADLER: Yeah, yeah.

MR. CUMMINGS: I mean and they certainly had a lot of wealthy girls that went there.

MR. ADLER: Sure, sure. There's -- you will find that the wife will leave it to her husband's college. Why not give it to their own college?

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah, yeah.

MR. ADLER: Talk about chauvinism, male pig or whatever you want. They perpetuate it.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah, yeah.

MR. ADLER: That's the whole thing, you know. Every sentence you utter can lead you into another -

MR. CUMMINGS: Into another one.

MR. ADLER: -- branch of where the problem exists. Of course, the law of university, you've got to make the appreciation of art --

MR. CUMMINGS: Wider and you develop new collections and --

MR. ADLER: -- [inaudible]. You get into the personality factors of people and molding of character, increase their knowledge, the social significance of art, the part it plays in a community, the state funding now you know, the legislature did a certain amount of -- that's unheard of, you know, years ago. So it's a recognition of the implications and also there's much greater participation of all its --

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MR. ADLER: -- you know people --

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, millions of people go to museums.

MR. ADLER: -- take themselves to museums. The museums all have schools and children walking around and stuff. Elderly people for therapeutics do it. Everybody is doing it.

MR. CUMMINGS: More and more, yeah. Well, that --

[END TAPE 3.]

MR. CUMMINGS: -- [inaudible] September 3, 1975, Paul Cummings talking to A.M. Adler in his office. You were the president of the art dealer -- Art and Antique Dealers' Association?

MR. ADLER: Yes.

MR. CUMMINGS: And this has been a while?

MR. ADLER: That's right.

MR. CUMMINGS: But what about the Art Dealers' Association, which you said you didn't have very good --

MR. ADLER: Well, no, I still don't.

MR. CUMMINGS: Interest or --

MR. ADLER: Yeah, I still don't but that's going to open up a whole big chapter and it's negativism rather than positivism, so I --

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MR. ADLER: But I just --

MR. CUMMINGS: Just in general terms.

MR. ADLER: Well, I thought it was a vehicle for a Colon and a little core of dealers who would have charge of that and get all the benefits out of it. And by benefits I don't mean normal benefits, but all these that were sort of this little tightly-knit group taking over everything and all of the advantages that it could have. And we were one of the founding groups and this sort of -- Herschel did that while I was in Europe. When I got back, I insisted we get right out for various reasons.

One being I didn't believe in the integrity of the top of this whole thing, which was later fortified by certain IRS people who came to be an omen. On occasion they almost took away their credit [inaudible] because of conflicts of interests, and Colon being the lawyer for Paley on a matter against the IRS and here they are and organized -- he's the head of an organization --

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. ADLER: -- and was supposed to work with the IRS and to --

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. ADLER: Yeah, in connection with the Picasso he gave to the Museum of Modern -- the Whitney Museum -- not the Whitney but the Museum of Modern Art and actually, eventually they had a man here. The IRS came to me and I suggested that they accept those figures because I said, "It's a great work of art and in a very little while it's going to make there -- it's not going to be as expensive."

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, right.

MR. ADLER: And the net gain of it all is in a museum, an American museum got a --

MR. CUMMINGS: Real major picture.

MR. ADLER: -- a major picture and I don't know if [inaudible] big pictures. Well, anyway I never believed in it. I don't believe in the restrictions. No dealer can give an appraisal on his own. They dictate there what he charges and all of that. There are a whole lot of things that monitoring may be good in certain hands. In other hands it can be a repressive organization.

MR. CUMMINGS: How do you contrast it with Art and Antique Dealers' Association?

MR. ADLER: Well, maybe because the Art and Antique Dealers' Association is ineffectual or maybe because it has the strength to impose its will on people, and it's the judicious imposition of the will that is the cause of my complaint. It's an area I don't -- it's argumentative and there's no sense in getting into it.

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, but it's interesting to have your point of view because you've --

MR. ADLER: But I --

MR. CUMMINGS: -- been in the trade for so long.

MR. ADLER: -- I just don't believe in the integrity of the inner core. They've all become rich. They've all I think benefited greatly by the insider to making a living when they are a quasi-official organization.

MR. CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm, right, right.

MR. ADLER: In government, you know it's like the generals, after they retire go and become president of munitions corporations or what they do.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, yeah.

MR. ADLER: But anyways, that's that. Anyway.

MR. CUMMINGS: Now, but you were president of the Art and Antique Dealers'. What [inaudible]?

MR. ADLER: There were a lot of good things that I can remember. We were in a sense --and I must go back a bit. The league was exceedingly stronger in its earlier days than it was in the later years.

MR. CUMMINGS: What caused the shift?

MR. ADLER: It just -- well, they had all the big dealers there --

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, right.

MR. ADLER: -- in those days and there were a lot fewer dealers and therefore, they had a lot of strength. They each put on shows at Madison Square Gardens and other places where -- the Charles and London people like that where they put on very extensive shows for the CINOA. I may have mentioned them before.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, right.

MR. ADLER: And as time went, on it was diluted, a few wholesalers got in and that sort of stuff, and it lost a lot of its potency. But anyway, during my tenure, which was quite a few years, I could name some of the things that we did, which were rather important. One, we monitored the auctions and galleries, and of course, the [inaudible] was the [inaudible] Gallery and where they would have sales like Roche Berceau [phonetic] sale, you know, and some of the others [inaudible] where they advertised the contents of the chateau then.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. ADLER: There was just a token representation of the content, but the man who was developing the [inaudible], and I do forget his name -- it will come back -- who ran these sales, would get the consent, the use of the name from some [inaudible] member of that family.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. ADLER: And they'd put a large illustration on the cover of the catalog, the content --

MR. CUMMINGS: Make it look good, right.

MR. ADLER: -- and the chateaus and so and so. Then they'd come around all over here and in Paris and buy up a lot of things and put it in the sale. So we monitored it to that degree where we were threatened and we actually got the -- had to hold the sale up and cancel the sale because of misrepresentation. And they had to announce in the newspaper with additions or whatever it is and also prior to the sale they had to make certain statements, you know so that there was a protection of the public to that degree.

MR. CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

MR. ADLER: We were also self-monitoring in the sense that anybody had a complaint against a dealer they'd write to the association and we would almost try that there and we have had many incidents that we kept within our ranks where we expelled or -- someone fairly well-known firms from the organization because of their practices.

MR. CUMMINGS: Was there a committee in charge of that sort of activity or was it --

MR. ADLER: Well, you have your executive committee at all times --

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. ADLER: -- which usually took up the matter. If it caused an inquiry on a certain thing they would go on and form a committee. We had that Gough Delough [phonetic] sale. We held that up because there again, it was all a lot of additions put into the building. Then we almost tried to take their license away at [inaudible], but we had the assistance of Dewey's firm because they represented Billy Rose. Apparently, Billy Rose had gone into an arrangement with the people to buy the house in a certain condition and therefore, he bought almost \$200,000 worth of objects like large commodes or mirrors that would be in situ, you know.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, right.

MR. ADLER: And so then they would have to move and there was a disagreement and so Billy's firm was sent to sort of help out on this case against the [inaudible]. But anyway, it was a monitoring organization and it did a lot of good. Then it put on certain exhibitions, which are pretty well-known.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, but they haven't done that for a number of years so --

MR. ADLER: Well, CINOA was the last.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, well, that's ---

MR. ADLER: The CINOA show was done by two organizations, which was the petty offshoot of original art and antique dealers doing the [inaudible] over there. Antique dealers [inaudible] formed that into this -- they have a small organization. But they represent a pretty good firm and together we have put on the CINOA show.

MR. CUMMINGS: How did that come about because that's a --

MR. ADLER: Well, it --

MR. CUMMINGS: -- rather unique experience?

MR. ADLER: Yeah -- no, well, it is for America.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. ADLER: It goes back to some years when I was president of the Art and Antique Dealers. I got a sort of semi-commitment from [inaudible] to have the show at the Metropolitan Museum. It's been the custom of the host country where the president is to put on a show of this stature, actually, one of the national galleries of the country. There was one of the -- in Amsterdam they had the Reich Museum there. The one with the -- with the BADA, British Antique Dealers', put it on at the Victoria and Albert Museum. There had large, extensive exhibitions and enormous catalogs and people from all over the countries, member countries were involved. You can imagine where the catalogs are.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, yes, I -- oh, yeah.

MR. ADLER: Let me find the cover here.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh. Oh, yeah, splendid catalog.

MR. ADLER: You can have that if you like.

MR. CUMMINGS: Thank you. Now what -- what does --

MR. ADLER: Now --

MR. CUMMINGS: What did this exhibition do because it is the first one had it here ever?

MR. ADLER: Well, I wanted to get back to CINOA and it's been about eight years or so ago, and we got a semi-commitment, [inaudible] and others like that to help us that he was recommended. We would say there would be nothing for sale. It was purely a prestige thing. We felt that there were these things there that were good enough for the Metropolitan Museum and other museums, and if they wanted to they could buy later, but there would be nothing for sale at the museum. And this was the same situation obtained here. There was nothing for sale at the museum. What you could do outside of it --

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. ADLER: But I think it's great for the dealers from all over the world. They let their best things known. It lends prestige to art and our industry as a whole, or profession worth doing. It lends legitimacy to the business. You know there was a day when an art dealer was considered a very shady character. I don't know whether you're aware of that and all the atrocities committed in the name of selling art [inaudible].

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. ADLER: So it's changed the nature of any business, like the American Medical Association, to have its organization and many of the others. The Bar Association, it brings to the top the best that there is and quality of the business. So it's a very, I thought a very --

MR. CUMMINGS: Was it successful from the members' point of view?

MR. ADLER: Yes, it cost the members money. I know altogether I've had two pieces in there and with the contributions about \$2,500 it cost me as an individual. And there are others who gave contributions. But the net result was that they made about oh, perhaps about \$65,000 profit out of it.

MR. CUMMINGS: Really?

MR. ADLER: I think we gave \$20,000 to the Metropolitan Museum to their scholarship or traveling fund, you know, for curators, and the other part was divided between the two organizations, which are non-profit organizations --

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, right.

MR. ADLER: -- and will be used for some beneficial general --

MR. CUMMINGS: Was that -- that money from admissions and catalog sales and things like that?

MR. ADLER: Not admissions, no. We lost money on the sale of the catalogs. It was basically from the contributions of its members and a few other outsiders. I think Henry Ford sent I think it was \$5,000 and other people like that. But mostly the members and you paid so much for an article and

also so much to have it illustrated. The proceeds of that were enough to give you the [inaudible] for the museum.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah. It was a fascinating exhibition I thought.

MR. ADLER: It was very good. You know it's usually -- I mean --

MR. CUMMINGS: Jammed with people and everything.

MR. ADLER: -- it was a [inaudible] thing. It was not a -- you can be top-weighted, you know, in one direction and not enough representation in the other.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. ADLER: For instance, I put in my Cycladic figures there to give a little weight to antiquity. There wasn't enough of that.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, right.

MR. ADLER: The days of Bremer are over and very few, you know, dealers in ancient art, so the -- my personal collection, but I gave that and I gave the Greek vase there to put in there. In fact, the piece of silver that I loaned to Weims [phonetic], he didn't have a piece that was acceptable to them. I gave him a piece to use in the exhibition.

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, how are things, you know selected or rejected by --

MR. ADLER: We had -- that was a committee. I was on two of the committees. I was on the committee to perform the whole thing anyway as past president, but I was on the vetting committee for antiquities and for paintings. So I was on those two committees. Now we, as a committee, met and rejected or accepted submitted photographs and the [inaudible].

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. ADLER: After we made those selections we passed them on to the Metropolitan Museum, where their curatorial staff went over that and had the final say --

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, I see.

MR. ADLER: -- to whether it was good or bad. In the main, our things were accepted, some were rejected, and the things rejected in some cases would cause controversy because the dealer felt that they knew more than the curator and that they were wrong. And there was -- being involved with an important piece of silver and the dealer felt he knew a great deal more than the silver expert at the Met. He may have, I don't know, and he had evidence that they were wrong and he was right about the attributions. There was another piece that somebody in Europe who was a well-known dealer in these things, and the Met turned that down. And there was a piece of furniture. It was [inaudible] English furniture [inaudible], which the Met turned down and this man whose piece they turned down was considered among the trade and all about the best expert, and he was turned down. And you know I sided with the Met on that for the simple reason that a dealer who has just had great past experience in his field can slip up in one respect that he doesn't have a sense of the art sequence. By that I mean the design, what is true design of a period. The piece [inaudible] was undoubtedly of French origin, not of --

MR. CUMMINGS: English.

MR. ADLER: -- of English and therefore, what is it doing on a piece of English furniture.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, I see.

MR. ADLER: So stylistically speaking, you know, a museum man can pick something out which an art dealer may not. He may not know enough about the nuance of that style --

MR. CUMMINGS: Or look at that from another side, yeah.

MR. ADLER: The fact that they were both old to the -- the [inaudible] was old and the bronze -- and the piece of furniture was old, that the this or that, it's almost immaterial. If stylistically they determine this could not be --

MR. CUMMINGS: Come together out of --

MR. ADLER: -- [inaudible] you find that they're right. But the converse is true also. I remember years ago, professor Weinberger, who was part of the institute when I was attending classes there, we saw a pair of bronzes that I had with [inaudible], and he said, "Oh, my God, these are remarkable. They're wonderful." In fact, they're -- you know whatever you will and they were probably done in the year 1586 and that sort of stuff there, which was all very good except for one thing. It was not of the period. Stylistically he was dead right, but in reality it was -- he was not correct.

MR. CUMMINGS: So for the later caste or something?

MR. ADLER: Yeah. Yeah.

MR. CUMMINGS: How fantastic, yeah.

MR. ADLER: So here was a man who knew from the stylistic point of view everything there is to be known about sculpture from the day of its origin to the -- but he's dead now -- but couldn't tell when the piece was in the period. So --

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MR. ADLER: -- you get both sides of the field, you see. I remember some of Ackerman, she was the tapestry authority. She was the wife of Pope, the great Persian [inaudible]. Once looked at a tapestry that I knew the history of, the gothic tapestry, [inaudible] with [inaudible] in the middle with little animals in the corner, she said, "Oh, yes, that was woven in [inaudible] and [inaudible] at this and this year." I could write a certificate and tell you exactly who the man who did the cartoon, who wove it and all, but I knew damn well that that piece was put together from fragments in Paris. So what she was looking at was a stylistic representation without being able to see that the [inaudible] and all had been put together and very cleverly done and there was another genuine mystique to it, made of genuinely old pieces --

MR. CUMMINGS: Was pastiche really?

MR. ADLER: -- and also done probably from Gerbel's book of tapestries and where the [inaudible] is similar and they --

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.



MR. ADLER: -- and so the difference between the scholarship and [inaudible] --

MR. CUMMINGS: That's true. That's true.

MR. ADLER: Some dealers know a great deal more than these people who have written books on the subject. They can tell from the design or from the style whether something is by this man, but that is actually [inaudible].

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, right.

MR. ADLER: Some of the biggest, most important people in Europe got caught on that.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah, that's right. I was going to ask you because I can't look -- have any other members been presidents in a while? I don't think there's anyone.

MR. ADLER: Well, there was an interim one through a mistake, but I was the only one really.

MR. CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm. What is the difference between that and the Art and Antique Dealers'? It's international and --

MR. ADLER: We're members of CINOA.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. ADLER: CINOA is the organization composed of the dealers' associations of the various countries.

MR. CUMMINGS: I see.

MR. ADLER: And that's the purpose here, you see. These are the member countries.

MR. CUMMINGS: I see, right.

MR. ADLER: Now this logo or what is it?

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MR. ADLER: Yeah, I put up \$1,000 for a contest, international contest as president to get this logo for the -- we selected that thing there. This is all my own doing, the whole darn thing.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, terrific.

MR. ADLER: But we have the organization in Belgium and in England it's the British Antique Dealers' Association and now there are other organizations that supply and deal with paintings, a national organization. In France it's, you know all the --

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. ADLER: -- there must be about 25,000 members in France in their organization, and in Belgium. Well, we -- it's a very powerful and very large group of people.

MR. CUMMINGS: But internationally you must have an enormous body of members?

MR. ADLER: Yes, we do. Oh, as individual members it's an enormous number, yeah. Yeah, and the British Antique Dealers' Association has got practically ever legitimate art dealer all over Great Britain, including most of the painting firms like Leggett and whatever you -- all the names in the whole group there.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MR. ADLER: And here we have Rosenstein is a member of the Art and Antique Dealers', Newhouse, and -- but basically they are dealers in objets d'art. MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. ADLER: Right.

MR. CUMMINGS: Now, what's the purpose of belonging to an organization like that? What is it's function?

MR. ADLER: Well, you support your trade organization as it were. If there is any serious problem they can help you out. They can support you or perhaps monitor you. Also you have the little -- and the signs out in the windows --

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. ADLER: -- which lends a little prestige, lends legitimacy to your firm that you are a responsible member and your peers have elected you to an organization and therefore, it's safe to do business with you. And if they don't do well by you, you can complain to that organization and get justice, and that's usually the case. We've never let anything go that would have to be corrected. [Inaudible] to the satisfaction of the wronged party.

MR. CUMMINGS: Do you think that it aids in doing business, I mean of one -- say as a dealer in this country and you decide to go to France or somewhere, is it an [inaudible]?

MR. ADLER: Oh, yes, [inaudible] they know that you are a member of that organization and therefore, are all right. You're not a fly-by-night firm.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, that's fascinating. I just wondered, we talked on and off about various collectors and I was just wondering if there were any collectors in the last few years who were of, you know have been particular clients or of particular interest to you? Are there any anecdote styles or things that would be of interest?

MR. ADLER: Well, I don't know that I personally would care to go into that. Some intimate things where you get into a household and you have intimate things about people. You get to know so much about the lives of people.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. ADLER: Some of it, it [inaudible] skeletons and --

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughs.] Oh, yeah.

MR. ADLER: -- they would sort of die to this day if they thought I knew anything about it, but somebody injudiciously talks about so and so shot her cousin when she was found there killed and that sort of -- this one committed suicide because his mistress was pregnant and he found her, and those are actual things, you know that happened over the years and --

MR. CUMMINGS: No, but I was more in terms of --

MR. ADLER: About their art --

MR. CUMMINGS: -- activities.

MR. ADLER: Well, I don't think that if you deal with Paul Mellon or the Rockefellers or people all over the country I just named that would be known to everybody, they're personalities are pretty well-known. Some you would get to be a little bit more intimate with than others, you know, but I would say that our circle of friends today are pretty much the result of my professional activities. They've become clients, become friends and contact -- two human beings will contact one another and anything can happen. It's like being introduced to somebody. You can become great friends.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, right.

MR. ADLER: It's the same with that. No, there's just an area which in the old days they used to talk -  
- I know the Devine books or whatever you know --

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. ADLER: -- the man he would -- with Morgan and he took his paintings and he smashed one of the two vases.

MR. CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm, [inaudible] and --

MR. ADLER: And that was --

MR. CUMMINGS: -- great story.

MR. ADLER: -- a fake one in the shows. It's great. I don't know how much of that. I can go into the finds and things that I've purchased over the years, no announce, knew that and I didn't know it, and you know, toot your horn that way but --

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, but that's kind of -- it's fascinating --

MR. ADLER: It's interesting.

MR. CUMMINGS: -- to know that --

MR. ADLER: I may have mentioned, I don't know, going many years ago to Mrs. Whitney's --

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, yes. Yeah, right.

MR. ADLER: -- Museum, you know, and that was -- those things like that or finding a painting that nobody knew or recognized and it turned out to be that -- it had an enormous increment.

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, are these --

MR. ADLER: But these -- I don't know. I often see in the newspapers a man who found a \$5 painting at some old antique dealers and it turned out to be a long lost part of a thing there. I -- I don't know if that's very productive. I've never had the \$5 painting turn into a million dollar painting.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. ADLER: That I'll say right off the bat, no.

MR. CUMMINGS: But you know, in terms of finding pictures, are they found through personal contact or research or do you look for things?

MR. ADLER: Well, it depends on the type of business you do. If you -- and we handled, you know, when I -- across the street here, have a large volume of paintings --

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. ADLER: -- you don't have too much time for the research on one particular painting. We did have at the time people that worked like Ms. Lamb who would research it but [inaudible] we employed there, where we've asked her to look up [inaudible] and things. But basically, you see -- you know pretty much what you buy. There's provenance and your own recognition and there are surprises and that sort of stuff there. And it becomes almost a routine thing.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. ADLER: We dealt so much with museums, for instance. They have their own investigative groups. We have ours. In certain areas we know a great deal more than the curator of that museum would know because we have much more exposure to certain schools, and they take your advice, so your integrity plays an important part.

MR. CUMMINGS: I was going to ask you, because we had talked about museum directors before but not really curators, are there curators around the country that you, I was going to say admired over the years and in particular fields that you feel are --

MR. ADLER: Oh, of course, they're well-known those that are, but curators, if they're awfully good end up pretty much as the director of a museum and then it's -- I've known, for instance, Cooney at the Brooklyn Museum in the Egyptology, who was an outstanding scholar. Butler now at the Brooklyn Museum outstanding scholar in Egyptian art. Vermule up in Boston, you know, is a great scholar in Greek things. I'll tell you one area that we could touch on here if you wanted to get away from this all, and that is in authentication of --

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, that's good.

MR. ADLER: -- [inaudible] art and more specifically, that Boston laboratory museum.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, yes, right.

MR. ADLER: I would say in the main they do service in routine things, but they've made some horrible mistakes where it calls for a great exercise of ingenuity, and I'm afraid they're limited in their knowledge. Their scientific know-how is not that great and they've proved very costly to people. I've had person experiences like these where it's very [inaudible] where you can tell the patina has been put on by means of paint or whether it's a natural --

MR. CUMMINGS: Development, yeah.

MR. ADLER: That's easy. [Inaudible] can get that means for finding that out. But where it requires more than that, where it requires deductive reasoning and all, they don't have the scientific know-how.

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, I always wonder how far one can go where -- in just scientific analysis in making accurate judgments on works like that.

MR. ADLER: Well, you see, that's the kind of battle of wits of all times between the forger and the detective.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. ADLER: Basically, the scholar will say stylistically this isn't right because the edge of the bladder or it should be longer or whatnot, which I think can be poppycock, too because variance on all these possible, and all of times and different areas, you can get the Cycladic figure from one island, where you get one from another island and there can be slight variations. There may have been a man who came from Anatolia, the origins of all who lived there, and he may have worked in a slightly different clay and the stylistic expert can be wrong, too. On the other hand, the one who goes only by scientific means without any awareness of style can be wrong also.

MR. CUMMINGS: So you think he --

MR. ADLER: Indeed he may not know enough.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. ADLER: One of the tests in Cycladic art, for instance, which people are afraid of is chemical to see what little samples will reveal and put through the qualitative -- I've had every form of chemistry. That's why I think I can talk with some degree of accuracy. They will put it through the various tests, facets and all to see if they were employed. Marble of course is calcium carbonate. That's pure marble and any presence of other chemicals outside of natural causes is subject of doubt. And one of the tests lately developed in Germany somewhere along the line was that the presence of calcium sulfate would indicate an acid had been used to create this sort of a phony surface. Now, I spoke to professor Frandel the other day. He's the professor of mineralogy at Harvard and the head of the mineralogical museum they have. He said, "Poppycock." He said, "If that Cycladic figure were buried in an area near water, that would certainly have sulfates there --

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. ADLER: -- and you would find calcium sulfate presence there."

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. ADLER: So all the tests and the --

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughs.] Yeah.

MR. ADLER: And I must say that I lost \$25,000 recently because of that one examination. After the same people told me that it was all right before buying it, I went through an enormous deal of trouble to make sure because Cycladic figures are very often under suspicion.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, right.

MR. ADLER: And they assured me it was okay. Afterwards, the man who bought it from me took it there because I said it was past on by the laboratory, and without realizing that they had already passed on it, they told the man that it was a fake because it had calcium sulfate in it.

MR. CUMMINGS: Hmm, that's fascinating.

MR. ADLER: [Inaudible].

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MR. ADLER: It's a field in which -- and a painting, too. I can tell you of a case of a -- of a Rembrandt that was sold in 1935. I did it through Howard Young. It was famous Bixby Rembrandt that sold for \$150,000 in 1935, which was the depth of the Depression and a heck of a price. Signed Rembrandt. It was called the Bixby, they said. It was in all the books, *Rembrandts in America* and the Klaska d'Kuntz [phonetic] and all of that, so provenance and all. Now it turns out that was not by Rembrandt, even though it's signed and all because Gerson says it's not. It's by a pupil.

MR. CUMMINGS: Hmm.

MR. ADLER: Now instead of this thing is worth \$2.5 million today, it's -- it has only a nominal value.

MR. CUMMINGS: But you know, how long will that last until somebody comes along and says --

MR. ADLER: If art appears to be all --

MR. CUMMINGS: -- Gerson's wrong?

MR. ADLER: That's right. I don't know.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MR. ADLER: But if art was going to be only a matter of dollars and cents then it's a very insecure business.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah, that's true.

MR. ADLER: Of course you [inaudible] by the mere change of attribution you've lost an enormous sum of money.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, right.

MR. ADLER: And that's sad. It's a sad part of this business. Everybody acts on good faith. Nobody has any incriminations, but it was just inadequate scholarship or too much scholarship from [inaudible].

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughs.] That's incredible.

MR. ADLER: The Metropolitan's Rembrandts have --

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, right, right.

MR. ADLER: -- have been under question.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. ADLER: You know that. They -- it was changing the attributions of hundreds of paintings in the Met also is a controversial thing. I remember doing a painting -- a paper on sculptors. Did I mention

that to you?

MR. CUMMINGS: No.

MR. ADLER: On the pulpit Pisa -- Nicola -- Pisano, Giovanni Pisano was the sculptor of that and the result of my paper and other corroborated material was that everything was in tact when they put it together, all the pieces, fit it in from the iconological -- iconographical point of view it was not. And here at the Metropolitan Museum at the same time, the three pieces from the original pulpit at Pisa by Giovanni Pisano from a collection our friend the Rolling Stone -- Strawberry Hill.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah, the English fellow.

MR. ADLER: Yeah, well, at any rate, through his collection and whatnot the -- but who's right and who's wrong? The Met obviously is wrong because everything fit it in. It's just complete and it's there today. Nothing is missing. And they claim to have three pieces from --

MR. CUMMINGS: That's fascinating, yeah. Since we're jumping around here, do you have any interests or activities outside the art business?

MR. ADLER: A great deal.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah.

MR. ADLER: Of course in my -- I call them my charities.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. ADLER: I spend a great deal of time on the Museum of Jerusalem. I'm one of the founders of it.

MR. CUMMINGS: Now how is that --

MR. ADLER: I gave them my whole art library, my whole collection there.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, you mentioned that, but how did you become a founder?

MR. ADLER: I don't know.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughs.]

MR. ADLER: I just don't know. I just -- it was just of interest to me. Well, I know how I got to be tied up with the museum, yeah. I ran for the -- I was, for many years, the chairman of the art division of the United Jewish Appeal, and how I ever got into that, I don't know either.

MR. CUMMINGS: [Laughs.]

MR. ADLER: But I basically lived in New Haven and had very little Jewish contact, but here I came in --

MR. CUMMINGS: Somebody called you up one day and --

MR. ADLER: -- I don't know, just --

MR. CUMMINGS: -- there you were on a committee.

MR. ADLER: Yeah, and I ran the auction to the [inaudible] for years, and one of the sales, the last in 40 -- '67, we got about \$300,000. It was right after that five-day law or something --

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, yeah, right.

MR. ADLER: -- law and people were high and all of that, and then shortly after the first time I went to Jerusalem we went to Israel, the wife and I, and Carl Katz --

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. ADLER: -- was then temporary director of the museum. And when he saw me he berated me, "Those paintings you had sold at auction would have fit into this museum very much so and I think you've been wrong in doing that. Why didn't you have it given to us?" And I said to him, well, I thought that survival at that time was more important than, you know, a few works of art which they would get in the future anyway. And then my wife looked at me and [inaudible] she nodded, yeah, said, "Fine," she said -- I said, "You can have my art library when I die." Then Axel Spring had gave him this money --

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, the building, right.

MR. ADLER: -- or the building and they had no books, so I decided to give it to them and here I am bereft of them.

MR. CUMMINGS: The museum in Jerusalem, what else have you been doing with them?

MR. ADLER: Well, I've been giving the library a start and I've given them other important objects of art that I had, important Egyptian obelisk. I have given them some paintings, a Monet pastel. I've given them art, archeological art. I am now giving them five pieces that I bought in Jerusalem on one of my visits. I came right alongside of a couple of excavations of the 2nd century A.D. Romans, you know, the Cave of Letters. But I've also given to Amherst. I've given them a great many things. I've given Yale things.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. ADLER: I've given the Museum of Modern Art things. It's been a policy to give and under our present tax structure, it's also --

MR. CUMMINGS: Has a benefit?

MR. ADLER: -- is beneficial, yeah, and advantageous to do so, so that's the story.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yeah. I think one thing you had mentioned before that we really just didn't say much about it. You mentioned the importance of recognizing trends and shifts in taste. How do you do that? I mean just --

MR. ADLER: Well, it's a curious -- well --

MR. CUMMINGS: It's so ephemeral.

MR. ADLER: Yeah, it's very difficult. I imagine one of the hints -- I mean you asked what good architecture is. I think architectural trends have always set the pace for the things in art.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, really?



MR. ADLER: Well, just start to think about it. If you had -- well, let's go back to almost any time, but let's get to more recent times. Let's say Louis XV style in architecture. It called for a similar sympathetic design of the interior as to the contents.

MR. CUMMINGS: Do you think that still holds true in 20th century?

MR. ADLER: Also, I think it also very much -- there's another whole area which I've long thought about that time produces all of it. In other words, it produces the -- you can tell a time politically and the minds of people and all by architecture and their styles. Now that's something that people can go into very extensively. How would you picture somebody, in other words how would it would even look in a Louis XV's room, with the Louis XV just decorations, the furniture and objects of art, what dress would you picture? You can almost picture the dress and the costume and almost the customs.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. ADLER: By that I mean the prevailing, the wealthier people, not the poor.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. ADLER: The poor of all times are just surviving and they are just attendant to the style of clothes and not a contributed one. Then go onto any period that you want after that.

MR. CUMMINGS: Do you think that's true in the 20th century as well?

MR. ADLER: Well, look at it. Look at the 20th century. You have the -- your Bauhaus school, the geometric, you know, forms and all, and I remember seeing the old German furniture at the time, and we've gotten more and more complex electronically looking in the form of electronic -- like a print -- imprint of a television set [inaudible].

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, right, right.

MR. ADLER: And can you -- it's not hard to understand the abstract arts, the various forms that it's taken on, and with it all that same complicated lives that they are. Economics are so damn complicated.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. ADLER: Nothing's simple anymore and it's jumbled. You need --

MR. CUMMINGS: The little pocket calculators.

MR. ADLER: The calculators to do work. They do math; all of that stuff there. It's all enough to create psychoses, neuroses, and get it -- throw the whole book at the human being today. So I would say yes, they very much reflect our own thinking and our own confusions and whatnot.

MR. CUMMINGS: I bet one of the obvious things, and I don't know whether you want to talk about it, is Mr. Feld's appearance in the horizon and the --

MR. ADLER: I would rather not.

MR. CUMMINGS: -- subsequent events.

MR. ADLER: It was one of the most powerful experiences in my life. Let's leave it at that.

MR. CUMMINGS: But it should in some way be documented or is it in papers and --

MR. ADLER: Well --

MR. CUMMINGS: -- and things and some of the --

MR. ADLER: -- I think plenty of other people will document that for you. I know a lot of people who know him.

MR. CUMMINGS: How did you pick him in the first place?

MR. ADLER: Well, there are very valid reasons. For one thing I wanted a little more expertise. I ran that whole organization in the United States, started as the president --

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, right.

MR. ADLER: -- oversaw the whole thing.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. ADLER: Practically every decision made at Herschel and Adler I made. Well, and I thought that we needed a little more expertise in American art. I foresaw that that was going to be a booming trend. They were running out of French paintings. Then I -- my daughters weren't interested in going into the gallery. I had no sons. Herschel's son died, you know. He had epilepsy. And I heard that he, Stuart Feld was leaving. We had some friends in common, the Horowitz's and [inaudible], and I thought it would be rather good if we could get somebody who knew the business. We'd break them in in a business sense and then he can carry on after he we retired. It was my intention to do it and well, I found out later on he was fired from the Metropolitan Museum, and not the personality as I learned from -- well, from then on it was just a nightmare --

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. ADLER: --and I was very, very glad to see it plague on all the other players. So let's just leave it at that.

MR. CUMMINGS: Okay well --

[END OF INTERVIEW.]

Last updated...June 11, 2009