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**Oral history interview with Henry S. Booth, 1977  
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**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

**DB:** DENNIS BARRIE

**HB:** HENRY BOOTH

**DB:** My name is Dennis Barrie. I'm here in the office of Mr. Henry Booth, one of the trustees of Cranbrook and son of George and Ellen Booth, founders of Cranbrook. I'd like to talk about the early influences on your father, on your parents and then get into Cranbrook specifically. Maybe we could start with what factors do you believe influenced your father in his young life to become interested in art?

**HB:** As far as I can recall from what was said and so on, his own feeling about that was the great influence of his own parents and the other family members that were in the copper business. Apparently his uncle was very much better off, I never understood why, no, pardon me, it was an uncle-in law, Henry Langley, that was wealthy. He was an architect in Toronto, Ontario. Henry Langley lived very well and apparently had a nice house with a lot of nice things in it. My father on occasion would go there to visit and would stay overnight and was duly impressed. However, that wasn't the only thing. The thing that my father put the emphasis on was the attitude and the ability of his own father and mother to make a very attractive home even when they were in financial straits. They always had a knack of fixing things up and making it unusual. The garden and all the rest of it. He remembered as a boy going out in the country with a little wagon of some kind and lugging home rocks to make a rock garden. Things like that. So that, from his standpoint, his parents always had a very attractive, comfortable home. I may have mentioned before a rather unusual thing that happened when he was in St. Thomas when my grandfather, Henry Wood Booth had a business manufacturing a substitute for coffee which was more or less the same thing as Postum. The two products came out just about the same time and there has always been an argument as to who invented it. Incidentally I haven't heard of Postum for years.

**DB:** No, I haven't either.

**HB:** I don't know if it's still in existence or not.

**DB:** It may come back with the coffee boycott.

**HB:** Anyway, they had a small factory just back of the house and the factory apparently had some steam and they had a steam fountain in their back yard.

**DB:** That's incredible. A steam fountain.

**HB:** I think they had a steam fountain at the New York World's Fair, but otherwise I don't know that I ever heard of one. Well, anyway I think that indicates that there was a certain amount of imagination, if not even a little touch of genius perhaps on the part of all sorts of artistic attitudes and so on. When my grandfather came out to Cranbrook to live in his latter years he developed a lot of paths through the woods and built the cascade from the Greek theater with the assistance of one man. So, looking back again, my father had this influence and as he acquired some wealth he was very much interested in having a beautiful home. When my parents were married my father decided to get a good architect to build the home on Trumbull Avenue in Detroit. It was Mason or Mason was involved in some way. Looking back I was thinking just the other day that that house in many ways was more elegant than this one is. And it was quite forward looking, quite modern in the

sense that they had built-in furniture. There was a built in desk at the end of the library, and benches and so on, which I believe was quite unusual for that time. There was a certain elegance about the outside of the house. There was a two-story oblong bay window toward the street which had a sort of copper repousse effect that had been built up and hammered out. It was really a very elegant piece of design. The house was more sort of Dutch influence than anything else, which was popular at that time, with step gables and so on. Well, one of the things which has astounded me in a way was why the urge to get out to the country because we had a very unusual situation in Detroit. The only view I can think of, and of course I was pretty young at the time, but anyway the only people I can think of who had what you would call a real gardens setup for their house was the Sarmiento family just off Cass Avenue. They had a walled garden. I was never in it, but I assume that probably they had some sculpture and that it was really laid out beautifully. Well, on our piece of property in Detroit which was just north of Grand River Avenue the house in the middle faced primarily south looking over a lawn area with a small pond. At the far end of the pond was what we called a hill, I think it was eighteen inches high, but anyway I remember coasting down it. And the water for this pond came out of a waterfall that came out of a corner of the house, a sort of naturalistic waterfall, and went through a little channel and under a little arched bridge and reached the pond. The pond had a little beach effect so we could go wading and that's where the birds always used to congregate and so on. In back of the house was the barn. It was a handsome building designed by Albert Kahn. As I recall it cost eight hundred dollars. The barn had a box stall with leaded casement windows in it for Bess, the horse. I have a good picture of my mother giving Bess a lump of sugar sticking her head out of the casement window. On the other side of the house was the driveway and there was a porte-cochere which was cantilevered out and the whole thing was all wood carved. It was really a very handsome thing. Beyond that was a formal garden with bay trees and a couple of semi-circular beds toward the end with a variety of flowers. Beyond that or connecting the garden from the Trumbull Avenue end there was a pergola. The pergola overlooked a grass tennis court where you looked through the gate from the formal garden here was a white marble wall sundial. On the sundial was the inscription from Robert Herrick which is on that brass plate under the clock shelf "Hours fly, flowers die, new days, new days pass by love stays." We had that plate made just sort of bring that thought out to Cranbrook. Then behind the tennis court there was a house to store the boy trees in winter and a lean to greenhouse against that. And at the back of the formal garden and separating the tennis court was a wooden lattice fence with brick piers. And facing the greenhouse was a vegetable garden and a laundry yard. The whole thing, well, that's really quite a list.

**DB:** Yes, it is.

**HB:** I didn't go around Detroit too much. Every once in a while we'd go out driving in the carriage. I think of places like the Hecker house and the Ferry House, where the Detroit Institute of Arts is now. My recollection of them is of a big lawn with maybe a round bed of red cannas and a cast iron dog or a big deer. And that was it.

**DB:** So the grounds of your town house were really quite elaborate, quite.

**HB:** Yes, actually it was not a big area, but things were divided up so that you got surprises every place you went. That is one of the things I try to keep in mind around here. Some people want to clear everything out if you can't see the lake or something. Well, you don't want to see the whole lake, you want to see just enough to make you want to go down the hill to look. My mother had been to Europe before she was married. I don't know when my parents took their first trip to Europe. I'm sure they were intrigued by Italian gardens and so on way, way back. Certainly the idea stuck with them. Everywhere they traveled they couldn't help but be thinking about Cranbrook. My father used to carry a notebook in which he recorded the dimensions of things.

**DB:** Dimensions of what, sculpture?

**HB:** Well, things where he'd get the idea that we ought to do this or that.

**DB:** I see. Like a little garden?

**HB:** So that if he ran into something .... For instance in this notebook he had the dimensions of the high altar at Christ Church Cranbrook. If he went to a Florentine dealers for instance, he could go in there and look at all sorts of fine old fabrics and come away with a couple of nice altar frontals or fabric to make a fine altar frontal. He was always alert for things of that sort and made use of it all the time. He was always thinking of opportunities. My brother James used to say that all he needed was an excuse to build and in the sense that he had the money all he needed was an excuse to buy. He didn't buy things just for the sake of buying. He always had an idea of what might be done with them.

**DB:** So his earliest buying was pretty calculated toward a goal, toward a use?

**HB:** I think so, yes. I'm pretty sure that's true.

**DB:** What about your father's relationship with your grandfather, James E. Scripps?

**HB:** When mother and father were first married, Mr. and Mrs. Scripps went abroad for I guess it was a year or more .... I have a hunch that that's one of the trips when he started buying paintings. Well, they were living in the house. And also I think an uncle, I think it was George Scripps, I've never quite been able to figure out George Scripps, apparently he had a certain amount of money but he was sponging off his brother or half-brother or whoever he was. According to what my father said later, he kept worrying about building this house, that it was going to cost too much, and this uncle of my mother's said, "Go ahead, you'll never regret it." Or words to that effect. So he blew himself, or I assume he blew himself. That's why he was in the wrought iron business and built a fine house. I'm sure he never regretted it. But I think it's rather astounding that with this fine house and this beautiful garden and with all kinds of facilities for the family and so on, the urge developed to start doing something in the country. Of course the original excuse was that it would be a place to go and have picnics. I've been trying to compile a Cranbrook history and my original thought for a title was "Cranbrook Picnic." I used to kid mother and father that it turned out to be quite a picnic, not only dollar-wise but they got a lot of fun out of it and great satisfaction. James E. Scripps I think was what appropriately might be called more historically minded. Of course we have to keep in mind the era we're talking about. He would go traveling around England, for instance, and would see something that he liked, a particular design of a piece of tracery or something like that, and he'd pull out his notebook and make a detailed drawing of it.

**DB:** James Scripps would?

**HB:** Yes, and he'd make some major measurements and record them. I assume that he was starting to think about building Trinity Church. And since his health was not good, he used to take trips to some of the spas in Europe once in a while for his health and he started buying pictures and so on. So he sort of followed along that line. When he added to his original house on Trumbull Avenue he had the old English point of view and the ultimate was the octagonal Gothic vaulted library. Incidentally in my opinion, the Library Commission pulled a terrific boner when they allowed it to be bulldozed. I've never quite gotten over that. They didn't even take the trouble to take a sample of the mosaic floor out of the place. They could have saved the whole floor and put it in some place. They could have given it away to somebody instead of just throwing out.

**DB:** Yes, it was really ridiculous. It was a great loss to the city.

**HB:** They didn't seem to know how to use it after times changed. I try to be reasonably just because I know how difficult it is to do a lot of things. You aren't your own boss much of the time.

**DB:** That's true.

**HB:** When you're dealing with different personalities they've all got different ideas and you've got to come to a sort of agreement which really pleases nobody.

**DB:** That's very true. Do you think that your parents were impressed by the sort of things that the Scripps were bringing back from Europe?

**HB:** Well, I think they must have been. I can't tell you the dates when he built his art gallery in the house. I guess the library was built pretty much at the same time. It's so darn easy to ramble a little.

**DB:** It is I know.

**HB:** Well, that's just life. Everything is all intermingled.

**DB:** Yes, that's part of it. There's no problem in doing it. So you were saying you don't remember exactly when James Scripps built his art gallery, but ...

**HB:** No, now whether he, I'd have to look up the record to find out when he made his first offer to the old Detroit Art Museum about giving them pictures.

**DB:** I can't remember the year right now.

**HB:** Whether they first sort of turned up their noses at some of the pictures that he offered them and when he built the art gallery to put them in I don't know. Well, of course I was young in those days and so I can't tell just what my parents attitude was about the art collection. I really don't know whether my mother was on one of the first trips to Europe when he started buying. I know that her younger sister, Mrs. Grace Scripps Clark, was on one trip. And I think Mrs. Whitcomb also was on one. And that probably had considerable influence on Mrs. Whitcomb's attitude toward such things.

**DB:** Your father became very interested in crafts. It seems to me from reading about him and looking at his letters and so forth that early on he became very interested in crafts people and craftsmen and people working with industrial arts. He had his own decorative iron works and so forth so he did have an interest. But what do you think caused this extreme interest in people with craft ability?

**HB:** I think you probably know that as a boy he worked for at least one summer, and it may have been for two summers, in the architectural office of his uncle Henry Langley; and decided he wanted to be an architect. Well, apparently in talking to his uncle he was told to stay out of this, there are a lot of headaches and not much money. Mr. Langley was a successful architect. Primarily he did churches. I believe the Anglican Cathedral in Toronto is one of the buildings he did. But that's the only thing I can think of where he really had a yen for designing. But maybe it was there. Anyway he became very adept at expressing things with a pencil. One time I was in Philadelphia at Samuel Yellin's ship, I guess making some repairs for one of the gates at Cranbrook and he made the comment that my father expressed more with a pencil than any architect he had ever met without actually putting in any details whatsoever. The overmantel in the Cranbrook Library here was

executed of course by John Kirchmayer from a pen and ink sketch. And of course you've got to remember that there were no fountain pens in those days. He had a gold pen that he always used. But he made this little pen and ink sketch about five inches long, I guess and sent it on to Kirchmayer. Whether he gave him any cues as to subject matter frankly I don't know. I've never happened to run into anything on that. But anyway, Kirchmayer did that panel from that sketch.

**DB:** So it was not unusual for your father to submit a sketch.

**HB:** Oh, no. If he went to an architect whether it was for the Greek theater here at Cranbrook or for one of the newspaper plants he never went without a plan. He always had the thing pretty well thought out ahead of time. At least with the newspaper business he certainly knew the operations from one end to the other and knew what was convenient and efficient and so on, and what was not. Whereas you could get some famous architect who may be a famous architect, but may not really have any feel for the operation at all and would have to spend a lot of time groping around trying to find the proper answer. The Greek theater at Cranbrook, which I think is a pretty good example of, well this is not what I started to say, but anyway this thought of reverse action pops into my mind.

**DB:** Reverse action?

**HB:** He had the idea of using the overflow from the water tower here at Cranbrook House, no one any longer uses the water tower, to go down a cascade. There again is probably one of the most Italian types of garden cascades within miles of this place. He got that going. And then of course everybody started to object to the fact that there wasn't enough overflow to make it run all the time. So the mill was built and a pump installed to pump water to keep the cascade going. And at the same time I said, "Well since we've got water now, why not have a swimming pool up at the top?" So the swimming pool was built after the cascade, and after the swimming pool came the Greek theater. Which is exactly the reverse of what anybody would normally think.

**DB:** Yes, I wouldn't have thought that at all.

**HB:** But in many ways that's typical of a lot of things around Cranbrook. And I'm sure it must have influenced my father in business and everything else. His mind tended to run both ways at once. Maybe that's where I've gotten the idea to tell people who are walking around the garden and are following the route in the guide book, I tell them, "Turn around and look some place else besides where the next number in the guide book is." It's an entirely different thing, if you take the official tour in the reverse order you're going into another garden.

**DB:** Yes, I've noticed that.

**HB:** People don't think of that, at least a surprising number of them don't. They hardly turn their heads from one side to the other to look at things. Of course if you stood on your head you'd get some interesting things.

**DB:** Well, how did your father become so involved with these crafts people? You've mentioned Samuel Yellin and you've mentioned Kirchmayer, I mean how did he become aware of people like Samuel?

**HB:** Well, I suppose in the early stages he met some of the people from the Boston Society of Arts and Crafts. They were having exhibitions and so on and going to see exhibitions. He met some of these people and one acquaintance led to another. One of the things my father often said was, "If

you want to have interesting experiences have something that you're looking for. Just don't walk into a shop. If you're looking for something and a certain shop doesn't have anything of the type you're thinking about, they may say, 'well why don't you go over to so and so. Maybe he might have something.' If a man gets interested in what you're talking about he may say, 'well I've got a friend who's got something of that kind. Why don't you go and see him?' You can get into private homes, you can get all over the place and meet all kinds of interesting people in the process. So he was alert to put down names and so on and pile up on a lot of things. As I've said, he carried around dimensions and things in his notebook and was in a position suddenly to make a decision to go ahead and do something.

**DB:** Do you know if he read William Morris and people like that?

**HB:** No, I don't believe so.

**DB:** You don't think so?

**HB:** When did Morris die? I've forgotten.

**DB:** I think it was just before the turn of the century, wasn't it? I can't really remember. But I wondered if many of your father's speeches alluded to some of the ...

**HB:** I don't recall. This though pops into my mind. I wonder whether by any chance when he was in London sometime he might have come across Morris's, what is that big book?

**DB:** Criticism on ...

**HB:** Well, anyway, it's medieval type of decoration with strapwork borders and so on. It's possible he may have run into something like that and just liked it and bought it and from that started getting interested in the printing business. Of course as you know, I think the books that he published back in 1900-1902 had a lot of strapwork borders and so on that he designed himself.

**DB:** Early on your father was one of the principal movers in the development of the Society of Arts and Crafts in Detroit. What role do you think he played in that development? Do you think he was a key figure in it?

**HB:** Knowing his energy and imagination and so on, I don't think the idea is all far fetched, to put it mildly. Frankly I don't know how he got acquainted with some of the other people and became interested. Helen Plumb of course was one of the early ones. I don't know how he met Helen Plumb. But apparently he made enough acquaintances to invite the whole group down to the old Cranbrook Press quarters on the top floor of the Detroit News building to have their initial meeting. At least that's something I read, I think I read it down at the exhibit. And it's something I didn't know before, that the organization meeting took place in the Cranbrook Press quarters.

**DB:** So it sounds as if he probably was one of the key pushers behind.

**HB:** He certainly was one of them, and I don't really doubt that he wasn't the chief one but I have no way of proving it any way at all.

**DB:** From the records he supported in financially for some time. I mean he was very generous with the Arts and Crafts. Beyond that was he very instrumental in selecting what people would be there and who would be brought in, and what exhibits and so forth?

**HB:** No, I don't think he had anything to do with it.

**DB:** So he sort of served as a financial ....

**HB:** Well, you know if a thing sounded good I can imagine him saying, "Let's go ahead and do it." He would accept somebody else's idea. He was also very flexible in so many ways. Even though he was quite opinionated he was flexible. If a mistake was made it didn't seem to bother him too much as long as you weren't in the poorhouse afterward. His attitude was, well, we made a mistake. Let's profit by the mistake. He would admit that he made plenty of mistakes in his own affairs. When I say that I'm thinking of Cranbrook House, for example, it didn't bother him at all when everybody finally concluded, well, that's not as good as it should be. Let's do something about it. In the early years there was a pool terrace out here opposite the sunset room. Finally we decided it was just too darn fussy. Well, the whole thing was ripped out and one simple, straightforward terrace ran out of it. One of the things that always astounded me was his willingness to go ahead and throw out something even at a loss if it was a mistake in the first place. He felt that, if you gave a thing a good try and it didn't work, the money that it cost was an investment. It never seemed to bother him a particle. In a sense he was quite radical. I'm much more conservative. Maybe I've got more patience. I don't think of myself as being particularly patient but I always feel, let's not throw out too soon. I may regret it late on. Of course nowadays things move so fast it's very easy to make a mistake.

**DB:** That's very true. But that never bothered him in the least?

**HB:** No, this business of Builder Booth, as my brother used to refer to him all he needed was an excuse.

**DB:** Did he capitalize, build upon a problem or a mistake? Well a classic example is the fire at Arts and Crafts.

**HB:** Well, he went to the fire. The first thing I think of is the fact that he bought practically everything in the place that was injured, but good enough to fix up and give it to somebody. I think we've got a round lacquer table in our living room that came out of the fire. It wasn't badly damaged but it was damaged enough so that probably they couldn't sell it very swiftly. Well, he bought it and we have it in our house. It had done a good job for fifty years or whatever it is, well, not quite fifty years. And the theater at Arts and Crafts was a try and stirred up a lot of interest. It didn't bother him to go ahead and move on to something else. I'm sure he never regretted the fact that he built the Greek theater primarily so that Arts and Crafts could come out and have all their annual festival things. Again it was just an excuse to do something. It's been a pretty serviceable thing ever since.

**DB:** Yes, it has been. In the 1920's he kind of removed himself more and more from Arts and Crafts and I know his heart and interest started to move out there. But do you think he was disappointed in the direction Arts and Crafts took in the 1920's and he thought he could do more with Cranbrook? Or was Cranbrook an idea that had been developing long before the Arts and Crafts?

**HB:** Well, what year did the Arts and Crafts School start?

**DB:** It was 1926 for the School.

**HB:** 1926, well, of course he had been interested in the old school design. And then when he visited the American Academy in Rome he got the feeling of that that there was real merit in having a limited number of people working in fairly ideal surroundings and so on. And he started to think about an academy.



**DB:** When was he at the American Academy? Was that in the 1920's or before?

**HB:** It must have been about that. I was a student at the University of Michigan when Eliel Saarinen came to the University as a special design instructor. And I took as a project an academy of art at Cranbrook.

**DB:** A design project?

**HB:** Well, of course we started talking about academy, but none of us really had too much of an idea of exactly what we were thinking of, well, any more than Saarinen did when he came out with his magnificent design. Mrs. Saarinen made this gorgeous model. Well, he painted with architecture and made a beautiful picture. Gee, what a composition of buildings just astoundingly beautiful. But ultra grandiose in a sense especially when you think of the limited number of students that were being taught. There was a great ceremonial hall. I don't know whether it outdid the City Hall in Stockholm that was built later, but it had a lot of that feel to it. I'm sure you've heard that father had the model around here for a long time and finally had it destroyed on the theory that people would think he had fantastic dreams and just didn't have enough money to put them into effect.

**DB:** So your family had seen the Academy in Rome. And almost at the same time, or a little later, you were doing the design for an academy here?

**HB:** Yes.

**DB:** But do you think this is what prompted the development here? I mean when he bought the property in 1903 or 1904.

**HB:** 1904.

**DB:** Do you think he was conscious of turning it into a public space at some time, or traditional space in those years? Did he ever mention that, or did your parents ever mention it, that they were going to do something more than just have an estate out here?

**HB:** Oh, I can't say really. But the though doesn't seem too out of place. I'll go that far. Way back there was talk of building a small church up near the north gate, that was the first site that was talked of for a church. Well, just the evolution of things and the attitudes that I've learned about my father, his attitudes, it doesn't sound unnatural at all that he may have had in the back of his mind some flossy little very tho bit of thinking that something might come out of this, just because of his apparently inborn nature of thinking in continuity, of things rolling on, not stopping.

**DB:** That you should do something more?

**HB:** Sure, of course I don't know, I think he would be very unhappy today in many respects where so many perfectly good things are torn down and so on. Although, as I've said before, he didn't hesitate to tear down things himself. But I think he would feel today that there is a lack of imaginational in many places.

**DB:** At Cranbrook itself or ....

**HB:** Well, maybe at Cranbrook. But generally speaking it's too easy to demolish something and say, "Well that's out of date," and start all over again and probably make half the mistakes you made before because of your haste and so on.

**DB:** Was he aware of your design for an art academy?

**HB:** Oh yes, sure.

**DB:** Did you draw up plans yourself?

**HB:** Well, yes I did. I never to too far on it. But I was groping around on composition and so on. At the same time there was another group of seniors working on a design for an architectural school in Ann Arbor. Of course we all got intrigued by that idea too. We had the idea that we ought to have a resident collage idea where the architects would all live right there. So they came up with a handsome-looking building. I was not active in that but I certainly was fascinated by it. I suppose I have told you about the welcome we put on for Eliel Saarinen when he first arrived at the University of Michigan. Did I ever tell you about that?

**DB:** No, I don't think so.

**HB:** Well, we heard that this famous architect had come from abroad and had just gotten an honorable mention for the Chicago Tribune competition. They didn't dare give him first prize because his drawings appeared late. We heard that he was coming to the University of Michigan as special design instructor. We students, seniors, decided that we ought to put on some sort of welcoming "do" for him. We got in touch with the Michigan Architects - Michigan Society of the Institute of Architects. They decided to put on a dinner. Well, the students decided to put on a pageant. I probably sold them on the idea. I must have because of the fact that I wrote the pageant and did the whole show except take all the parts. I took the part of a high priest of art or whatever. It was really a pretty good pageant. I know that Saarinen got a kick out of it. We had all the various arts and crafts represented and so on. We raked in people from the Music Department with a flute and we had all this before dinner. Professor Emil Lorch, head of the Architecture Department at the University was an imaginative soul. And he decided it would be good to get George Booth to make the principal address at the dinner. Father had never met Mr. Saarinen, but he was asked to make the speech and he did. Of course I had been all mixed up in this pageant business and I got a lot of stuff out of the attic at Cranbrook House to use in the pageant. So a natural friendship developed and father asked Saarinen to work with him. I don't know whether he came for a weekend or a day or what, but anyway they got acquainted. And shortly thereafter they asked Saarinen to go ahead and make a plan for an art academy. No, wait a minute, I've got to go back. The first thing Saarinen was asked to do was to design a memorial hall for Detroit, which the city had voted in favor of but had not passed any bond issue. So father was inveigled into financing Saarinen's work on that.

**DB:** The design?

**HB:** Yes, apparently the architects themselves had agreed that they wanted somebody that wasn't local because they knew perfectly well that there would be rivalry if any local architect attempted to do something, so here was an opportunity to use Saarinen. Well, father financed that. That was the first thing Saarinen did for, well, not for dad, but in a way for him. And then when he got through with that he started talking about an academy and he asked Saarinen to go ahead and design an academy for the present site. Eventually Saarinen came up with this beautiful plan and Mrs. Saarinen made a model. Let's see, I'm sort of lost. Where was I?

**DB:** We were talking about how Saarinen's involvement came about at Cranbrook. And just to backtrack for one minute, I think we'll get back on it, your father just didn't decide on the academy idea just to make work for Saarinen. There had to be something deep. It was something he was terribly interested in?

**HB:** Oh, no, no. I was supposed to graduate from the University in 1922. Like all architects in those days, nobody graduated on time. It was a four-year course and there was too much to do. So I didn't graduate that year. Robert Swanson and I decided we were going to Europe whether we graduated or not. We went in the summer of 1922 and stayed for ten months. Well, father had been at the American academy in Rome before that, probably just the winter before. He had the idea. He had Mr. Lehman I think his name was, who was head of the Music Academy. "They need a car to get students back and forth to concerts because the busses stop running and they can't go to a concert and get back to the Academy afterwards." So he suggested that he and I go fifty-fifty on a Fiat car. So that was my sole contribution to the American Academy in Rome, fifty percent of a Fiat.

**DB:** That's interesting.

**HB:** For a while I received an annual report and was listed as a life member, but I haven't heard from them recently. Well, anyway, that indicates that the academy idea was started then. As I say, I visited the Academy the winter following my father's visit. Soon after that I returned to Ann Arbor, did more work, and graduated from the University in 1924.

**DB:** That's when Saarinen came.

**HB:** He came in the fall of 1923.

**DB:** With the plans for the Academy here. Did you or your father submit design ideas to Saarinen on what essentially was to be built?

**HB:** Well, of course the first idea was the crafts. When they actually got started building, the crafts were the things that were taken care of. I don't think, well, maybe this is a little extreme, but I don't think anybody particularly thought about just plain intellectual matters. To backtrack again, Mr. Arthur Nevill Kirk came over at the time of the Arts and Crafts exhibit. One of the things in the show was the present cross on the high altar at Christ Church Cranbrook which Kirk made in England. And so when Father was in England he visited Kirk and finally prevailed upon him to come to this country. Of course one of the first things to be built at the Academy was a place for the silversmiths. It was just that sort of thing. And early in the game he prevailed on Maycopper to come out from the Boston Society of Arts and Crafts. A man who has been dead for some time. Maycopper had great knowledge of craftsmen and so on and he located some of these people. It started out that way. Well, here again I have to keep correcting myself. When Saarinen came to Cranbrook he had two students that had just graduated from the School of Architecture in Ann Arbor. They came as special design people under Saarinen even though there wasn't any such thing as an Academy.

**DB:** To work on the drawings for the Academy?

**HB:** Well, I'm pretty sure they did. I'm sure they did. Well, anyway they were just going to come over here and be here with Saarinen and learn what they could and do anything that the two of them would concoct. You know, I'm sure they were in on the actual drawing of the original Academy design. So he had the architectural idea represented and then started getting these crafts. Of course Mrs. Saarinen had done weaving batik and so on. So the weaving department got started. We were still without any Academy of course.

**DB:** Apparently informal.

**HB:** Oh yes, Sure.

**DB:** But Mrs. Saarinen had students? Had what, what shall we say, people like apprentices?

**HB:** Well, she located a Mrs. . It's a hyphenated name, Werbe I think is the last part of it, to do weaving. Mrs. Saarinen primarily did the designing and started building looms and so on. Then they started taking some students but still on a very informal basis. And it just evolved. They started building buildings along Academy Way from one end to the other. Year after year something would be built.

**DB:** Pretty much following the plan?

**HB:** Well, the initial Academy Row in the model was primarily houses for the faculty. The building at the left of the entrance was headquarters. I don't remember what he had on the right. But the buildings were all exactly the same shape so they were built. Then of course when things started getting more complex the design had to change a little bit. But that whole Academy Row lineup and the Library and Art Museum setup that's almost identical to the original model. Nothing was built at the other side of the east-west axis of the model where there was this great ceremonial hall and a gorgeous tower and a few other things.

**DB:** Do you think your father and Saarinen had worked out between themselves that Saarinen would be employed here for sometime? Or was it just more informal than that? It just kind of happened?

**HB:** Well, Saarinen seemed to be very happy. I'm sure there was nothing ever formalized about it. Not like the case of Carl Milles where a contract was made to pay him so much for a year for the bronzes, which was a sort of automatic tether to Milles. At least it worked out that way. Of course that was Saarinen's idea that that's the way it would work, that there would be a much better chance to keep him here if they had this string attached to it; to get paid so much every year.

**DB:** So it wasn't that formal, an agreement? It was more of a ....

**HB:** I never went into it. Of course I've never delved into a lot of these things. But I'm pretty sure there wasn't any agreement.

**DB:** As the Academy started to evolve, do you think it was a joint creation of your father and Saarinen? Or do you think that your father's ideas were pretty much those at work?

**HB:** Well, they had a good many conversations and there is no doubt that Saarinen had an influence on my father and my father had an influence on Saarinen. I think probably you would say it was sort of a joint effort in a way. They did a lot of debating about all sorts of things.

**DB:** For example, what would they have debated?

**HB:** Well, I don't know, just the philosophy of art and education, and how you encourage the artist and all that sort of thing; if you do any teaching what do you teach, all that sort of thing. I'm sure they discussed that a great deal.

**DB:** It seems to me that the idea of the artist and the apprentice living and working in the same environment was always manifest at Cranbrook? I mean do you think either man ever thought that it was becoming a more formal educational situations?

**HB:** Well, you see, the Academy was actually formalized as an institution sometime before father died, wasn't it?

**DB:** In 1942.

**HB:** Father died in 1949.

**DB:** It seems to me that in 1942 or 1944 there were classes given you know, so that people could become art teachers. I wondered .... But now it seems it was almost out of necessity rather than their intention.

**HB:** Well, it was Zoltan Sepeshy's thought that many of these people couldn't afford to just do art work, that they had to make a living, at least to some extent, through teaching, make it possible for them to do the things that they liked. It seemed to come naturally. I don't know, well, the way things have changed with every university in the country having art centers, goodness knows whether it's the right idea or not. Maybe we should have been the ones to have just stuck to our guns and say, "We don't bother with any credits at all around here, if you are any good you can get in, if you aren't any good you don't." Maybe it would be a huge success today if ....

**DB:** be exceptional.

**HB:** Yes, it's so easy to get into the current and just be carried along in spite of yourself. But of course, as we know, everything gets more and more difficult to operate nowadays. It gets difficult because it gets complex and we tend to make things more complex. Do you read Art Buchwald in the Detroit Free Press.

**DB:** Yes.

**HB:** Did you read him this morning?

**DB:** No, I didn't see the paper this morning.

**HB:** Well, he had a good dissertation on ....

[END OF INTERVIEW]