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Archives of American Art

Oral history interview with Philip C. Beam,
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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a tape-recorded interview with Philip Beam on June 18, 1984. The interview took place in Brunswick, Maine, and was conducted by Robert Brown 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.

Interview

ROBERT BROWN: We're beginning an interview with Philip Beam, Robert Brown the interviewer, at Bowdoin College in Brunswick, Maine. This is June 18, 1984. Perhaps we could just begin talking a bit about your childhood. You were born in Dallas in 1910. Were you born to a family with some interests of education or in education or cultural avocation, at least?

PHILIP BEAM: Yes. But I'll have to say that my father's interests were literary. He loved to read, and strangely enough, read poetry and memorize poetry. And he encouraged my brother and me to read all our lives, and we still do. But my mother was not that much of a reader. But she had a visual interest that, through her long life, she was always interested in redecorating and matching colors and things of that sort.

MR. BROWN: Do you think a bit of that was apparent to you even as a small boy, her interest?

MR. BEAM: Well, it somehow rubbed off on me.

MR. BROWN: Yes.

MR. BEAM: And my father, noting this, bought me some drawing equipment and a little box of oils, and I began to dabble, without any instruction or without any opportunity because it is fair to say that there was very little to be seen in the way of examples of fine art in Dallas prior to World War I and for some years after.

MR. BROWN: Was there a local museum?

MR. BEAM: But a very tiny one, and it had nothing of national or international interest whatever. And I just did this because I had some kind of an urge to draw. And I thought I might go on to become an artist, a painter. And my father said, well -- but I told my father I didn't feel somehow that I had the talent to be a first-rate painter, and I didn't want to be a second-rate starving artist.

And he said, "Well, why don't you consider commercial art?" He had a friend who ran a large advertising agency, where they did advertising layouts. And so he got me a job there, sort of as an office boy for the summer, so I could observe at first hand. And in that process, I saw that the commercial art consisted of doing pictures which would sell products. That was the goal. And the artist did whatever was assigned to him, whether it was a refrigerator, an automobile, or a vacuum cleaner. And he had no personal say, though technically some of these people, with an airbrush and such, were marvelous.

And so I saw the technical side and its importance. But at the same time, I felt I wanted to do something more, a little more creative. They were paid well, but it looked like a treadmill. So I gave that up, and for the time being I had nothing to do.

MR. BROWN: You weren't particularly interested in -- or did you happen to like the technical side in your drawing and painting?

MR. BEAM: I still do, but that's only the means.

MR. BROWN: You were a teenager about this time when you discovered the art reality?

MR. BEAM: No, I was younger than teens.

MR. BROWN: You were quite a young boy?

MR. BEAM: Yes. I wasn't even Boy Scout age at that time.

MR. BROWN: Did you have art instruction in school? Was there anything in the curriculum?

MR. BEAM: There wasn't any. There was virtually nothing of that sort. Prior to World War I, Dallas was a great agricultural center. Then when World War I came, with its enormous demand suddenly for oil, the oil fields developed in Texas. It's been a big and rich and oil-oriented ever since. Not oil painting, of course.

MR. BROWN: No. (Laughter)

MR. BEAM: And they've come a long way since. But when I was a kid, there was no instruction of any kind. You couldn't even take lessons on Saturday. But my father had to take a trip up to St. Louis on business. He loved sports, as I did. And oddly enough, Texas didn't have any big sports down there. The nearest big league baseball team would have been St. Louis, the Cardinals and (inaudible). So he would take a business trip and slip out to the ballpark. And he invited me to come along, which I did. But he said, "I'm going to be tied up all morning in the conference. And why don't you go out to Forest Park and wander around?"

And I went out there, and I went into the Jefferson Memorial, which is still there. I went into it a couple of years ago. There are still 10,000 arrowheads.

MR. BROWN: Was it a great big natural history museum, sort of?

MR. BEAM: It was to commemorate the Louisiana Purchase.

MR. BROWN: The Louisiana Purchase.

MR. BEAM: And the Indian artifacts were a part of that. And it looked out to the Great West. It was very interesting. Well, since, they took the Lindbergh exhibitions there, and they are fascinating, but that wasn't there then.

Anyway, after looking at all these Indian heads, I wandered out and asked the guard if there was some other place I could visit, and he said, "Well, up on top of the hill is the art museum, the one permanent building left over from the World's Fair of 1903." And so I wandered up there, not knowing what I was doing, and went inside and saw, for the first time in my life, what became a first-rate nationally known museum and even then had works of international character like Melee and so forth and so forth.

MR. BROWN: Did you basically look at the paintings, or do you remember --

MR. BEAM: No, I wandered around looking at the paintings, and I was just enthralled. It was an eye-opener. And I knew that from that time on I wanted to do something in connection with art. If I couldn't be an artist, how about being an art historian? So my parents made inquiry and found that Harvard was one of the few places, along with Yale and the eastern schools where one could get training and formal training in art history.

MR. BROWN: They weren't averse to your going east to school?

MR. BEAM: No. On the contrary --

MR. BROWN: They weren't parochial Texans or anything of that sort?

MR. BEAM: Oh, no, no.

MR. BROWN: They were quite broad in their interests and awareness of things?

MR. BEAM: Yes. And my father, who is with my brother in the oil business all his life, saw that if I wasn't going into some form of business in Texas, that there was nothing else in the cultural line there at that time for me to do. So he was very practical, encouraged me to come east.

So I applied to Harvard and got in, admitted at that time on the upper 10 percent because the President of Harvard, Lowell, was trying to make Harvard more geographically conscious. Harvard had been a New England university up to that time. And Chicago University was coming on strong and challenging Harvard. And Lowell was wise enough to see that. And his successor, who came the year after I graduated, Conant, really expanded Harvard into an international university, as it has been ever since.

MR. BROWN: But when you went there, you went with (inaudible) from more or less the first class or so to come from all over the country, or one of the earlier classes?

MR. BEAM: Yes, but we were outnumbered.

MR. BROWN: By the local -- by the people of this region?

MR. BEAM: There were six of us came on, and I think only two of us stayed, because socially, coming from

western, hospitable Texas up to New England overnight was a bit of an experience.

(Laughter)

MR. BEAM: And as I left for Harvard, my friends said, "Oh, you'll never make it. You'll flunk you. You'll see." And I had a rough time the first year because of my deficiency in foreign languages. So Spanish I knew. But the Texans didn't care about training in French, German, or Latin, that sort of thing. But I had a wonderful Latin teacher and a fine French teacher who got me enthusiastic.

MR. BROWN: Right away?

MR. BEAM: Yes.

MR. BROWN: You mentioned this Latin teacher is still alive, isn't he?

MR. BEAM: Yes. Alston Chase is still alive, though retired. And they were wonderful. And they got me interested in the world of languages, and I went on to get interested in languages, and I had to scramble to make up years of deficiency. But I've been interested in languages ever since.

So I learned that a teacher can introduce subjects to students when they've had no previous opportunity and do them a great service. And in later years, as I taught at Bowdoin for 47 years, we had boys come here to Bowdoin who were from the northern part of Maine and had had no artistic opportunities. And they would just happen to take an art history course, and we'd grab them and get them interested. And they would go on for years and become keenly interested. This was just part of the function of teaching.

MR. BROWN: And that was what was happening to you?

MR. BEAM: That was what was happening?

MR. BROWN: How about the social thing? Was that still a bit of an adjustment? The cooler temperament of the New Englanders?

MR. BEAM: Yes. My wife is a New Englander, and my children are New Englanders. So I've long since become used to that. But unlike Texas, where they take you in with open arms, well, the New Englanders look you over for six or eight months. But once they take you in, they will remain your friends for life, as Alston Chase is and all my professors. So there is something to be said of the long-range loyalty of these New Englanders. These are good, solid people. And I've always valued that and felt at home in New England. This is my home. I've lived most of my life here.

MR. BROWN: Were your classmates mostly as intense and turned-on as you were? Or was there quite a variety?

MR. BEAM: No. I was almost totally surrounded by boys from New England prep schools who had their own friends. And so I had to make friends very slowly there. And in a way, this sort of threw me on the books. And I went out for sports. And I studied. And I didn't have many social distractions. And a lot of those boys, I envied them because they were there and they knew a lot of people and they had a ball. But it was all part of the growing-up process.

MR. BROWN: Well, you fairly early were able to get into your field. By the second year or so you were trying art history? (Inaudible)

MR. BEAM: Well, at Harvard you're exposed to several attitudes toward general education over the years, as you're aware. It's been well publicized.

MR. BROWN: Yes.

MR. BEAM: At that time, they were still under the influence of Elliot's introduction to Germanic education as distinct from Oxford, and specialization. And so you were obliged to pick your major at the end of your freshman year. Well, this suited me fine. It also meant that by the time I got my degree, I'd been allowed to take about 18 courses in art history. And then by the time I finished my graduate work, I'd taken a total of 30, which is a very large number.

And also, we were thrown into classes with graduate students, which put us on our metal. And we had to take it seriously. This turned out to be a bit of advantage because I remember sitting around the dining table at the end of the year, and most of my classmates there were having a terrible time deciding at that young age what they wanted to do for the rest of their lives. But I knew.

MR. BROWN: You did?

MR. BEAM: Yes.

MR. BROWN: By then you knew?

MR. BEAM: Yes. Now, I was the exception. And I think even the Bowdoin students, many of them are lucky if by their senior year they're fully committed to this or that career. And it is a little young. And later on, under the Finley reemphasis on general education in his well-known book, Harvard went a bit in the other direction and delayed concentration till your junior year. And that is pretty much the standard across the country right to this day.

And they would -- Bowdoin fights a little to get people to take a diversity of courses so that the word a "liberal" education means something instead of pre-business or special education. And we're still doing that.

MR. BROWN: So you, in fact, had a specialized undergraduate education?

MR. BEAM: Yes. But I was interested enough in other things. My father is interested in reading and history. And I discovered the Civil War and Abraham Lincoln.

MR. BROWN: You mentioned this was not known to you?

MR. BEAM: It was taboo when I was a boy in Texas. Gee, you weren't allowed to --

MR. BROWN: Wouldn't admit it, huh?

MR. BEAM: No. It was called "the War of the Rebellion," not the "Civil War." And they were still fighting it and I think still are. But another effect of the Harvard system was that the professors there at that time were all specialists themselves. But unlike the current trend, where you jump, not only in art history, but into a special aspect of it as fast as you can, they insisted upon us taking a broad spectrum of the whole history of art. And it was programmed for us. We had to take ancient, Renaissance, Medieval, modern, the works, you see.

MR. BROWN: So it was not really as specialized as I believed at first.

MR. BEAM: You were allowed to specialize when you got into graduate school.

MR. BROWN: Right. But as an undergraduate, it was in fact really a very broad thing. The point of entry was art and art history.

MR. BEAM: Yes.

MR. BROWN: But you covered a tremendous spectrum.

MR. BEAM: And they felt that to understand the specialty, you needed a broad background.

MR. BROWN: Did you begin with what we now think of as a survey? Or was there any such animal?

MR. BEAM: Yes. Yes.

MR. BROWN: Who did that, a team of teachers?

MR. BEAM: Chase and Edgell, two very renowned professors. Chase was an archeologist. Edgell was --

MR. BROWN: George Harold Edgell?

MR. BEAM: George Harold Edgell was the head of the architecture school, went on for a long time to be the director of the --

MR. BROWN: The Museum of Fine Arts?

MR. BEAM: The Museum of Fine Arts. So they were both very broadly educated men. And Chase was a wonderful linguist, and he instilled this love of Latin and Greek and Roman and Greek history, which was good background, too. And that stood us in good stead for a further reason.

One of the leading forces there at Harvard at that time was Paul Sachs, who -- of the Gold and Sachs family, told he had six months to live and decided he wanted to do something he enjoyed. So he not only went into art, but rounded up his rich friends, and they built the Fogg Museum. And he was keen because the museum profession was in its infancy at that time. People like Alfred Barr were destined -- one of his students, was destined to go on and develop the Museum of Modern Art and revolutionize modern art and museum practice. There were no rotating exhibitions at that time. And Alfred Barr, he really started all of that.

Well, Paul Sachs wanted us to prepare, be prepared in our training to go into museum work if we wished, as well as just teaching. And if you're going into museum work, you ought to have as broad an education as you possibly can. You may end up being a curator of ancient art. But in the museum field -- it's a very versatile field. And you do all kinds of things, then and now.

MR. BROWN: So he further emphasized this need for breadth?

MR. BEAM: Yes.

MR. BROWN: In the undergraduate education.

MR. BEAM: Yes.

MR. BROWN: Did you have him for a teacher fairly early?

MR. BEAM: Oh, yes, yes. He taught modern French, nineteenth and twentieth century. Marvelous teacher, tremendously emotional and inspiring. (Laughter)

MR. BROWN: Was most of it straight lecture, most of these courses?

MR. BEAM: Yes. And I've never had anything against that, because I would rather sit and listen to Chandler Post teach me as much as he could as fast as he could than to spend a lot of time telling him the little that I knew, which he didn't need to know. And as I mentioned, our philosophy teacher, luckily, was Alfred North Whitehead. I sat in a class of 700 students, and it was a privilege to listen to this man for a year. And I would have been far worse off with a third-rate instructor and three other students than I was listening to Whitehead, because he taught me things I still remember.

MR. BROWN: You began your curriculum with a survey of sorts?

MR. BEAM: Two kinds of surveys. Paul Sachs believed very strongly that art historians and museum people could learn a lot by engaging in art -- the drawing and painting, whether they were going to go on to be professional artists or not, that doing it teaches you something the way playing football gives you the experience before you become a teacher and a coach.

And so I was turned over to Arthur Pope, who was a distinguished art historian and a very talented painter. And he put us to copying works of art in a peculiar way, great examples of art by Turner and Monet and so forth. But he wanted also to train our memory, not just simple copying. So he would put up a big reproduction of Rembrandt's Supper de Maes (phonetic) in the Louvre. And he would let us sit there for 15 minutes and focus on it as hard as we could. And then he would take it away, and we would do a drawing of it from memory. And we did a great deal of this. And since you knew you only had 15 minutes, it inspired your memory.

So in years after, when I went into museums, I could almost walk along and look at pictures and take photographs of them so that a year later I could literally draw a Monet or a Degas that I had seen. And I've got the pictures to prove it. I'll show you some of those.

MR. BROWN: And how was that as a teaching device? What do you think you learned from this? You learned to develop your memory.

MR. BEAM: It trained your memory. Paul Sachs encouraged that because in his study of the museum public, it bothered him that, on a given Sunday afternoon, people would walk into a room full of beautiful Degas paintings in the Metropolitan Museum, and would wander around the room for five minutes and walk on to the next gallery. And he was a censure museum man. And he felt that the casual way in which people looked at -- notoriously bad observation.

MR. BROWN: And this was a device that forced you to it, forced the --

MR. BEAM: Yes. So he wanted to train our memories. And Arthur Pope had come up with a means that augmented this, and he was delighted. And Sachs made all these students go and take Arthur Pope's course.

MR. BROWN: It was a fairly onerous course, wasn't it, for a lot of people?

MR. BEAM: Yes. So when I came to Bowdoin, one of the first things I did was to introduce a studio course, which was meant to be comparable to laboratory practice in the sciences. They had been doing it for years, learning by doing, you see. And I started that off. And then I got busy as a museum director and teaching courses. And I had to give up that instruction. And it continued. In the course of time, the studio field in the American colleges just expanded, and every department has one.

But there has been, I think, a separation with the intention of making the studio side creative and expressive, independent of the history of art, you see. My use of the studio was relatively limited. And now I think it's gone to the other extreme, and people, if they're talented, can turn out beautiful pictures and drawings and almost bypass the history of art, which I favor, because I think that in sports as in art, watching great examples is instructive, you see.

MR. BROWN: Um-hm. Might as well go all one way or the other.

MR. BEAM: Yes. And Montiff (phonetic) spent 10 years of his life copying in the Louvre. It didn't hurt his originality, as some of the students fear. Students are actually afraid that if they copy works, that it will spoil their originality. And I say that the great masters teach them what to say and how to say it, you see. It doesn't hurt them a bit. And in the Renaissance, all the people like Michelangelo were put to copying the masters' drawings for -- during their apprenticeships. Didn't hurt them.

MR. BROWN: It's comparable to your sitting in with 700 others listening to lectures.

MR. BEAM: Yes.

MR. BROWN: Instead of just going off on your own, doodling or copying, or not copying -- just being creative from the beginning, I suppose.

MR. BEAM: Yes. But the trend in education, inevitably, has become specialized so that when you're looking for a man to teach studio art, you get as good an artist as you can and you don't demand that he know much about art history.

MR. BROWN: Um-hm, or teaching.

MR. BEAM: But you'd like for him to be a good instructor in his field. But if he's a talented artist -- and then professionally, you expect him to exhibit, so he's got to be a talented artist. So he's directed down one way, which is a route which is a full-time occupation, you see.

MR. BROWN: For your undergraduate, your three years of concentration, did you have a paper to do, senior paper, or research you began doing? Or was it by and large a note-taking and examination process?

MR. BEAM: Well, at the end of our senior year, we had to prove that we had gotten a comprehensive education in the history of art, through a four-hour examination in which you identified slides of works that you had not seen before, on the basis of style. Again, thanks to the influence of Paul Sachs. To him, the study of art history was largely connected with the history of style and its changes and so forth. We had to do that.

And then we had a three-hour written examination on the history of art. We had to write -- if you were out for honors, you had to write a full-fledged honors paper, and I spent two years and went to Europe doing this. It was not a little thing. And then you had to undergo an hour's oral examination. Well, all of this was great.

When I came to my doctoral work, because in those days you had to undergo a similar set of examinations, plus a three-hour oral examination. And a number of people who had come to Harvard from different universities or colleges and had not had this ordeal of the ordeal had a terrible time. They got all tongue-tied. One girl got so hysterical she couldn't even remember her name. Later on she went on to a higher career. But for the moment, that practice did -- it helped.

MR. BROWN: So you had this when you were really quite young?

MR. BEAM: Yes. So moving into graduate school was not that big of a change, see. We had had graduate students right in our classes all along.

MR. BROWN: What did you do your honors paper on that took you to Europe?

MR. BEAM: The early work of Michelangelo.

MR. BROWN: So you went and looked at it?

MR. BEAM: Yes. And there again, one difference was that, when you were doing your honors paper, they would encourage you to take a -- and study a big master, see. And -- but when you came to graduate work, they went to the other extreme and encouraged you to take some master that had never been studied before. And they wanted me to do a piece, do a dissertation on Delo de Nicolo Deli (phonetic). (Laughter) And nothing had been written on him, but I think for good reason. And he -- I said, "Why?" He said, "Well, there's only about one paragraph on him in Vasari" and for good reason.

(Laughter)

MR. BEAM: Well, I talked him out of that because I had become acquainted with the family of Winslow Homer, socially at first, and then had become interested in his art through going to Prout's Neck many, many times and the wonderful hospitality of Charles Homer and others, the nephew. And I asked if I could do a dissertation on Winslow Homer because I thought that the stereotype of Winslow Homer as a terrible-tempered man who just was a hermit and drove people away with a shotgun was very different from the description of Winslow Homer that I had heard from people who had actually known him.

And oh, the department -- they had to have a full-fledged meeting. No one at Harvard had ever written a dissertation on an American artist at Harvard. But thanks to Allan Burroughs, the X-ray expert there, who was a pioneer of X-rays and the son of Bryson Burroughs, the great curator of American art at the Metropolitan, they were persuaded to let me have a go at it, you see. And it was a long, long time before Harvard recognized American art or allowed people to do studies in American art. But I'm glad to say that that's all changed.

MR. BROWN: Well, to a certain degree at least, yes.

MR. BEAM: One professor wanted me to specialize in Byzantine art, and another in early Spanish art. He said, "Why do you want to study American art?" I said, "Because it's my country. I know it, I feel it, and I have the best chance of understanding it."

MR. BROWN: Their attitude was that, in terms of art history, it wasn't worth looking at?

MR. BEAM: Well, there was a (inaudible) wall in the middle of the Atlantic. And American art, generally, was in its infancy at that time. See, this was back in the early '30s.

MR. BROWN: Um-hm. It didn't have the reputation it has now?

MR. BEAM: It's come a long way, with the expansion of museums all over the country. And their best opportunity to develop collections of American art as distinct from the terribly expensive European art, you see.

MR. BROWN: Was there also at that time, in the late '20s, early '30s, still a bit of a snobbish attitude toward Americana, American?

MR. BEAM: Oh, yes, yes. And American literature. And given a choice of, say, an undergraduate specializing in Shakespeare or Sinclair Lewis, there was no doubt as to what you should do.

MR. BROWN: Well, you were graduated then in '32, something like that?

MR. BEAM: '33.

MR. BROWN: '33.

MR. BEAM: Right in the middle of the Depression.

MR. BROWN: Did you pretty much know what you wanted to try to do, something in art history? Did you have a prospect of employment? Or were you going to go on to further education?

MR. BEAM: Well, Paul Sachs had gotten us so interested in museum work that a fairly large number of my generation, like Gordon Washburn, Al Littman, and Perry Rathbone, quite a crowd of us, went out deliberately into museum work. And I had met Paul Gardener when he was finishing up his graduate work, and he had gone on to be the director of the new museum at Kansas City. It hadn't even opened.

MR. BROWN: And had he done straight art history, or had he done some kind of --

MR. BEAM: Straight art history.

MR. BROWN: But you all had had some kind of museum training with Sachs?

MR. BEAM: Under Sachs, yes.

MR. BROWN: Which consisted of what? Perhaps you could describe that just briefly before we get to Kansas City?

MR. BEAM: Well, Paul Sachs knew that if we wanted to go into museum work professionally, we'd have to become aware of the many practical aspects of museum work, like the diplomatic, the economic, the budgetary, the conservation side, which an art historian can bypass. And so he used the Fogg Museum and the Museum of Fine Arts as laboratories to take us into the storerooms and tell us what registrars do, and conservation. And we

went upstairs to see how pictures were preserved. The art historian folks never did that, you see. In fact, they were not welcome. And we'd go over to the Museum of Fine Arts and get into all the storerooms and see hundreds of works of art. It was great.

MR. BROWN: That's fine.

MR. BEAM: And Paul Sachs was -- he had a great talent for this sort of thing.

MR. BROWN: How did he assess your aptitudes for museum work?

MR. BEAM: By listening to us, talking to us, and observing us.

MR. BROWN: For some of your peers, did he say, "Well, don't -- you should probably go on to teaching. Don't think of a museum career." Do you recall very many being washed out by Sachs?

MR. BEAM: Well, it sort of took care of itself because Sachs was such a wonderful teacher that he attracted all the art historians. They came over and took the course. It was a large course. And only a small number of these wanted to go into museum work because, if you do, you'll have to have a practical -- a lot of art historians, they're not interested in how pictures are packed in a packing crate.

MR. BROWN: Right.

MR. BEAM: If you're a museum man, you're responsible for that. You don't do it; you've got to know, you've got to observe it. You've got to get into the -- all the involvement of thinking of and organizing a year in advance exhibitions. You've got to know where works of art are all over the country, and borrow from your friends and coordinate it and time it. And you've got to attend to insurance and what you can afford and what you can't.

And Sachs was insistent that we be capable of doing all these things before he'd recommend us for our museum jobs. So that weeded out the group.

MR. BROWN: Did Edward Forbes play much of a part in this museum training? What was his role? He was the co-director of the (inaudible).

MR. BEAM: Well, as it works out, he was the one who had invited Paul Sachs to come and join him as co-directors. They were one of the few co-directorships in the country I've ever heard of. But they made a good team. They had adjoining offices with an open door. But they almost never went through it. Sachs was very dynamic, outgoing temperament. And he loved to teach and expound. Forbes was very quiet. He and his wife were gifted painters. He was a good money-raiser on his own. He was quite efficient. And he took care of all the operating procedures of the Fogg. He saw that the storerooms were properly managed (inaudible). And Sachs wasn't directly that interested, see. Sachs was a dynamo. So they made a good team.

Forbes did very little teaching. If he saw one of Pope's students who had a talent for drawing, he would get him aside and encourage that in a special way, and was even instrumental in singling out a few who should be encouraged to go on and become professional artists -- a very hard field, see. And he said you had to be A-triple-plus to make it in the art field in those days as a productive artist.

So they each guided us. And they kept us out of trouble.

MR. BROWN: Well, you then went to Kansas City immediately upon graduation?

MR. BEAM: Yes.

MR. BROWN: Was the museum a building?

MR. BEAM: Yes.

MR. BROWN: Or there was just the beginning?

MR. BEAM: Yes, it was a huge building, as it still is, because it had been given a fabulous donation by Nelson, the Nelson Gallery. And for 19 years since he had died, they had taken the interest from this great endowment and had been buying works of art when you could buy a Tissien for 10,000 dollars, you see.

And during the Depression, they had -- they were one of the museums which was rich. And so they were buying through their agents all in New York and Europe and the Orient. Larry Sickman, the great Orientalist, was in Peking buying for them. And every day was like Christmas because these packing cases would come in, and Otto Lipman and Bob Lockhart would literally open up the packing cases and pull out Chinese vases and scrolls and a Monet painting -- and an education in itself.

And then we would catalog them and process them through customs, and things that an art historian alone doesn't do.

MR. BROWN: So for you at that time it was utterly fascinating?

MR. BEAM: It was.

MR. BROWN: It was an opportunity.

MR. BEAM: We worked hard, and I learned more in two years than I ever did in any period in my life.

MR. BROWN: What was Gardner like, Paul Gardner, the director?

MR. BEAM: He was of a generation of amateurs like Charles Elliot Norton, who had no formal training. But Gardner was a wealthy man, not married. He had lived for 18 years in Europe, in Venice, traveled widely, keenly observant, and just absorbed an education. There wasn't much he didn't know -- not book learning. He knew where everything was in the Louvre and San Francisco.

MR. BROWN: He had done graduate work at Harvard, though, you said?

MR. BEAM: Yes. And he was a brilliant linguist, among other things. And he encouraged the study of languages. And he was fluent in German, Spanish, French, and you-name-it, so that he could go to the experts in Europe and talk with them. He knew all the dealers. And there's an education to be learned among dealers that art historians bypass. He knew them all. And so when he came to Kansas City with this enormous bankroll, he knew where things were in the storerooms in the dealers' -- and he could get them.

And so this collection of art just flooded in to the gallery, to the storerooms. And then the day of opening came. And people from all over the world came there, and it was just marvelous. But as I mentioned, I came back at the end of two years on a vacation, and I talked to Chandler Post. And he said, "Well, it's obvious that you enjoy museum work, and it's a great field. But have you done any lecturing?" And I said, "Yes, we do everything." He said, "How did you like it?" I said, "Well, I think it's great. And I enjoyed it thoroughly."

And he was always one to encourage us to write, and as an avocation, and take pleasure in contributing something to knowledge. And none of this publish or perish business with him -- contribute something. You'll enjoy it. And when I was at Kansas City, one of my assignments was to work as a newspaper publicist at the gallery. So I go in the evening to the city desk of the Kansas City Star, and I got my English lessons battered by the old editors who hacked up my prose and told me to cut out the jargon and write plain English. That was an education, too.

MR. BROWN: And as publicist for the museum, you went directly into the newspaper?

MR. BEAM: In the evenings.

MR. BROWN: (Inaudible) right there.

MR. BEAM: And I saw these people there at this vast city desk who were reviewing a play in the evening, and then having to do a review before midnight and get with it. They would sit down and write the review right on the typewriter. And I learned to do that and stop procrastinating. That was a beneficial attitude.

MR. BROWN: And lecturing, I suppose, was mostly for the general public, wasn't it? It was part of the effort to educate the public?

MR. BEAM: Oh, yes. See, it was a new museum, and the whole middle west came there by the hundreds and hundreds. And we would go out, take a projector and go out to the little towns all over Kansas and Missouri and give lectures and publicize. It was my barnstorming days.

MR. BROWN: You enjoyed that, as you told Post. You enjoyed doing that?

MR. BEAM: Yes. And barnstorming in this sense: I got out in western Kansas after driving through a blizzard for about five hours, and they didn't have a projector. And the lecture was in a barn with one pot-bellied stove, and the screen was up here. Well, I stood up there in an overcoat and lectured these people huddled around the stove and improvised this lecture, and I left. Made them promise to come see the museum.

(Laughter)

MR. BEAM: But the enthusiasm of the people out there was marvelous. And the hunger for opportunity, you see. St. Louis had been the cultural city, and Kansas City was sort of the stockyard town. And they were

embarrassed. They wanted to catch up. So everybody came.

MR. BROWN: A pretty broad spectrum of the population, or at least the better-educated target population would be interested?

MR. BEAM: Oh, the farmers' wives and all these people. They wanted to learn something. They really did.

MR. BROWN: Were they simply attracted to art, do you think? It was like that?

MR. BEAM: Well, partly it was publicity, and partly curiosity. It was a genuine interest, too. And we developed one of the early programs that I knew about of getting all the schoolchildren in the act. We had them coming in by the busload. We would take them around to galleries and lecture to them in the presence of the pictures.

Paul Sachs could see all too easily at the Fogg that it's quite possible to get an art education, art history education, of real impressiveness by confining yourselves to books and photographs. And Paul Sachs wanted us to study the object, study the style, study the objects. Whenever you can, go to the pictures. Go to the Museum of Fine Arts. Get out of that photograph room. And so some of that got rubbed off on us.

We gave slide lectures out of necessity of -- general art history lectures. And we got a lot of lecturers to come in from the east to the big auditorium. But by golly, we'd take the schoolchildren around to the galleries.

MR. BROWN: What seemed to be of particular interest to the public? (Inaudible) were certain collections at Kansas City that they preferred?

MR. BEAM: Well, if you know that museum, it started from zero, you see. And with this fabulous endowment, it was something like the money for the building --

(End of tape 1, side A)

MR. BROWN: For a moment about Arthur Pope and his point of view, his approach.

MR. BEAM: Yes.

MR. BROWN: Because he so influenced you. What would you say he was, as you recalled it? We've just seen these studies you did, these memories studies. They're remarkably faithful and varied according to the artist and the style.

MR. BEAM: Well, Pope would insist in obliging us to do this, almost forcing us to do this, that we had to understand the reason behind it. Otherwise, we would have rebelled. And the reason was that Pope was always trying to search out the underlying principle of a style or a period or a given work of art. And he thought that drawing it was a good way to provide you with an insight into the underlying structure and so forth.

Like the fine drawing that underlies Turner's work, which is often confused, as you know, being so impressionistic it's nebulous. What wonderful drawing underneath that. He wanted us to see that, and as a part of art appreciation, value it. That's what he meant by art appreciation, to value the skill and work that goes into it.

And that stood us in good stand later on because it could be applied to all the courses we took. He would say that, if you just make a copy, which will fool somebody into recognizing the source, that's all right. But the important thing is for you to learn something in the process, not just to play magic.

And he felt very strongly, and preached this to his fellow professors more and more as time went by and the history of art gathered momentum, that there is always a great danger of amassing a great many facts, memorizing facts. We had to memorize facts by the thousands, you see. And it makes you a good boy if you can do it. But he was one who insisted that the four-hour slide examination at the end of our senior year should be like sight translation.

MR. BROWN: Um-hm.

MR. BEAM: And my friend Alston Chase, who taught languages, said he had boys who were so good they would take a translation of Horace and memorize it. But then when he would give them a piece of Latin they hadn't seen, they would fall on their faces. He said that's not good. So Alston Chase -- every third day of class, we would have sight translation. That was a hard -- but it proved the point.

MR. BROWN: And Pope was the one who stood for this in the visual arts?

MR. BEAM: Yes.

MR. BROWN: In art history?

MR. BEAM: Yes.

MR. BROWN: This stood you in great stead, then, in the beginning of your museum career, didn't it, where it was the things that reminded you of, but not the exact things with which you were familiar, particularly when you were in Kansas City, and they were bringing in -- were most of these things had never been seen, had been in private collections, acquired through dealers?

MR. BEAM: Hm.

MR. BROWN: The things that came to Kansas City?

MR. BEAM: And later on, when you're trying to teach, which is never easy, you're constantly as an individual of faculty questioning, "What are we trying to do? What is a liberal arts education?" And we spent hours and hours and hours in faculty meeting during curriculum reviews asking, "What in the main are we trying to do?" You see. And Pope knew what he was trying to do. Sachs knew what he was trying to do. Chandler Post did when he said, "Go out and write and pay back something you've learned. Contribute a little bit to knowledge." This was a principle, a guiding principle.

MR. BROWN: Did you also feel you might not have too much of a future for a long time in Kansas City? Was there a chance that you would become a senior curator or a director? Or you might have had to wait quite awhile?

MR. BEAM: I was a young fellow. And I found Kansas City a marvelously hospitable -- as the middle West is. It's somewhere between the East and the South. But wonderfully hospitable. There was a large group of young people, and we'd go horseback riding and skating and dancing. And Chandler Post suspected that I might be a little bit too happy there, and not look to the future.

MR. BROWN: (Laughter)

MR. BEAM: And he said, "Museum work is fine. But suppose the time came when you'd decide that you really wanted to devote yourself to teaching." You didn't need a Ph.D. at that time for museum work. But he was afraid that I might let several years go by and then want to be a teacher. So he persuaded me to leave and come back and complete my graduate work and my doctorate. So that at the end of a couple of more years, there was an opportunity to come to Bowdoin. And it wouldn't have been offered to me, because they wanted a person who could be director of the museum. Mr. Andrews was 68 years old, and they wanted someone who could be director of the museum and also develop the art courses, and do both.

MR. BROWN: This was after having some -- you had -- you came directly to Kansas City to interview?

MR. BEAM: No.

MR. BROWN: You'd been at Harvard?

MR. BEAM: I went back to graduate school along the urging of Chandler Post. The best advice he could have given me, because I was still young, and I hadn't wasted the time.

MR. BROWN: You also went to the new Cortole (phonetic) Institute part-time one summer?

MR. BEAM: In the summer, yes.

MR. BROWN: 1936, I think. Was that enlarging? Was that any different for you?

MR. BEAM: Yes. Oh, yes. And Chandler Post and Paul Sachs introduced me to the head of the Institute of International Education. I went down to New York for an interview to apply for a summer scholarship. They wanted us to use our summers as usefully in travel and study as we could. And the head of the Institute was one Algier Hiss, you see, and very courteous and friendly. And two weeks later I got notice that I had been granted a scholarship to go enroll in a program of courses at the Cortole Institute.

Well, the Cortole Institute was to the British Museum and the University of London what the Fogg Museum was to Boston and Harvard. It was very distinguished and advanced. Their only advanced degree was an MA, which they awarded in the form of a certificate. And in England, the Ph.D. amounted to little. That was a German degree.

But Sachs wanted me to go there because they had a very fine roster of professors, who came over from the British Museum and the National Gallery and the Tate and the Wallace. The curators and the assistant directors - - men of distinction, see. And, oh, they published (inaudible) the great authority on English architecture. And this

was an advantage.

But the courses were in the morning, lecture courses, very intensive, for four hours. And in the afternoon, we would be taken on trips out to the great country estates and castles. We saw Water Castle; we saw Windsor; we saw all of them, which I -- and you needed an entrée. I couldn't have gotten that just as a casual tourist. And Jeffrey Webb would take us -- he would lecture to us, so we were learning as well as enjoying.

And on the days -- about three or four days a week, we were free. And we would go to the great museums of London, the National Gallery, the Victorian Albert, the Wallace Collection, the Tate, and Sachs says there's no place in the world where you can see more -- mind you, see more great works of art in the summer than you can in London.

I got a little misled. I think it started with Pope. I had fallen in love with Turner. And I went over to the Wallace -- to the Tate, where the vast collection of Turner's watercolors was stored, and asked if I could see some. And they gave you a portfolio of Turner's watercolors, and I sat down and looked at them. And I think about half the summer, I went through, oh, probably 19-20,000 Turner watercolors. That's all I got. I got addicted. But I saw all the other works of art there, too.

MR. BROWN: So that was typical of Sachs, though, to want you have breadth, to know, to see, see, as he would say.

MR. BEAM: Well, these men divided undergraduate work and graduate work -- comprehensive for the undergraduate, specialization for the graduates. By then you knew what you were supposed to do. But always, the comprehensive if you're going into museum work. And so they would urge you to have two sides to your coin, the specialized and the comprehensive. So people have misunderstood me in thinking that I advocate some kind of only-general education. I want them to do both. And I've spent half my life studying Winslow Homer's work -- I don't think I've neglected that -- and American art.

MR. BROWN: But this summer in London was the summer of comprehensive study for you, mainly?

MR. BEAM: Yes. It was an opportunity to see the great treasures of the world in the originals right there. And then we would go out to the Dullage Gallery and the Ashmolean and to Oxford and Cambridge to see the great collection of Richmond and the Apsay (phonetic) House. We did everything, saw everything we possibly could.

MR. BROWN: Did this more or less end your coursework, your graduate coursework, after two years or so at Harvard?

MR. BEAM: Well, I took my degree then, see.

MR. BROWN: And then you went on to -- then you came up here, though, didn't you?

MR. BEAM: Well, I finished all my residence work, you see.

MR. BROWN: Before Harvard.

MR. BEAM: Because by the time I had gotten my A.B., I'd taken 18 courses with graduate students.

MR. BROWN: Well over half the requirement, right?

MR. BEAM: Yes. So they had to think of courses for me to take. I took a course in X-ray work with Allen Burroughs, and a course, a seminar in American art, which got me started there.

MR. BROWN: Was Burroughs quite a good teacher? What was he like, Allen Burroughs as a teacher?

MR. BEAM: Very quiet. Wonderful with two or three guys sitting in front of an X-ray. It was a revelation, what he could show you. And he always taught us to see with X-ray eyes, to try to look at the under-painting and imagine the under-painting. That was useful. And he taught us how to read X-rays and also that the X-rays know better than the man who reads it. So that later on when the X-ray became a big thing in museum work, people say all you have to do is take an X-ray and then you can tell whether it's genuine or not. No, wait. (Laughter) It will show you things, but you've got to understand what you're looking at.

And then there was the great Langdon Warner in the Oriental art. And I got to know him through Larry Sitma. And he loved to go over to the Museum of Fine Arts. And he'd invite me to go along, so I'd go over there and get a private tour of the Oriental collection with Langdon Warner. Who could ask for anything more?

MR. BROWN: Was he a fairly colorful man?

MR. BEAM: Oh, colorful, marvelous, great big red-headed outspoken fellow -- not a typical Harvard professor at all. In fact, he was the Oriental department at that time. Of course, it's become great since. But I think he felt a little lonely. And he was glad to have this young kid go along with him. I showed some interest, and he would take me.

MR. BROWN: When you finished your residence, then you were ready for employment again? Were you going to go on and do your writing?

MR. BEAM: Yes. The job opened up here.

MR. BROWN: How did they hear of you? Did they contact Harvard?

MR. BEAM: Everybody wrote to Paul Sachs if they were looking for a museum man.

MR. BROWN: Um-hm. Did you just come up -- were you interviewed by President Sills?

MR. BEAM: That was the day.

MR. BROWN: What was that like?

MR. BEAM: Well, I came up here. Jobs -- friends of mine were telling me about going to New York for two weeks and trying to get a job; they couldn't get a nibble. Things were desperate, see.

MR. BROWN: It was '36, the depth of the Depression, huh?

MR. BEAM: Yes. And so Paul Sachs called me in and he said, "There's an opening up at Bowdoin." Professor Andrews, who later on became a wonderful friend of mine before he died -- he was 68 and he had had two coronaries. President Sills wanted to get a younger man in place. So he knew Sachs and conferred with him. I came up for an interview. It was the day after commencement. And a campus is lonely as a vacation resort in winter the day after commencement.

MR. BROWN: Yes.

MR. BEAM: It was a rainy, drizzly day. And I came up here on the morning train. I wasn't to see President Sills until about 3:30. I went over to the museum with Professor Andrews. And he had been an ill man for about five years. So things were in a little bit of a standstill. And all I could see was all the work that needed to be done. And with that weather, I was a little depressed.

But two things changed all around -- showing the power of personality. I went over to see President Sills. He was a charmer, a real father figure. And I fell in love with that guy. And I thought, "Gee, I hope he offers me the job. I'd like to work for him." And I never knew anybody that knew Sills here who didn't say the same thing. He had a way with people that -- oh, they'd eat out of his hand. He knew everybody and their kids by their first name. You'd see him out here. In the afternoon, he always took a walk. And he'd stop and talk with Joseph leaf-raker, no pretense. And yet he was dignified. Wonderful person.

So I went back to Cambridge, and Professor Sachs said, "How did it go?" I said, "It was a dreary day and I felt really depressed. There's an awful lot of work to be done in the museum." And he made two points. He got on principle. He said, "How old is Professor Andrews?" I said, "He's 68, and he's had two coronaries." He said, "Send him a telegram." (Laughter)

No, I told him about all the work to be done, and he said, "Phil, I can get you two kinds of jobs. I can get you a job in a small museum where there's an awful lot of work to be done by you and one janitor, but where you'll get the credit for it. Or I can get you a job in the Metropolitan Museum where you would get lost and nobody would ever hear of you."

(Laughter)

MR. BEAM: And that has happened to some very brilliant friends of mine. Morrison Hechter went there, and it was 10 years before he ever got a byline. And others -- it's a big place. You're a small puddle, a small frog in a big puddle in the Metropolitan. So I came to Bowdoin.

MR. BROWN: You accepted pretty quickly after that talk with Sachs?

MR. BEAM: Within the hour.

(Laughter)

MR. BEAM: And I came up, and I went to Europe for the summer and traveled around, and came back and started in the fall.

MR. BROWN: And was Andrews there to help you and guide you?

MR. BEAM: Andrews turned out to be a marvelous person. He was trained in English. He taught English at MIT. And when Professor Johnson, the first curator and director, died suddenly, President Sills -- there were very few trained art historians of his age and maturity. And he asked him if he'd come up and teach some art history and run the museum, because he had -- he was a wealthy man. He had traveled to Europe many times. And like Gardner, he had gone to all the museums. He was a cultured man. So he gave these cultural courses. But they were an education.

He loved the English language, loved to write. And he gave me a second lesson in English, the difference between -- due to an (inaudible) and refinements of that sort, you see. And I would say "as" instead of "like" a cigarette. He'd die. But that was great.

MR. BROWN: He was a man of considerable refinement then, was he?

MR. BEAM: In the summer, we'd get in his big Oldsmobile and travel all over the country. He was nearsighted and he couldn't drive. So I would drive. We'd go over to the museums. That was a wonderful opportunity. Then he died. But he was the most kind person you could want to know.

MR. BROWN: Did you come here principally to teach, though, in the beginning, didn't you?

MR. BEAM: I came here to do everything, see. He was director of the museum, and he ran it. And he taught all the courses. And I've got his old notes. They were beautifully written. I've got all his lecture on Jacques Louis David. That was superb even now. That was 50 years ago. Wonderful man. He was out of Andover and Bolton and taught at MIT.

But you see, he was able to handle the directorship because we were right at the crossroads of an era. Alfred Barr hadn't even introduced the rotating exhibition then. Museums were largely static. Temporary exhibitions were very few. And so Mr. Andrews could do that because you'd hang the pictures nicely on the wall and leave them there for three years. And it wasn't taxing.

Well, I came in fired up by Paul Sachs and Alfred Barr to start a new era, and with a small budget, started putting together -- borrowing from all over the place (inaudible), stirring things up. And I created a lot of stir, once you start that. That's the way the museum looked over there. I visited, you see.

MR. BROWN: Yes, yes, yes. The paintings are stacked (inaudible). And then below them on little shelves are probably the prints, the drawings.

MR. BEAM: The drawings, the prints, yes. Hadn't been changed in a decade.

MR. BROWN: Just left there, and one -- were the students -- did they spend a good deal of time in there? Andrews would take them in as part of his teaching?

MR. BEAM: They loved his lectures, but they didn't spend much time in the museum because there were changes.

MR. BROWN: It was always --

MR. BEAM: This was no onus on Professor Andrews because this was the pattern all over the country. You could go to the Cincinnati Museum and come back five years later, and it would be the same. But then a new generation, like Carpenter and Cunningham and Washburn, and Perry Rathbone, all fanned out across the country and started stirring things up. It's never been the same since.

MR. BROWN: Was the museum's audience very broad, or was it mainly to help -- just sort of like the Fogg, to serve the students? Was that the main idea behind the Walter Art Gallery?

MR. BEAM: The visitors book showed that people came from every state in the country and many countries of the world because hanging on the walls was, and still is, a distinguished collection of American art and some outstanding Ausserian reliefs, a superb collection of drawings, including Broydel. Scholars are still studying that collection of drawings. So the things were there. It was just the static condition of that time. And the students were not as keen on art history at that moment as they have become in recent decades.

The momentum developed in the history of art in the last 30 years has been fantastic, with the growth of museums and courses and enrollments and so forth.

MR. BROWN: The museum at the college was almost -- it had been a separate bequest, I believe, hadn't it? It was built -- designed by Charles McKimm and --

MR. BEAM: It was still almost like a private personal collection. The heart of it was the collection given by James Bolton 100 years before, and so forth.

MR. BROWN: Yes. Sort of like a body on the campus, but not particularly of it, or not entirely.

MR. BEAM: Yes.

MR. BROWN: Somewhat like, say, the John Carter Brown Library of rare Americana at Brown University.

MR. BEAM: Yes. Well, Philip Holfer often complained that scholars would come from Istanbul and --

MR. BROWN: (Inaudible)

MR. BEAM: -- and Moscow to his library there, and a student could go all the way through Harvard and never set inside it. I don't think you can force-feed people. Over the decades, I introduced art (inaudible) and a roster of courses. And in the course of time, I taught everything.

(Laughter)

MR. BEAM: And gradually, as the faculty increased, we'd get specialized more. But I did that to try to generate some interest, though at that time there was no opportunity to major in art at Bowdoin. And I had to introduce that. And I introduced the studio courses, you see.

MR. BROWN: All within the first year or two of your coming here?

MR. BEAM: Well, education then was, you majored in physics, biology, chemistry, and you went on to be a doctor, an engineer, or a lawyer, or government, history.

MR. BROWN: But what about -- wasn't there a liberal arts major as well?

MR. BEAM: Yes, but it was much more limited than it is today in all kinds of ways. Now you can major in archaeology. You can major in classics. You couldn't major in music at that time. And there are all kinds of fields that we now consider important, which were not in the fold then.

MR. BROWN: So art history was just a minor part of the liberal arts curriculum?

MR. BEAM: You took it if you were interested. It wasn't even a minor at that time. But I pushed for a major, and -- or a minor. And nowadays, we have the biggest enrollment in the whole college. But we've done it without compulsion.

And there is today this talk across the country, getting back to basics, which I think will delude people. They think getting back to reading, writing, and arithmetic, which you to know, anybody, anyway, see. It's what you do with them that counts. And so there's been a surge in the faculty meetings to put the -- go back to a structured course of compulsory requirements. And my experience is that it would be like trying to make me a physics major.

And we had when I came here, everybody had to take math. And they learned to hate it, see? I loved it because nobody forced it on me. We had fellows who would go four years at Bowdoin before they would complete their freshman math to graduate. That's not good. And so when they gave up the compulsory, there was a big drop-off in enrollments in some courses like chemistry and math and so forth. And the professor says -- they were a little scared at first -- "We'll hang in there. And then we'll reorient the students who want to take our stuff." Now they're on solid ground. They've got big enrollments, good majors, all of whom want to be there. They turn out good doctors. They turn out good mathematicians, not people who are forced.

So -- a number of people said, "We ought to have a compulsory course in music," see. I love to listen to music, but unlike my father, I have no ear for it. If I was forced to take a music, where they had to read scores and play the piano and all this, I'd flunk. That's not fair. But I love opera. I listen to music all the time. So I rebelled against making art one-two compulsory, and was succeeded in that, and it's a blessing we did because last year we had 200 people sign up for art one, collectively, and we had to turn them away. But there's nobody in there who doesn't want to be. And there's no law that says that all students who come to Bowdoin should either have interest in or aptitude for it.

My father loved opera. He'd go to New York to listen to it. I went one time; I thought it was the craziest stuff I ever heard. So he said, "All right." It wasn't 15 years later that I went with a friend to hear Carmen, and I fell in

love with it. And now I go to operas whenever I can. But nobody forced me. Sometimes these interests come late. I have letters from students who said, "We played some good golf and tennis together, but I never took any of your art courses. I'm now 40 years. What can I do about it?" And I say, "Well, you're young. Go to some museums and read about it." And then they develop an interest, and these people become collectors. But if they had been forced to take art one-two, I don't think they would. That's just my theory.

MR. BROWN: So in fact I gather you, in your teaching and then when you took over the directing of the museum, which was 1939, I believe, you presented what the possibilities were.

MR. BEAM: Yes.

MR. BROWN: And then the students would come, and the public would come, as they pleased, as they developed interest. Is that right?

MR. BEAM: Well, I started seeing what Chase and Post and Sachs could do by their own enthusiasm. And when I started to teach, my father, who had salesmen working for him, said, "Look. The starting point of good salesmanship is, the salesman has got to be interested in it." So if the teacher is interested, the students will be. If he's bored, they certainly will be. And when you have required courses and the teacher has to do beginning French to very unhappy students over and over again, it kills it.

MR. BROWN: When you took on the museum, were you able to gradually make changes? Before World War II, were you --

MR. BEAM: I had to work through President Sills. He was the key. I had to set it. They had a very small budget because they needed one. Buildings and grounds took care of the building, and there wasn't any need for exhibition money. So I went to him, and I said, "There are some marvelous things being done in the big cities. And just because we're in the country shouldn't prevent us from getting in on it." I told him about the Museum of Modern Art, and by golly, when he went to New York he went to see it, see? And that sold him. So he got me some exhibition money, and each year he would -- he said, "Look. I can't get this through the trustees overnight. But you'll apply for a little more money each year, and I'll help you." And we built it up.

And I had thought that if I could get some interesting exhibitions -- the first exhibition was just a portfolio of color reproductions from the Associated American Artists. But it was something that older people came to see it, and they were for sale, and some of the students even bought them. And we began to encourage that. I set up a program of taking a lot of color reproductions and framing them and bringing them out to the students for 50 cents apiece a year so they'd have something on their walls besides girly pictures and posters. And that developed, and we got up where we had a collection of 500 or 600 color reproductions.

Opening day, the place would be mobbed and still is.

MR. BROWN: Was much of this contemporary work or fairly recent work?

MR. BEAM: Color reproductions of all kinds, see. You could buy them. That was a new field. And likewise, students hadn't seen the exhibition. So they came, and pretty soon, as I got to know -- Professor Sachs wanted to do another thing that art historians don't often do, get on and meet real-life artists, see. So I got to know when I was in Kansas City the likes of Benton and Curry and Wood, personally, that came to the museum and I cultivated them. And I'd go over and visit (inaudible) at the Kansas City Art Institute. And Curry invited me to come over to Kansas State and lecture. And I went up to Iowa and lectured for Grant Wood.

And you learn things by meeting the artist personally you can't learn by reading about them. So whenever I could, I'd meet fellows like Walt Kuhn. And a student wanted to write a paper on Jack Levine. I said, "Go down and say hello to him." And so he said, "I'm just a kid. He wouldn't speak to me." Three of them went down there, and Jack was -- he took them in and spent the whole day talking to them. And they wrote good papers, see.

And Hopper and Kunioshi (phonetic) and people like that, wherever possible. So I went around. I knew that there were an awful lot of artists, living artists in Maine, see, because of the climate. So I began to cultivate them. And I said, "Look" -- to Fitzgerald or -- "We haven't got much money, but would you be willing to let me have a show of your watercolors, originals, here at the museum?" So we had it. I'd collect all the old clippings. And more and more, we got shows of -- one-man shows of artists. And I gave Steve Etner (phonetic) his first one-man show, and got to be friends with Strater, Don (inaudible).

MR. BROWN: Henry Strater?

MR. BEAM: Gave him his first one-man show. These people were delighted. They were lonely a lot, a little bit shy. I got to know Marcen Hartley, Henry Barnum Poore, Waldo Pierce (inaudible). And just great. Pierce was a great cook. So every time we'd go over to Bar Harbor, we'd stop -- my wife and I would stop and see Waldo, and he'd

make a great salad for lunch, and so forth.

MR. BROWN: And they were delighted when you would show things here; is that right?

MR. BEAM: Yes. There was an opportunity. These people were hungry. See, everything is in New York. Here we are up here. I said, well, let's do something about it.

And things sort of snowballed, and as we did that, then the attendance built up. And I could get more from -- trustees are always statistics-conscious. How many students are taking Government 1?

(Laughter)

MR. BROWN: They think that gives them a solid --

MR. BEAM: Well, they're businessmen, and don't fight it. Join them.

MR. BROWN: Yes.

MR. BEAM: So I'd inform them of the increase in the statistics. And with the guestbook to prove it, they would give us more money. And then I wanted to build up the endowment. So I went and visited Charles August Handlon (phonetic) for about 20 years. We never talked about money. He was a great friend of John Sloan's. I loved Sloan and his wife; we still see her. And when he died, he left us the largest single Sloan collection in the country -- virtually complete the graphics, those wonderful graphics where Sloan has drawn. And (inaudible) million bucks, with the specification that the money be used for the purchase and exhibition of American pictorial art. This was a gesture to his friend Sloan who had been badly neglected, you see, and to help American art. And he was a close friend of Bryson Burroughs. They are lucky we got the money instead of Burroughs.

But he also had a place up at (inaudible) Harbor. And you can combine this love of Maine with opportunity. And wherever I could, I would get to meet people of means. I liked most of them, but you've got to have the means to help. And so over the years, they have given us endowments that have added up. Rockwell Kent came in. We were nice to him. And he left us a large collection and some money to maintain it. And so these things have added up. And the museum has pretty respectable endowments now.

MR. BROWN: Um-hm. Is part of its attraction that it attracts the community from a very, very broad area, as well as serving the college?

MR. BEAM: From all over the country and both sides of the Atlantic. And my little work in newspaper work taught me the value is, Paul Sachs never has to say that -- you've got to have publicity. If you've got something to show them in the museum, people aren't mind readers. Tell them about it. So I've worked on publicity, and the museum still does that, does a good job.

So you get -- I was telling you about the accidents that befall you in your life, and give them credit. But Chandler Post believed that there is a beneficence circle. And if you 50 percent the right things, things will -- one thing led to another, and they will grow. You build up your endowments, and the trustees will help you and they'll give you more money and you can do more good shows, more just one exhibit. Some of them will give you works, like Rockwell Kent.

When Mosen Hartley (phonetic) died he specified that one of his -- we should have a choice of one of his pictures. So I chose the Vital (inaudible) one. It was a favorite of his, he said. I still think it's a good one.

MR. BROWN: Did you hit it off quite well with him? He was a particularly private man, wasn't he?

MR. BEAM: Very private, very loving. His family thought he was -- they didn't understand him. He was living over at Mosen at the time. He had almost no money, very little help, very little appreciation. If it hadn't been for a few friends in New York and his dealer, Walker --

MR. BROWN: Hudson Walker.

MR. BEAM: -- who encourage him, I think he would have given up in despair. These are the things that you see through the personal contacts in the field of art, by getting out of your office, that you don't see just by reading the book.

MR. BROWN: (Inaudible)

MR. BEAM: Well, I've written books, and I don't want to discourage books.

MR. BROWN: Yes, but that's after you've been out. And then you've gone back to the study, so to speak.

MR. BEAM: Yes. Use all the avenues you can.

MR. BROWN: President Sills -- you said to me earlier that in other times he put a great deal of emphasis on teaching.

MR. BEAM: Yes.

MR. BROWN: And how did -- in the early days, say, before World War II, did you develop that? How did that go along? You were starting with a pretty small base, I suppose, of students.

MR. BEAM: Yes. We had a fairly good enrollment under Professor Andrews because he was a fine speaker. And oddly enough, the students appreciated that they learned more English from him than anywhere else. He'd bear down on their -- he had them write papers all the time, descriptive papers, and he'd correct them to the hilt. And they appreciated that.

And he was a fine person. And he had no children; he wasn't married. He took a fatherly interest in them, and they warmed up to that. So there was -- I inherited a lot of goodwill. He was a popular person. It was just that at that time, art ranked well below physics and chemistry in terms of seriousness. But I didn't let that bother me.

MR. BROWN: You must have made a good deal of use of the rich and broad collection, perhaps more than had been done?

MR. BEAM: I did, but I had to get to work on Monday. We only had 150 slides, you see. And Professor Andrews lectured primarily from the collection in the galleries, and we put up 50 chairs or so. He lectured in the galleries, and this was fine. And I'd done that at Kansas City, and I wanted to continue to do it. And I still do it. And I'll do exactly that with the other hostile people.

MR. BROWN: In the galleries?

MR. BEAM: Unless you're in the Metropolitan, you can't teach the history of art just in your gallery. So as I said, among other things I learned at the Fogg, I got the photographer to teach me how to do photography because Sachs said that a camera is a wonderful adjunct for any art historian, see. So everywhere I go, I've taken 40,000 or 50,000 slides. Right behind you are pictures I've made, volumes and volumes of photographs of Winslow Homer that I've done, printed, almost went blind from the darkroom work. My feet hurt. (Laughter)

But when I resigned, I think I had made about 40,000 slides, that are in the next room. And any respectable art history program has to have that. Somebody had to start it, see.

MR. BROWN: And you were able to make some headway fairly quickly, were you?

MR. BEAM: I went to President Sills, told him what needed to be done. He had a blind eye for art. He was a classicist, he loved literature, didn't know one picture from another. But he had faith in people. If I said, "Look, this is good for Bodeman and the students in the museum," he would support it and encourage people. So I owed a lot to President Sills and Andrews, and was lucky in that respect.

MR. BROWN: Were you -- into World War I, did you teach right through that? Or were you off during that war?

MR. BEAM: I came along in World War II.

MR. BROWN: World War II, excuse me. I'm sorry.

MR. BEAM: Well, I was a little old. I applied for a commission in the Navy, and they were looking for young men. See, I was getting along into the later 30s.

MR. BROWN: The 30s, um-hm.

MR. BEAM: And they then wouldn't give commissions. And I had no interest in going as a GI at age 36 or so.

MR. BROWN: So you continued teaching then, right, through the war?

MR. BEAM: Well, Bowdoin's enrollment dropped down from 550 to 150 regular students. But we had large contingents of soldiers here. And I taught -- speaking of luck -- when I was at Harvard, I had to pick up a science course. I wanted to pick up a science course. And I signed up for meteorology and took a course in meteorology the first semester under Robert Dukursy (phonetic) Ward, who had trained all the early Weather Bureau men in Washington. He was the great-grandfather.

And the second semester was a gentleman named Huntington from Yale, who was the great climatologist. He

was the father of Chuck Huntington here. He came up, and he gave a course in climatology, so I took that. And I've been crazy about weather ever since. And so the Air Force was looking for somebody to teach meteorology and geography. And so they let me teach meteorology and geography and climatology. I'd been interested in geography, as one should be in art history, and had taken some courses in it. So I spent two years of the war doing that, but the enrollment got so low we thought we were going to have to fold up. But we got through it.

(End tape 1, side B)

MR. BROWN: The family of Winslow Homer and how this, of course, led to what became one of your great interests and tremendous contributions to art history --

MR. BEAM: Well, when Professor Andrews taught at MIT, there was a young man training there to be a nautical engineer and ultimately designed military warships. His name was Charles L. Homer. He was a nephew of the artist. And he took a course with Professor Andrews, and they got to be good friends.

And when Mr. Andrews and I were talking about American art and this and that, and he asked me some of my favorite painters, I said, "Well, I like Winslow Homer's pictures." I didn't know as much as I should have at the time, but I said, "I love Winslow Homer's art, and I understand that he spent the latter part of his life in New England." And Mr. Andrews said, "Well, I know Charlie Homer, he's a nephew. And the next time we go down to Boston" -- we were always getting in the car and traveling -- he said, "I'll set up a luncheon meeting with Charles Homer," who was then the chief designer of ships at the Quincy Naval Yard. "And I think you'd enjoy him."

Well, I certainly did. And among other things, Charles Homer's personality gave me an insight into the Homer personality at large, because I met others, like Charlie's daughter and Lois Homer Graham, all of whom have a certain quality that emanates from the Homer family.

MR. BROWN: Can you describe it?

MR. BEAM: Very keen mentally, fantastic memories. Whenever I talked to Lois Homer and her husband -- they'd always come to (inaudible) each summer and we'd get together with them. And she'll talk about things that happened to her when she was a girl or at college just as though they were yesterday. And she never forgets a thing. And fortunately for me, Charlie Homer had a fabulous memory, and rarely did I ever catch him or anybody catch him in an error -- a scholarly mind.

Winslow Homer could have been a botanist. He had a scientific mind. He knew every flower and plant on the whole of Prout's Neck. People said he could point out this and that. So Mr. Andrews invited Charlie Homer to join us at the Parker House because the old Parker House, not the present one, but the old Parker House had been a favorite eating place of Winslow Homer's. And it was a kind of tradition in the family that the Parker House was a good place to eat, and is.

So we met there for lunch. And I thought Charlie Homer was fascinating. We got to talking about this and that. And his uncle came up and so forth. But I just liked the fellow. He loved to tell stories. And he had a wonderful -- a beauteant (sic) quality. The Homers as I've known them all, they get a kick out of life. They've got vitality and energy. And certainly Lois Homer has. She's certainly 70-plus, and she goes skiing, and she'll jump in the -- she and her husband will get on the train and go to New York for a play at the drop of a hat. And then they go to New York all the time. They're alive.

And so when Charlie invited me to come to his summer place, which is now the Ark, where he lived in summer, and visit him as a social engagement, I remember this. And I called up one time and said, "I'd like to come over to Prout's and see you people." So I went over there. And his wife was just as engaging as he was, very ladylike, very friendly and hospitable.

And so I got to going back there just to see them. I was not married. This was back in '36. I was not married, so I was footloose, and I'd go back there and visit them. And they began to invite me to stay in the studio, which they used as a guesthouse. So I got to stay there and fell in love with Prout's Neck, and got to see the scenery under the conditions of Homer had observed them.

This again is one way of getting out of the library, get the feeling element, put yourself in the place of the artist. And whenever I've met some significant artist, I want to go see his studio.

MR. BROWN: That was pretty much as it must have been in Winslow's days, wasn't it?

MR. BEAM: Oh, yes.

MR. BROWN: In the '30s still?

MR. BEAM: Yes. They've dressed it up since, but it was still very simple.

MR. BROWN: It wasn't very much furnished or anything?

MR. BEAM: No. No. Charlie Homer, among other things, was a wonderful cook. He loved to put on lobster bakes and clam bakes, which didn't displease me at all. So that first summer, I just went and visited them. But as we'd wander around the Neck -- he was always prowling the Neck, and we'd meet Dr. Farr or somebody like that. And the turn would turn to Winslow Homer, or his father, who I think made a more vivid impression on people than even the painter. Winslow was on the quiet side because he was busy. And his father was all over the Neck. He was a very outgoing and busy person.

And so one day, I asked Charlie if anybody was writing this down, because a picture of Winslow Homer had emerged that was much more many-sided and complex and real than this stereotype that arises when a student will say of Van Gogh, "Oh, he was the fellow who cut off his ear," and that's all they know about him, see. Or Gauguin was the artist who deserted his family and went down to the South Seas. Well, there's a little bit more to Gauguin than that. As a starter, yes.

And Charlie said, "No." And it didn't occur to him. He had and always had.

MR. BROWN: Did they think that Downs had done what needed to be done, Downs in 1910, perhaps? Or he didn't even think about that?

MR. BEAM: Downs had made a good start because he had conferred with Charles Homer, the brother of Winslow.

MR. BROWN: The brother.

MR. BEAM: And he got it firsthand, and a wonderful source, and with Mattie, his wife. He knew Winslow as intimately as any woman ever did. But I asked Charlie if Downs had ever spent much time up at Prout's. And he'd done factually and scholarly a fine job, and he'd gotten things on the record which would have been totally lost otherwise.

But what I wanted to do was to talk to all the people I could who had known Winslow and also to live there in all kinds of weather. And I had an arrangement with Charlie Homer that when a big storm was blowing up in the late autumn, he'd phone me, and I'd go down there and see it, because the summer people miss that, you see. And you can go down there for eight days in a row, and there won't be any storm. And I wanted to see the storms as Homer had seen them.

And that was an experience in itself. I'd stand up on the rocks when the waves were coming and almost eye-high, mountainous waves. And the wind was so strong we'd have to get behind a rock to keep from getting blown in the ocean. And then you'd get soaking wet, but it was worth it.

MR. BROWN: And you know -- you knew or you'd been told that Homer did that very thing?

MR. BEAM: Homer did -- oh, he knew the Neck even in the dead of winter.

MR. BROWN: And he would go out in it to a degree, too?

MR. BEAM: Yes. So later on, I would go down there in February, see, and try to photograph, because Homer painted pictures. There's a pile right over there of pictures that I took, and I nearly froze. Well, you don't freeze in the library. It puts you in the position of the artist. (Laughter)

So I said, "Charlie, the next time I come down I'm going to bring a notebook, and you're going to sit down and repeat all these things that you've been telling me, and I'm going to write them down." And he said, "Well, there are a lot of people around here who must have known Winslow. And I'll make some inquiries." So he said there's Mrs. Savage, and she knew him. And there was Lynn Libby; there was his houseboy, the candy man. So I went and visited them and wrote down their recollections and checked things that bothered me about his life of hospitality or his hostility, so forth.

It all had to be qualified. He hated to be disturbed while he was working. But after work, he'd be as friendly out on the Neck, talk to people just as easily as anybody. And the children would come, and he always had candy or oranges. And he'd give them some candy or oranges, so long as they didn't come to the studio and bother him.

And one eminent hostess chided him as being standoffish. And he explained to her that back in Philadelphia, her husband, who was the president of a big bank, had about four secretaries to protect him, and he had no one, see. And that made the point, and they got to be good friends. But he was surrounded by people there on the Neck who were there on vacation and had nothing to do. And as he became well known in his life, they wanted to bring visitors over and introduce them to the great painter, see. And it became a positive nuisance.

MR. BROWN: Yes. He was simply one of their amusements for the summer.

MR. BEAM: Yes. And he -- they had to get out of Prout's Neck for the summer. And he'd go to the Adirondacks or Canada, come back in the fall after they'd gone.

MR. BROWN: Prout's Neck had been -- didn't he and his brother develop that? It was developed as a summer place, wasn't it, for (inaudible)?

MR. BEAM: Well, when they first started coming there in '83, it was no summer resort at all. I've got photographs that I can show you. Only three buildings on the whole Neck, see. And Charles Homer was a very astute businessman and made a large fortune, which helped Homer when he was in his late years. He invented (inaudible). And he got a royalty on every can in the days when they would put nine coats on a Pullman coach. See, it was a goldmine -- still is a good varnish.

And he lived in the ark, and he had servants and so forth. And they bought up the Neck with his money. And they put Mom and Poppa a home there. They were getting along in years. And they got a fellow named Stevenson, a railroad cartographer, to divide it up into house lots. And they sold off all the lots. And the Bursar of Bowdon College is Tom Libby of the Libby family. It was once called Libby's Neck. He said, oh boy, a lot of fortune went down the drain when they sold it to -- they sold off that whole property for very little.

But it was Charles who developed it. And Winslow took a third of the lots, and Arthur took a third, and Charles took a third. And Winslow sold off the lots and kept a record. And you can see the references to it in correspondence with his brother Arthur, because they were borderline cases, of, "Who owns lot 28, and who owns lot 29?" And Arthur said, "Well, you give me lot 28 and I'll give you Easter Point." So that when Homer painted Eastern Point, he owned it, see. It isn't often the artist owns the landscape he paints.

All right. But it boomeranged. Homer needed money, or wanted it. And in the course of time, through his own sales, he helped to develop it into a summer resort second only to Bar Harbor, and very affluent, for the people who pestered him, so he couldn't have it both ways.

(Laughter)

MR. BROWN: You got these stories then directly from Charlie Homer in the '30s? And then you reconfirmed it from --

MR. BEAM: The many people who had known Winslow, and in their separate ways described him. And gradually, I put together a picture of the man. He was extraordinarily generous. He was perhaps most at ease with the natives and the farmers and those people. And he -- if any of them had trouble, like when one of them had his barn burned down, Winslow made a big contribution, went around soliciting money to rebuild it, that sort of thing. And he did it so quietly, you see.

Well, he was no curmudgeon -- all kinds of stories about his generosity, and all the native people, like Mrs. Vale, who had grown up there -- lots of other people -- they thought Winslow Homer was the salt of the earth. They all recognized that he was a man of keen intelligence. He was widely traveled. He was no bumpkin. He knew New York and Atlantic City. And he traveled more than most people at that time. And he was a man of the world.

MR. BROWN: And yet he left them alone, or they left him alone. I suppose the locals, they respected each other, didn't they? Unlike the summer people.

MR. BEAM: The local people didn't think of him as a famous artist. He was Winslow Homer, you see.

MR. BROWN: So this became then increasingly intriguing to you, I suppose, and into the late 1930s. I mean, you're visiting there more and more and taking more and more notes.

MR. BEAM: Yes. I went back for two reasons. I enjoyed, and always did, Charlie Homer and his wife. And there are many friends on the neck among the summer visitors who would invite us to dinner. Of course, Charlie would repay them with wonderful lobster bakes, you see. So I got to know most of the residents there. And one day something clicked in my mind. It occurred to me that, since this was 1936 or so and Winslow Homer died in 1910, the people who knew him personally, like Lynn Libby had been a housewife, but was getting along in years -- that all of these people were getting along.

And if I didn't get their recollections on paper pretty fast, they would be lost forever, see, because as far as I could discern, no other people who were, or should have been interested in Homer, American art scholars, had spent much time on the Neck. And some had come up for a few days. But you couldn't get the feeling of Prout's Neck and you couldn't meet all these people and you couldn't write it all down in a few days.

I felt lucky that I lived only 40 miles from there, and I could get in my little Ford and go over there anytime. And I'd go over for an afternoon or the evening. And I'd do that 50 times in the course of the summer. It was a

pleasure, and it was work. But I got this idea that I'd better write these things down.

And this again sprang from something that Paul Sachs had told me. He said that many a man in science started out with a quest that wasn't clear. And somewhere along the line, he'd get the light. He'd call it serendipity, and then he'd get an idea. He'd say, if there's the material for a good study, write it down. And it may not amount to anything, but at least you'll have the material. And if it comes from people who are aging, it can be precious. As an art historian, you have a duty to write it down. That should be your practice, whether or not you're going to put it together in a book.

So the book sort of evolved after I'd gotten enough material, you see.

MR. BROWN: Meanwhile, in these early years, was your awareness of Homer's quality as a painter growing in your investigation of him?

MR. BEAM: Oh, yes. The most I learned about the man, the more I came to admire and respect him. And also, I had done my share of watercolors, and I knew what a terribly difficult medium it is. And I was just in awe of the ability of Winslow Homer to paint pictures like that one of the end of the hunt, and get all the tones exactly right, with no signs of fumbling, correction, or messing around. I can do a nice, clean line drawing. But when you're working in watercolors, you've got to know what you're doing. The only way you know what you're doing is from thousands of hours experience. So that picture speaks of years of experience.

No beginner does watercolor like that. So his nearly 40 years of doing watercolors, you could see the growth that was fascinating in terms of the evolution of his style. And you couldn't help liking him. And I genuinely became -- admired the man, his discipline, his Spartan qualities, his ability to live there in the dead of winter, cook his own meals when there wasn't anybody within five miles, and not a word of complaint. You'd go out on a morning when it's 10 below zero, and if the sun is sparkling on the water, he was thrilled by it, you see. No complaint about how cold it is. One little pot-bellied stove in the whole studio. He was a real man.

MR. BROWN: This interest -- you felt that it was a duty, as Paul Sachs had indicated. And you were very aware very early on that it was a duty to lay this down.

MR. BEAM: Write it down.

MR. BROWN: Yes.

MR. BEAM: Write it down.

MR. BROWN: For how long did you --

MR. BEAM: I filled all those notebooks over there before I even thought of writing a book.

MR. BROWN: Those were recollections?

MR. BEAM: Yes. Then in the process of writing a book, I came up against the same problem that any scholar does. This is universal. You've got to come up with an idea that is worth developing and will make a contribution, meaning that it's not a retread of something that's been done, that it's not on a trivial subject, as I see it, like (inaudible), that it is significant.

And I don't think Shakespeare or Winslow Homer will ever be exhausted by anybody. There's just no danger that that will happen. So don't steer clear of the big men, you see. They're big for a reason. But find out what about them hasn't been done. Try to shed some light on it, and not to try to do the whole thing.

The fellow who wants to write the definitive magnum opus is in danger. For one thing, you won't live long enough. And it will be so big it will be confusing. So you've got to carve out a subject, you see. And as I saw it, my best chance of writing about Winslow Homer, with some feeling and understanding, was to treat the years at Prout's, because I could join hands with him, even though he wasn't there. I could go over to Prout's. I could live there. I could see the storms as he saw them. So I could write from my point of view in words what he had done in pictures.

There were aspects of his career in Cambridge and the Civil War period that were long gone for me. I couldn't write with any insight. I tried it, didn't work. So I had to settle on the Prout's Neck period. And I was encouraged enough by James Thomas Flexner and some others who were older and wiser than I.

MR. BROWN: Do you think that you shied away from the others because you had such vividness and such a wealth of material in Prout's Neck that to look at the career at Harper's or in the Civil War sort of paled by comparison? The documentation that was available -- the ability to sense what he was trying to do?

MR. BEAM: It would be a library book. I couldn't come to grips with it through personal experience, you see. I'm not that good of an imaginative writer. There are writers, Nivens in American history, who can (inaudible) always back in the Civil War fighting it, you know, and make it live. Well, I couldn't do that. But the minute I got to talking about talking about Prout's Neck, I knew what I -- I felt on safe ground.

And Flexner said, "Well, no point in your doing another Downs," which was a general biography. Downs did it at the right moment, a year after Homer died. And it needed to be spread out. That was the first real biography. That needed to be done. But it doesn't need to be done again, you see.

MR. BROWN: About when did you begin working on Winslow Homer at Prout's Neck? It was published in '66. That's what, 30 years after you first began --

MR. BEAM: Oh, I began -- I began getting the -- Ben Rowland was the one who --

MR. BROWN: Photographer, wasn't he?

MR. BEAM: Yes. Well, he was an Orientalist and such was a generally wise person. And he said, "I think you've got -- if you know the Homer family and you live only 40 miles from Prout's," he said, "Gee, that's great." He said, "I live 6000 miles from the Orient."

MR. BROWN: (Laughter)

MR. BEAM: And he said, "Concentrate on that, and begin to think in terms of a book." And he said, "It may take a couple of years for it to take shape in your mind." And he was the one who gave me the insight. He said, "If you disagree with what you've learned from Homer's friends and relatives about the picture of him that's been presented -- you think it's unfair and limited -- why, try to revise that. And it will make -- that will be a contribution."

And I think I've got letters of appreciation to show that that part, at least, was successful. There are all kinds of other aspects, like catalog resumes of Homer's work that anybody can do as well as I or better because that's the sort of book you ought to write in New York City, with its great library facilities and the Frick art references and places like that. So Ben Rowland was the one who encouraged me to get thinking in terms of a book.

And then I went to see a classmate of mine, Dick Clark, who after Harvard had become a Rhodes scholar. He had majored in English and had gone on to become the senior editor at Houghton and Mifflin. And I went to see him. And I said, "Dick, I'm interested in writing a biography of Winslow Homer." And he said, "I don't think that" -- this was a long time ago. That was, oh, back in the '40s. He said, "I can't sell a book on American art." And so I couldn't sell him on the idea.

But as we talked -- he was a good friend, not unsympathetic. He said, "I don't think you're ready yet. You've got to crystallize in your mind points one, two, three, four. What do you want to prove? Was there a turning point in Homer's life? If so, and you can prove it, spell that out. Also, go on to explain as fully as you can why the locale of Prout's did as much for Homer as, say, Aril Head for Van Gogh or as Tahiti had done for Gauguin. If there is a geographical inspiration there, play that up, you see. That's not the sort of thing you can do by sitting in the Library of Congress." There again, the Prout's Neck business, you see.

MR. BROWN: So what he was trying was perhaps to suggest that you emphasize that aspect of his biography, not try to do a whole biography.

MR. BEAM: He thought I was trying to do too much. And I was not, as my wife would say in terms of bridge, playing from your strength, you see.

MR. BROWN: And Flexner said it for other reasons, he'd say, we have a biography.

MR. BEAM: We have a biography. He said, "It seems to me that your best information was gathered at Prout's Neck." And he encouraged me.

MR. BROWN: So you began working on it then in the '40s, the assembling and writing from your copious notes?

MR. BEAM: Yes -- no. And I wasn't really ready until, oh, 15 years because I was the director of a museum and I was teaching all the courses.

MR. BROWN: You were chairman of the department from '49 on.

MR. BEAM: Chairman of the department, I was trying to travel. I had a wife and children who needed some attention. So I didn't have unlimited free time.

MR. BROWN: Then you took it to, was it to Little Brown?

MR. BEAM: Again, I was lucky. The senior editor at Little Brown was Randy Williams, who was a genius among editors. He was a real old pro. And I had followed the advice of Dick Clark not to offer a sample chapter. He said, "I've got a whole file of books that have never gotten beyond a sample chapter. I give a fellow a contract, and he thinks he's finished his book and he never -- he quits. Ten years later, nothing has happened." He said, "Put it all on paper as well as you can."

So I had a pretty complete manuscript before I ever went to visit Randy Williams. And fortunately, Randy Williams loved Winslow Homer, you see, and knew a lot about him. So that was a good thing. He also was a good friend of James Thomas Flexner. So he called him up. And he said, "I read Philip Beam's manuscript. I think the early part doesn't convince me, but the minute he gets to Prout's Neck it makes sense." And Flexner told him that that's exactly what I said, and he said, "I think that American art has aroused enough interest now so that you could sell a book on Winslow Homer at Prout's Neck, you see."

And specialized books like the Swedish author's book on Gauguin in Tahiti. People have written for years about Gauguin, and nobody had bothered to go to Tahiti. It was an eye-opener. So he said, "Play that up. And all you need to do is throw in an introductory chapter, and good readers will fill that in." So that was good advice. And Randy Williams helped me in other ways. By that time I had generated all that material over there, these volumes. I had no lack of material. But the main lessons were lost in the words.

And so Randy Williams -- I say he was an old pro. He said, "I'll publish your book on one condition. And I said, "What?" "Cut it in half." Oh, Lord. I had worked all summer on it. And I thought, "Oh, boy, here goes another summer's work. I won't be able to get it until next summer." I said, "Can you wait till next summer?" So he said, "Yes, I'll do more than that." He said, "I've got some pretty good editors here like Mary Ratcliff. And so many authors come in, and they want me to write a contract which prohibits the publisher from changing a word without permission." He said, "This is stupid." He said, "Get all the help you can. Your readers are going to be outsiders. The pros are the objective people between you and the critical reviewers and the readers, and they will view your book as you can't possibly. It's your baby."

So Mary Ratcliff took the book. And she had a motto: Half as long is twice as good. And I said, "Where did you get that?" She said, "I got it from Ives Von Raugh (phonetic), less is more. And it works." And I remembered when I was writing for the newspaper, I could grind out a long column, and the editor would say, "For gosh sakes, boil it down. Boil it down." That's what he would say, see. "I'm only going to give you 12 inches. Put the story in 12." So I harked back to the newspaper training.

And Mary Ratcliff spent that following summer -- and I've got all the documents to prove it -- in the most diplomatic and genuine way, going -- attaching little pink slips to the side and say, "Would it be as good this way?" She'd take a whole paragraph, a long paragraph, and boil it down to four sentences, and it was always better.

So I think that there's an unfair element about publishing. And in any introduction I've written since, I've always tried to give praise to the copy editors because they -- they only get a byline, see. When I did the book on Winslow Homer's engravings, gee, those people at Harper's were marvelous.

MR. BROWN: Did Mary Ratcliff -- and they took off the earlier chronology as well?

MR. BEAM: She boiled it down to about eight pages, and that was enough to get going. And she rearranged the following part so that it underscored exactly the parts that brought out his personality and the character parts and the interplay, and why Winslow Homer was inseparable from Prout's, you see, and proofed it, and introduced, wherever possible, his own word in the form of the letters, you see. And the family had given me access to all those.

And I'd done them a service, I think there, because Mattie had collected the letters because she believed in Winslow Homer long before anybody else did. She had saved them.

MR. BROWN: Including the brother. She --

MR. BEAM: The brother, too. They believed him. He financed him, and she appreciated him. She had more of an eye for art than he did. And she collected the letters. But they were all scrambled together in no particular order. And I got Charlie Homer to sit down with me over weeks of time and put these in chronological order, as best we could, by using his knowledge, you see.

He mentioned Hamilton. Okay. That's got to be before 1886, because Hamilton died in 1886. So there's no date on the letter, but it puts it in a time frame. And he'll mention -- Homer will mention Archie in his new patent-leather slippers. And no reference, because he would assume that they know who Archie is, see. But Charlie

said, "Oh, Archie was such-and-such." And he'd give me a little thumbnail sketch on it, and why. And he would say that, "He was a fellow who amused Winslow, who could dress like a gentleman, but was very casual about his working hours." But Archie was a summer visitor who is always dressed to the hilt. He was very dapper in his manner. (Laughter) He and Winslow were pretty good friends.

MR. BROWN: This was absolutely invaluable, your sitting down with Charlie Homer to go over these.

MR. BEAM: Yes. The letters of Winslow Homer, as anybody can see, are very cryptic, you see. And you have to read between the lines. And if I hadn't gotten Charlie to do this before he died, many of those letters would be unintelligible. So it was a team job.

MR. BROWN: But they were very telling, as you put them in your book? I mean, as you led up them and as you --

MR. BEAM: In the context.

MR. BROWN: In the context.

MR. BEAM: But we had to do -- to put approximate dates on them, and we had to identify all kinds of characters who were only mentioned. Or Charlie would fill in through his own knowledge a letter about a trip that Homer is taking someplace, but you wouldn't know where, you see. And he would fill that in. And so when the letters were given to Bowdoin, I tried to remember my Sachs training of these responsibilities that fall to a museum man, an art historian who benefits by the care and preservation of things.

I recognize that a lot of the letters were very fragile. And Charlie wanted me to put them in an album in this order we had amassed, with scotch tape. Oh, Sachs would have fainted, you see. And he had actually started to do this. And I spent the first month after the letters were given, with the help of the chemistry department, removing the scotch tape. Great for some stuff, but not for letters of any value.

MR. BROWN: No.

MR. BEAM: So then I went to the people at the Holton Library, and Sachs also said, "Look. If you're going to be a scholar, a museum man, you don't have to remember everything, but you ought to know where to look it up."

MR. BROWN: Sure.

MR. BEAM: Seek help. So I went to Holton. I said, "We've got a valuable collection of 176 original letters that Homer wrote, mainly to his family -- real insight, you see. And how do I take care of them?" So there again, I got some lessons. They sold us the large boxes in which you store valuable prints, and large-size manila files, chemically treated, see, because the ordinary files will bleed sulfur and ruin the letters in the course of time.

And I got one file for each letter, see. And then I also got from them some chemically stable sort of glassine envelopes.

MR. BROWN: Um-hm, with pockets.

MR. BEAM: Yes. But you don't put the letters in the pocket. Okay, what's the purpose? When a scholar comes to visit, he will put a letter in the pocket temporarily so that he could hold it up and read it on both sides and he doesn't get fingerprint oil, see. This is done by the staff. He can hold it up and see.

MR. BROWN: You were able to do that fairly quickly after you got them?

MR. BEAM: After I knew what to do.

MR. BROWN: By finding out what to do.

MR. BEAM: Putting them in ordinary manila folders, in the course of time they would have turned dark yellow. They were fading hard enough to read as it was.

MR. BROWN: And if they had stayed with the family, they probably would have been glued down and whatever.

MR. BEAM: They were in the studio.

MR. BROWN: Just sort of in a drawer here and there? Is that where they mostly were?

MR. BEAM: Well, Charlie, brilliant as he was, was not a trained museum man.

MR. BROWN: Right.

MR. BEAM: And another thing that I did -- and I want to be fair to Charlie because his very generosity was a problem. When people would come to the studio, he loved his uncle so much he would spend time showing them all around. But sometimes a large group would come. And meanwhile, I had done one thing. I had brought my camera down there, and I had photographed every blessed thing. I got hundreds and hundreds of negatives -- everything in the studio, so that I had a record.

I had learned this also out at Kansas City for one of my jobs -- was registrar. And everything that came in was photographed and cataloged, you see, a standard procedure. But it's not in a private collection. So I had a record. Therefore, I was able to show Charlie one day, I said, "Where are the gold medals that were in this drawer?" "My lord, they've disappeared." "I've got negatives of the gold medals." You see, the only record that exists. And we don't know where they are. But when there are 43 people in a busload wandering around with no guard of any kind, they're going to pick up things and stick them in their pockets.

MR. BROWN: You mean there were tourists even 30-40 years ago? They were beginning?

MR. BEAM: From the beginning, yes.

MR. BROWN: They would be part of a summer group tour of the Maine coast?

MR. BEAM: Yes. Well, Homer was well known for that. The bus stop at the studio was not unusual at all. Charlie would show them through and trust everybody. And when I first went there, there were about several hundred little photographs that Homer had made with his first Brownie camera, first roll-filmed camera in history, very fore-handed. Well, on his trips he would photograph like mad. And there were several hundred of these photographs. And I had made a copy photograph, a negative of every one, see.

So when I went there, I was astonished. There were only about 30 or 40 left, because -- playing cards -- slip in your pocket. And visitors are, you know, memento hunters. They'll steal anything.

MR. BROWN: Steal anything, yes.

MR. BEAM: So I had that record. And this gradual pilfering was finally the principal argument that Martin Sadik and I used one day when we had lunch with Doris Homer, see. We said, "You Homers are wonderfully generous. But the public is not behaving." And these things were kept in a studio, which in January and February is freezing cold and unheated. And the letters were foxing and mildewing. And I said, "I have my wishes, but for gosh sakes, give them to a museum where they will be preserved, the Metropolitan or someplace. I'd like to see them at Bowdoin because we're near at hand. We'll take care of them." And Doris --

(End of tape 2, side A)

MR. BEAM: Doris understood this argument. And I said, "Look, Doris. We're not going to make a nickel out of this. We're going to spend a lot of money and a lot of hard work. But it's again, Sadik and I are trained as museum men to have a responsibility for the future. And Homer belongs to the nation. These should be preserved, just as you're doing with the archives. We won't be here forever."

So she said, "All right. You go to the studio and select the things that you think are of prime historic importance and should be cared for in air-conditioned vaults and properly," like the letters and so forth. And she was wonderfully generous there.

MR. BROWN: This was in the '60s, say?

MR. BEAM: Yes, around '67.

MR. BROWN: And she was quite aware of the worthwhile-ness of proper storage? You had convinced her? Or she herself was somewhat sophisticated?

MR. BEAM: Yes, but not museum trained.

MR. BROWN: Sure.

MR. BEAM: You see?

MR. BROWN: So you had -- you were able then -- everything you knew of you tried to assemble? Everything that was still there?

MR. BEAM: Well, Marvin Sadik and I went through -- and I knew these intimately. And I pointed out -- point-point-point -- and we took them and put them in his car and brought them back. And they formed the nucleus of the memorabilia collection. And then she thought this was such a fine idea that in the course of time, the former

family chipped in. The others agreed, and they have added to it.

And I'm absolutely convinced that we did the honest and right thing. It would have been irresponsible not to. And you see, when a busload of visitors comes to the studio, even today, they wander around. And I've told Doris how to fix things to the wall, and Chip how to put things under glass, and so forth. And they are more aware of what we call in museums "security." Maybe we overdo it.

MR. BROWN: Sure. But it's --

MR. BEAM: It's (inaudible).

MR. BROWN: So your photographing documentation is probably without fear, in terms of documenting an artist's studio?

MR. BEAM: It's what I automatically did as a good museum man, you see.

MR. BROWN: Yes, yes, yes.

MR. BEAM: So let's recognize that if I had been trained in art history alone, I wouldn't have done this sort of thing because this is what you learn in your museum experience and in your museum training.

MR. BROWN: Was your recognition of the possible associational value or even greater importance of anything there -- was also something that --

MR. BEAM: Well, all museum people ought to have it, become as you do in the Archives.

MR. BROWN: Yes.

MR. BEAM: Save it, preserve it, you see. And you can't always know what value it's going to have in the future. But if you don't save it, it won't be there.

MR. BROWN: That's right.

MR. BEAM: That's your first responsibility, is physical preservation. And I spent the first summer trying to get these letters in shape so that they could be studied and used. And I've gone to Holton first and gotten their advice, as you can see. And also, I had -- I think I convinced Doris. I spent about 3000 dollars getting those things -- out of my own pocket -- getting those things in shape. So I proved to her that there was nothing in me except interest in artwork.

And also, on the advice of somebody at Holton, I had Xerox copies made of all the letters because the students would write a lot of papers. They are at a different level from the serious scholar. They don't have to handle all of the letters. And they can get it through a Xerox or even microfilm. And in the library, they don't let people come in there today and take out the old Harpers Weekly volumes because, you know, some of them had all the Homer engravings cut out. And those are cheap old paper, and they're getting awfully fragile. So they're all on microfilm. And you can study them there, and then you can prove your point, and they may let you see them.

But I had Xerox copies made in triplicate. And I keep them in different places so that there will always be one copy. And then I hired a lady in the library who was then the head of the special collections, who is very good -- and it's a special field -- at going over old manuscripts and deciphering that terrible handwriting and German script. And Homer's handwriting is awfully hard to read. Even when you're familiar with it, you puzzle over it.

So I commissioned her, again on my own, to take all the letters and do a typescript interpretation of every single one, you see. And that is available to scholars because even if you turn the Xerox copies over, sometimes they're hard to read.

MR. BROWN: Sure they are.

MR. BEAM: Homer would write in a hurry or scrawl.

MR. BROWN: It's questionable whether they would be easier to read or worse than the original; that's for sure.

MR. BEAM: So the scholar has now --

MR. BROWN: So you thought of these various points of entry or places at which the scholar could ultimately --

MR. BEAM: No, the Holton told me.

(Simultaneous conversation)

MR. BEAM: They said, "Have it typescript if it's hard to read or decipher."

MR. BROWN: Did many people know that the family had kept so many of their letters? Or so few? You might think of 176 as --

MR. BEAM: No, because --

MR. BROWN: (Inaudible) that he bothered to look into those letters?

MR. BEAM: Yes, he had.

MR. BROWN: He had?

MR. BEAM: But I don't know how many weeks Charlie and I took trying to put these in some kind of order.

MR. BROWN: So they had never really been -- they weren't consultable --

MR. BEAM: Well, look, the scholar hasn't got unlimited funds. He would have to come up there, stay at an expensive hotel for months and months. And I could get in my Jalopy and go down there, have a lobster dinner with Charlie anytime I wanted. So my location here was very special.

MR. BROWN: Well, your publication of Prout's Neck in '66 was more or less the same time that the letters are finally being preserved and conserved and so forth here?

MR. BEAM: I did them all at the same time.

MR. BROWN: So was this, the publication of your book, what was the reception among the -- in the world of scholarship and people who love American art, the Prout's Neck book?

MR. BEAM: Well, that has a little history in itself. But I'll put it briefly. When any publisher breaks out a book, particularly in a field which has not a great backing or enthusiasm -- American art was proving its point even then; it has come a long way. But the -- Randy Williams sent out the usual sample copies to the reviewers, see, The New York Times and the Chicago Tribune, and so forth. And then you wait and chew your fingernails. And it may work, or you may get killed.

And one day I was sitting at my desk, and the reviewer, the lady in charge of the New York Times Sunday Book Review Section, which is prime copy -- everybody wants that, you see. She phoned and said, "We are going to publish a review of your book on Winslow Homer Prout's Neck in next Sunday's Times. And we need in a hurry a photograph of him and a couple of paintings," which she named. "Could you supply them?" And I said, "Yes, I could." I got all those (inaudible). I said, "Was the review a favorable review or not?" She said, "I can't tell you that." It was a naïve question. And I said, "Well, could you tell me who wrote it?" She said, "I can't tell you that either."

(Laughter)

MR. BEAM: So I phoned Randy Williams, and I said, "It's going to be in The New York Times Sunday review section. He said, "Hooray!" I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "Well, if we get a good review, we've got it made. If we haven't, you might as well (inaudible)."

(Laughter)

MR. BEAM: He said, "Take some aspirin. I'm used to this." He said, "I go through it 100 times a year with our books," you see. Well, as it turned out, the review was written by the leading Americanist at the time, Edgar Preston Richardson, see, whose work was gilt-edged. He had been director of the Detroit Art Institute, built up their great American collection, and director at Winter Tour.

All right. So you can get a book review in The New York Sunday Times, but it can be on the back page. It's very important that you get a good review and that it be done by a scholar whose name means something to everybody. And if you get the latter two, you're lucky.

(Laughter)

MR. BEAM: And Richardson, God bless him, focused on exactly the two things that I wanted to bring out in this particular book -- the importance of Winslow Homer's environment on his art, that it was a turning point in his career, and that there was warrant for saying, by writing a book on Winslow Homer at Prout's Neck that his career was in effect in two great phases. I had later treated the earlier part, the engravings and so forth. But his career was divided into two parts, like Van Gogh's and Gauguin's, with geography playing a leading role.

And also, he had himself taken issue with the unfavorable depictions of Homer as a very mean and unpleasant person, but he hadn't done anything about it, especially. And so he was pleased that I had, especially. And so he gave me high marks on both the two things I was trying to bring out. And I've got copies of the review.

MR. BROWN: So that was a Hosanna, practically. That was wonderful.

MR. BEAM: Oh! And when the review appeared in the Sunday -- oh, boy, I spent a sleepless night. And I got down there early to get a copy. And I read the thing in fear and trembling. And boy, never did I have a load taken off my shoulders.

But I called Randy and said, "What did you think?" He was ecstatic. And he explained that a review, a favorable review in The New York Times could make the difference between, oh, 10,000-20,000 copies, which from a publisher's point of view -- he has his stockholders and they can't work -- they don't work for nothing.

MR. BROWN: So you knew you were an author (inaudible) of some impact.

MR. BEAM: Well, learning all these things takes a lot of schooling on your part, and it makes you bleed to see fellows who are coming along who think that if you write a book and it's scholarly and accurate, the publishers ought to line up to publish it. Publishing is a business, you see. If you can get your book or article printed by, say, a university press, why, they will bear the cost and you don't get a nickel because they're subsidizing it. But they won't advertise it, and it will end up being read by a few hundred scholars, and that's fine. And it's all very elite.

But if you think you're dealing with a national figure and you want a lot of people to read it, from here to California, and ordinary people as well as scholars, well, you take your chances and you go to a commercial publisher. A lot of my friends, they look down their noses at commercial publishers. But --

MR. BROWN: You thought you had sort of a mission for Homer, right?

MR. BEAM: Yes.

MR. BROWN: And best go that way.

MR. BEAM: Yes.

MR. BROWN: Did you find that in time, from the response to your book, that the impression of Homer as a curmudgeon, as a difficult person, had changed?

MR. BEAM: Oh, yes. I can show you a whole pile of articles based on that, which I think would not have been written in so an understanding light formerly, or with such interest in the man as a human being. There was a lot known about Homer as an artist, which I traded on and inherited. But I think it was fair to say at least Richardson thought that I provided a broader picture of Winslow Homer and that somehow it did help in understanding him. And I know I could put probably 1000 letters in there from people since then who wouldn't have written me if I hadn't written the book. And I've tried to be helpful to my young friends who are trying to write a book to save their jobs, that, look. There's more to it than that. If you spend your whole life teaching students, as I have, you'll have a maximum of 3000 students. If you write one general book which sells 40,000 copies, you'll help people all over the country, amateur and professional, that you'll never meet personally. There's a limit to what you can do as Socrates did, see.

And the book publishing is a marvelous opportunity. Don't belittle it. And the commercial publishers will advertise. They'll spread. They'll study or distribute your book.

MR. BROWN: Well, your book -- it had that dimension of sales, did it? Forty-thousand or something on that order?

MR. BEAM: No.

MR. BROWN: The Prout's Neck?

MR. BEAM: A biography will never sell to that extent.

MR. BROWN: But it did have a large sale for that species of book?

MR. BEAM: They were pleased. They got their money back.

MR. BROWN: Yes.

MR. BEAM: And I made something.

MR. BROWN: So it must have played -- this was '66 -- a pretty important role in heightening people's awareness of American art.

MR. BEAM: Well, I'd like to think so because insofar as people like Winslow Homer -- it's not very far because he was so American in his interests. But the word in my profession is, if you want to get some money in the bank, write a general book or textbook. So I wrote the Language of Art long before I did the other. And that took a little bit of my time, see.

MR. BROWN: Yes.

(End of tape 2, side B)

MR. BEAM: You were asking me what one gets involved in in a career over a long period of time -- sort of emerges unexpectedly. You sometimes think that you developed a monster doing it. And in the field of art, there is the large area of the commercial art world, which doesn't affect particularly, say, a scholar in English or Sanskrit or, say, a man in history. My son has a doctorate in history. But he is not affected by this.

MR. BROWN: But you are. People come to you for your expertise.

MR. BEAM: Art historians all across the country can easily become involved in this. Some adopt an artist for study who is not a burning concern to the public.

MR. BROWN: But Winslow Homer happens to be, doesn't he?

MR. BEAM: He wasn't when I started out, see, nearly 40 years ago. But that has grown progressively. And with it, as the artist becomes more established, along with the great growth in interest in American painting and art, and the almost automatic increase in the values of American art -- there's a citizen of Philadelphia who around the turn of the century could have bought paintings by Pito and Harnet for 150 dollars.

MR. BROWN: Well, you had said that Lloyd Goodrich had given you advice years ago that you shouldn't -- if one never takes a fee for this kind of thing, you're implicitly (inaudible).

MR. BEAM: Well, the temptations are ever present because increasingly very large sums of money are involved. I get sent through the mail a little tiny Winslow Homer drawing about eight inches tall of a shepherdess, price tag 18,000 dollars. And to give you -- oh, I don't know what it would be today. That was five years ago. And the watercolors go at auction for over 200,000; the oils go for a half-a-million, things of that sort.

So there are all kinds of economic pressures, and you have to be careful. And I was suggesting some that -- one of the concrete changes that has occurred, a friend of mine who lived in Philadelphia -- he's dead, but at an advanced age. He was there around the turn of the century when he could buy paintings by Pito and Harnet, the local still-life masters, for 150 dollars. And nobody wanted them. This is part of the history of lack of appreciation of American artists while they're alive. And then ironically, after the prices go up, everybody discovers they were great masters after all.

Pito's -- a Harnet sold about a year ago at auction for, what? It was a record price, 350,000 dollars. That's quite an advance over 150 dollars. And all of these things raise questions about intrinsic worth versus economic marketplace and things like that, which are very difficult, see, to -- and in the long run, if people ask you to put an appraisal on a picture, even if you were, it's what they can get for it in the market.

MR. BROWN: Sure.

MR. BEAM: And another reason that I've avoided it -- I was talking to Lloyd about this -- to do even certain kinds of authentication, you have to be, as he was, in the center of things in New York because -- and have the chance to go constantly to dealers, their storerooms, and get a vast experience in what's flowing through the marketplace, because it's almost as active as the stock market and almost as volatile.

So when you're up in Maine, you can't do that sort of thing. You have maybe a little bit more detachment, but you don't have access to the tickertape.

MR. BROWN: You're talking about for appraising now or for authenticating? Because if you're authenticating, you need --

MR. BEAM: Well, both. But the difficulty is, they go almost hand in hand, you see. The authentication, the pressure for authentications has been pulled upward by the spiraling prices. And if the prices hadn't soared, people wouldn't be that eager for -- they wouldn't search their attics so avidly to get pictures.

MR. BROWN: When did this -- has this followed you for years? Does it go back some years? Before the 1960s,

let's say, was there much call upon you to authenticate?

MR. BEAM: Well, yes, all the way back to, oh, the '40s and so forth. When I started working with Charlie Homer shortly after 1936, and he was a kind of clearinghouse, a visitation. He owned the studio, et cetera. People would come there. And so in the conversation, they would ask, "What young men are working on Winslow Homer?" And he would mention my name. And of course, Lloyd was older and established. And there weren't too many.

And even then, to try to fill in specific illustrations, I went with Charlie Homer over to a warehouse in Portland one afternoon. And in a vault there, he had, oh, nearly 50 Winslow Homer paintings, most of which today are in museums. I see them in the Metropolitan. And I can document this because I came back a little later with a camera and photographed them all. He didn't at the moment have a photographic record and a file of negatives.

Well, this is an automatic reflex with anyone trained in museum work. The first thing you do is to take a photograph of anything that comes in. So I did that and made an album of things, two of them, and gave him one.

MR. BROWN: So you fairly soon were building up a repertoire of knowledge of Homer's work that very few had at that time?

MR. BEAM: Yes, because I'm saying there wasn't a keen -- there wasn't that keen an interest. And Charlie Homer had this -- nearly 50 paintings, oils and mainly watercolors, which had come to him as an inheritance directly from Mattie. They had been given to Mattie by Winslow. And he gave them because he thought that -- he thought they were among his best work. And he dearly loved Mattie and her husband, his brother. So these were, you know, gilt-edged pedigree.

MR. BROWN: Yes. Yes.

MR. BEAM: Well, Charlie would be offered a couple of thousand dollars for a watercolor, which is in the Metropolitan Museum today, which would, if sold, go for a couple of hundred thousand, see. So the appreciation of Winslow Homer came rather slowly, if one can measure appreciation in this world by price tags. And it's hard to avoid it.

MR. BROWN: Sure. There was for years -- people would look to Europe, didn't they for -- in this century as well for new things, for the pace-setting art? And the American art was thought of as a poor relation? Or was that pretty well (inaudible)?

MR. BEAM: Well, American art was a poor relation in this sense: So too were the really creative artists of Europe. Now, in the history of modern art for at least 200 years, there's been a lag of appreciation of 25 years. The public is almost always behind. A fellow is lucky if he gets appreciated before he dies, if he lives long enough.

If you were to go down the streets, a boulevard in Paris in 1885 or '90 and say, "What do you think of the work of Toulouse Lautrec, Gauguin, Cezanne, Monet, Degas?" even worldly-wise gentlemen would look at you. For one thing, they were not in Paris. Degas was, and Lautrec. But Cezanne went down south. Renoir lived elsewhere. Gauguin went to Tahiti. So at that time, the leading -- the great French artists were poor relations.

Who were the people who were getting the blue ribbons and the gold medals? They were the Bonots, the Cabinelles, the Bugaros, the academicians. And when most young Americans went over to study in Europe, they went to the etaliers, even Aikens of Jerome or Bunaut, you see. And you read the old biographies of these men -- studied under Lean Jerome, et cetera.

So it wasn't as though the Americans were treated so badly. They were treated badly because they were contemporary. The leading so-called progressive collectors in Europe were buying the academic work, whose prices have gone steadily downhill. And they're in storage; nobody wants them, especially. And in this country, the well-to-do people, the Vanderbilts and so forth, were buying Rembrandts and Tissions and things of that sort. I mean, the great --

MR. BROWN: Master. The Old Masters.

MR. BEAM: Yes. Now, take a great collection formed as late as that of the Frick in New York -- not very much American painting in there, is there?

MR. BROWN: No.

MR. BEAM: See? Marvelous European paintings -- they show wonderful taste. But he was a railroad tycoon, and a railroad tycoon should own a great mansion on Fifth Avenue and a collection worthy of his status. And so fellows like -- Winslow Homer, after all, fared a lot better than Aikens. Aikens, the great place to study Aikens now is in

the Philadelphia Museum. And ironically, it's a great place to study it because when he died, his widow inherited all these pictures because they hadn't sold. And she very generously gave them to the Philadelphia Museum, almost gave them.

Homer had at least one benefactor in New York, Clark, who was a well-to-do man and bought paintings. And this was pointed out. But the one point is overlooked. If you looked at the Clark's collection as a whole, even though he did buy fine Winslow Homer oils that are now masterpieces, most of his paintings were gilt-edged European paintings. Clark didn't take a chance on the Degas and the contemporaries.

MR. BROWN: So the Homer was simply a particular minor, but a minor --

MR. BEAM: He was lucky to have Clark. But to imply that Clark was -- discovered Winslow Homer and formed a great collection of him without other pictures is to put it out of perspective.

And Homer was fortunate enough in that there were around Boston some very astute students of art with money. Well, take Fendolosa, who went to Japan and saw to it that wonderful Oriental arts came back to form that marvelous collection of Oriental art in the Boston Museum. And there were other collectors there who, when they went to, say, (inaudible) Richards gallery, Homer's outlet in Boston, were attracted to his pictures and would buy them from time to time.

And that is one reason why the Museum of Fine Arts has such a fine collection. These civic-minded people left their pictures to the Museum of Fine Arts.

But remember too that, when they bought watercolors, the highest price Homer ever got for a watercolor in his whole life was 200 dollars. And the highest price he ever got for an oil was for the Gulf Stream. I forget whether it was 5600 -- so even Clark didn't pay him great sums. But he fare a lot better than Aikens.

MR. BROWN: You began teaching here in the '30s. Did you put much emphasis on American art at that time? Or did you -- you had to cover pretty much a great deal of the art historical waterfront, I suppose, didn't you? (Inaudible)

MR. BEAM: Well, I had to wait. For one thing, when I came, the department was in its infancy. And there were very few slides to work with. So I was like an author who had to get some paper before he could write a story. (Laughter) And I began immediately to -- one of my best friends here happened to be a photographer. And he taught me photography. He was a professional photographer, and he taught me photography. And it turned out to be a marvelous adjunct, and it is routine for any art historian today.

And so I began to make slides. And I just got on my desk a slide that was made, of the small size. It's over the 50,000 mark. And I made about 20,000 of the large slides, which were the format of that time. So I had to wait to teach American art. And meanwhile, it was just assumed that any respectable art department in the country, whether the school be large or small, would offer primarily a selection of courses dealing with Europe. Two areas were neglected, Europe, America, and the Orient.

MR. BROWN: They were neglected?

MR. BEAM: Yes.

MR. BROWN: Yes.

MR. BEAM: So when I started a course in Oriental art -- just a one-semester course because I didn't have unlimited time -- it's the first course in Oriental art that was ever taught in Maine in a college, and I think the only one to date as such. But I had to teach ancient, Medieval, Renaissance, nineteenth century and twentieth. And when I started a course in American art, I was ahead of Harvard because I was the first one ever allowed at Harvard to write a dissertation on an American artist. And there have been, even today, very few, see.

And they wanted me to write a dissertation on Delo de Nicolo Deli, a minor Italian late Renaissance artist. And I said, "Why?" They said, "Well, there's been very little written on him." I said, "Well, it wouldn't be much material, either." And I think he got about five lines in Vesar (phonetic), you see. And for good reason -- I later looked up some of his paintings, and they're not very good.

MR. BROWN: How did you persuade Harvard then to let you do your doctorate in an American subject?

MR. BEAM: Because of an accident. I had met socially Charles Homer. And we hit it off personally. And I began to get interested in his uncle's paintings and went to Prout's Neck to visit, write. And there was in the studio this goldmine of family material and memorabilia, which is now over here. And a lot is still there. And when you go to the department to decide on a dissertation, a fair question is, "What material do you think is available?" And if you can tell them that you have access to the accumulated documents of a family, why, you know, they rub their

hands with pleasure. That's an accidental discovery.

MR. BROWN: Sure. So that was enough to swing them away from their normal European bias?

MR. BEAM: Oh, yes.

MR. BROWN: And allow you to do an American subject.

MR. BEAM: Plenty of other people write on European artists.

MR. BROWN: Sure. But at that time, that was exceptional, at Harvard at least, to allow an American work?

MR. BEAM: It was exceptional for about two decades. There was there an outstanding man named Allen Burroughs, who wrote a fine book on American art called *Lenders and Likenesses*. His father was Bryson Burroughs, the great curator at the Metropolitan of American art -- did wonders for that collection. So he grew up with that. But his function at Harvard was to develop the department of X-ray studies, European, ancient, Medieval, et cetera. And American art was a sideline with him.

But there were three of us who would go over to the Boston Museum and see those wonderful paintings, find that there was not much of academic interest. And we went to Allen Burroughs and asked him if he would take us on in a seminar sort of, a tutorial. It wasn't even a course. We sat around, and he talked, and we listened, and so forth. And I don't think it was ever officially listed in the catalog as an offering. And we did that.

MR. BROWN: He was quite an effective teacher?

MR. BEAM: Oh, he's a marvelous teacher, very enthusiastic. And as -- secondly, we were all destined to go into museum work in one way or another. And Paul Sachs encouraged -- he brought Burroughs there to -- as a pioneer in X-ray studies at Harvard, along with the development of their fine conservation department. This was progressive, if the American art wasn't.

And Burroughs took us on, in another semester, in the process of looking at X-rays, which is by no means automatic. And an X-ray is no better than the man who looks at it. And so that was a plus. And when we went on in the museum work profession later, we had our background in X-ray work.

But then a couple of years later, Burroughs left Harvard. And he was not -- the American instruction was not continued or replaced. And it remained really for Yale to pick it up before Harvard did. And Yale has pushed American art in the last two or three decades by adding faculty and so forth, much more so than Harvard.

MR. BROWN: Well, who did you work with when you did your doctorate? You received your doctorate in '44, I believe, from Harvard.

MR. BEAM: Yes.

MR. BROWN: Who would you have had there as your advisor on an American subject?

MR. BEAM: Well, I didn't. But this is not unusual for a person who goes into a doctoral field, to end up knowing far more about that subject as an expert than anybody in the department. And it's a sort of standing joke that when you go to your final oral examination, where they are supposed to ask you questions, you know more about it than they do. They will even apply in the European field, see.

So Chandler Post, the great authority on Spanish art, and Dector Tell, who was the nearest thing because he was the professor of nineteenth century European art -- and he couldn't study that without learning something about American. Those were the two gentlemen who read it. And I had packed it so full of documentary material from the supply by the family and from the direction of the family, people who had known Homer -- oh, they thought it was marvelous.

MR. BROWN: Did this study and research -- did you see it affecting your teaching at that time? I mean, were you -- when you were teaching here -- I should ask, I guess, what were the expectations here at Bowdoin for the teaching of art history? I know you said you had the backing of President Sills when you came here. (Inaudible)

MR. BEAM: Well, maybe I might explain that we live in an age of specialists for the last 20 years. But prior to that time, Harvard made a deliberate effort to force everyone who went through as an undergraduate, and then as a graduate -- if you didn't, you had to catch up -- to take the widest possible spectrum of courses.

MR. BROWN: So you did that?

MR. BEAM: And it's fortunate for me that Harvard began through some endowments to acknowledge the

Oriental. And they had a series of people there like Langdon Warner and Ukio Yushiro (phonetic) and Hobson and other visiting lecturers -- great specialists in Oriental art. And we took the courses. So that was an opportunity. So I didn't offer a course at Bowdoin, you know, with no background.

MR. BROWN: Yes.

MR. BEAM: This was a sort of gift to Harvard. And since then, they've gone on to emphasize, one of the centers of Oriental study.

MR. BROWN: But you could produce -- present fairly specialized courses here at Bowdoin then? You gradually introduced them as you (inaudible).

MR. BEAM: Well, in this way: I ended up taking as an undergraduate and a graduate a total of 30 courses in fine arts. And I started off with the introductory courses, with Edgell and Chase and those people. Well, by the time I was a junior, I had run out of undergraduate courses to take. And the norm then was to allow the undergraduates who were going on to major, or concentrate as they called it, to enroll in courses primarily for the graduate students. And we had to hustle to keep up with the graduate students, you see.

MR. BROWN: Sure.

MR. BEAM: But it did allow us to get progressively into specialized course, like a semester course on Venetian paintings and things -- courses that were highly specialized under Charles Kuhn and Chandler Post and museum work under Sachs, and so forth, so that by the time I finished 30 courses, I had about five introductory courses and 25 specialized courses. So I had quite enough to introduce courses at Bowdoin.

MR. BROWN: And were you about the only art faculty into the '40s?

MR. BEAM: Yes. I was it.

MR. BROWN: You were it?

MR. BEAM: Yes. I did have colleagues in the museum staff. But I was the one teacher.

MR. BROWN: What were the expectations of the students at Bowdoin? Were they quite interested in art, or was it to be something simply as a part of their broadening liberal arts education?

MR. BEAM: It was both. There's never been a lack of interest here. And I think you're here, just let me put it two ways. The largest course in the college today is Art one, 220 students. That's a big course at Bowdoin. And it has been that way for at least 10 or 15 years. When we were over in the museum, I could take 90 because that's all the room it would hold. And now we can seat more, and it's cut off at 220 because the professor didn't want to go blind.

At Bowdoin, you read all your own papers, exams, you see. And we don't have a corps of graduate students who can read all those bluebooks. So the dean let him limit it to 220. But that's the biggest course at the college. And for, oh, for a long time, it could be demonstrated that the art courses have been the most difficult in the college. There has been, admittedly, a proliferation of honor grades in the academic world. And I think we gave our fewer top honor grades than any of the courses in the college. We wanted to guard against any possible implication of dilettantism or taking something on the side.

When they take an art course, they work for it. And when they take Art one, then even though they're majoring in government or chemistry, they come back and take more art courses, some three or four or five.

MR. BROWN: What do you think spurs them on?

MR. BEAM: It's an interesting field. People like to look at pictures. It's no accident that television and movies have always had an appeal.

MR. BROWN: Sure. But when you -- say, in the '40s when you began your teaching here, what was your approach in the lecture? Was it strictly lecture?

MR. BEAM: I had. Well, I did get a colleague to teach with me after the World War.

MR. BROWN: Who was that?

MR. BEAM: Shad Rowe. Albert Southerland Rowe. He later went on to be the chairman at Cornell, and a wonderful person. He came here out of the Navy. And so we could offer more courses. But inevitably, the courses that are offered at first, I wanted, as they did at Harvard -- and I still think it's a great idea -- to cover the

whole history of art the first time around. Then you get a perspective, instead of plunging into specialization.

And so Shad and I divided up the history of art into a sequence of period courses, ancient, Medieval, Renaissance, Baroque, and nineteenth century. And then when he came, I had a chance to offer the American and added the Oriental. Now, these were one-semester courses which are rotated. There are only two of us. And they had to be survey courses. But we tried to pack as much information in them as I can, and I've got all these outlines over there on the shelves. I never talked so fast in my life, you see.

But I'd learned at Harvard that, in the introductory courses, people like Edgell and Chase, boy, they were good. They could pack an awful lot of information into a semester's work. And then of course, you could ask people to read a lot. So you'll end up learning a lot. And presently, Bowdoin has as respectable a roster of majors in the art as any department in the college, except maybe government, you see. It's very large. We have to turn them away.

MR. BROWN: You were chairman from 1949 on?

MR. BEAM: Yes.

MR. BROWN: Did that increase duties much? Or because it was a small department, was it not a great deal involved as might be, say, today?

MR. BEAM: Well, I had the advantage of being that I didn't have to consult a lot of committees to get approval for things.

MR. BROWN: Till then you were subject to central administrative control, more?

MR. BEAM: Yes. And if the president and dean liked what I was doing, they pretty well trusted me to go ahead. And they supported me very well. No complaints there.

MR. BROWN: When did you bring in studio courses? Or were they at least a small part of the curriculum the whole time you were here?

MR. BEAM: Well, I had studied at Harvard as part of the introductory program there. I'd studied under Arthur Pope, who in retrospect I think was one of the greatest teachers I ever had. And Pope conducted a course in the principles and theories of art, accompanied by laboratory work, which he likened to laboratory work in the sciences because he said, you learn a lot by doing and seeing that you can't learn in words, you see. For one thing, you learn how difficult it is if you try it. And I'll show you in a little while some portfolios of the drawings that I did back at that time.

MR. BROWN: So you can employ this when you came to Bowdoin? You then began instituting a similar laboratory course?

MR. BEAM: Yes, because I thought it gave such valuable insights. And those of us who went on to careers in art looked back and said that Arthur Pope's approach was one of the best that we'd ever had. And we all introduced similar courses at our respective schools. Judkins went on to become chairman at McGill, and he introduced it there. And Shad Rowe introduced -- was not much of a painter, but he valued it. He introduced that at Cornell. And I introduced a course here in painting and drawing on a voluntary basis, because had plenty to do. And I'd meet with the fellows at night.

But I found out in a practical academic life that if students don't get credit for courses, they won't or can't work very hard. You know, they've got to spend a lot of time in languages and chemistry. And so the evening courses were fun, but they didn't go as deeply into the subject as I wanted. So I persuaded the administration to let me start it off, at least, on a credit basis.

So I taught history in the morning, and then I devoted the afternoon to the studio work. And I believed in it. And in fact, students love to draw and paint. You see them all around here in the corridors. And it got so popular that the president gave me a trained artist, you see, to come and develop the studio program. And in the course of time, the enrollments there got so big that the studio work is an entire division. And this building is a beehive of studios and painting.

MR. BROWN: This new building? Yes.

MR. BEAM: And etching and photography and all of that. I started some instruction in photography because some of the people said they might want to go on to make art history or art a career. And I thought, and still do, that to do your own photography is a great -- you save so much time, see. I never went to Prout's without a camera. And I made -- I was able to build up the collection of slides by the thousands by doing them, whereas if we had to buy them from outside or wait for somebody else to do it, it takes your time. It's faster and better to

do it yourself.

MR. BROWN: Sure.

MR. BEAM: And it reached the point where there was a separation in approach, actually. And I think I'm speaking pretty nationally. The studio courses started as laboratory courses. And they became terribly popular. And at Cornell, for instance, they had to build a whole separate building with studios in it. The Goldman Smith Hall wasn't big enough. So that was kept as a history.

And here, there are two divisions, and one can major in studio or art history. Some do both. But one can do both. And in the course of time, you will have artists. You want good artists to teach these. And they may or may not have any historical background. And you can't demand both. To be trained as an artist takes -- it's a career. And I was the sort of -- my generation was sort of an accident. We started off with one-and-a-half feet in the history and added this other, you see.

And it's a little bit unfortunate because a large portion of the studio work is aimed at creative and expressive work, and has only a side connection with the history.

MR. BROWN: So you saw gradually a division, a cleavage?

MR. BEAM: A chism (sic), yes. And even to the point of separate buildings, almost entirely. That has occurred at Yale, and it occurred at Cornell. It occurred at McGill and all over the country.

MR. BROWN: Sure.

MR. BEAM: And in the course of time, studio courses were set up from the very outset as sort of, you know, local academic art schools. And this has had a profound impact on education. I don't want to wander too much about education.

MR. BROWN: And that occurred here to a degree, too, did it, at Bowdoin?

MR. BEAM: Yes.

MR. BROWN: This cleavage. So they can have a major here at Bowdoin in studio?

MR. BEAM: Yes.

MR. BROWN: And that's been so since --

MR. BEAM: And they can take a little more in art history.

MR. BROWN: And that's been true since the 1960s, that art?

MR. BEAM: Yes. I've always felt that it was valuable for an artist to be as educated in the history of the visual arts -- these are his great models -- as possible. And Picasso made a career in being a one-man encyclopedia of the history of art. So it does pay off. But it's just the factor of numbers and instruction. And there came a time when it was almost impossible for us to hire -- we were caught. We wanted a first-rate etcher or a first-rate painter. And it was impossible to demand that he knew much about history. So they go on separate roads.

And the net effect in this country, from here to the Pacific, has been that the former training of American artists is now radically different. A fellow like Aikens would go up through the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, an art school. And he'd go to Europe and study under Jerome. He might or might not know something about art history. He did a wonderful job.

And so if a young man as late as, say, 30 years ago wanted to be an artist, he would go to the Art Students League or the Rhode Island School of Design or the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts or the Museum School in Boston and bypass Harvard and Yale and the universities. And now, he's much more likely to go to the nearest college or academy and bypass the old schools.

MR. BROWN: Right.

MR. BEAM: So that he gets a BA and he goes out, and it can't have helped to have had a drastic effect on the training of artists in this country.

MR. BROWN: And yet, as you said, in the universities, you do have small-scale art schools that are the equivalent, sometimes on a small scale, to the old art academy.

MR. BEAM: Well, in the old days there would be, at most, a dozen outstanding schools in the country training artists, professional artists, see.

MR. BROWN: Now there are scores of them because --

MR. BEAM: And they would go through an apprentice, a hard apprentice system. Let's take the case of John Sloan. He went to the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, made a living doing journalistic work for the newspapers. Then he went up to New York. And he not only starved until he could get exhibitions and dealers, and to establish himself as an artist.

Now, there are hundreds and hundreds of these schools all across the country. So an artist will go to the nearest one. It may or may not be first-rate training. You could concentrate, when you only had the Museum School and Rhode Island School of Design, Pennsylvania -- the leading artists of the country would teach there, you see. There are not enough of those to go around, see.

Winslow Homer, a little before, bypassed both. He came up by studying lithography. And so today, a fellow, if he wants to be an artist, will follow this route: He will go to the nearest university or college that has a studio department, and he will study there. And this is happening by the hundreds and hundreds. So there is an enormous number of these artists. They can't possibly make a living through the dealer route, you see. And so they teach, you see.

MR. BROWN: What effect did it have on the teaching of art here at Bowdoin during your years, as the studio grew larger and larger?

MR. BEAM: It didn't have any effect on the teaching of art history because that grew apace. We had more students than we could handle.

MR. BROWN: Do you still continue with your laboratory course?

MR. BEAM: No, no.

MR. BROWN: If they wish such direct experience, they went and worked with one of the studio art people?

MR. BEAM: Well, it got pushed out in that -- as the enrollments at courses developed and more and more students wanted to major in art and go on either to teach art or do museum work or, in many cases, go into the dealer field. We've had them at Sotheby's and places like that. If they're going to be professionals, they've got to have a way to make a living afterward. So those were the possible routes.

And as those numbers increased, we had to increase our offering of art history courses. And even though the college gave us another instructor, he didn't have time to teach studio. So we would bring in first one studio instructor, and now there are four strictly studio, see. Because none of them was trained to teach the history of art. So there was a -- we're on good speaking terms, but our backgrounds are different.

MR. BROWN: Did you find it difficult to assess the ability to teach on the part of an artist? Presumably, you'd be familiar and you'd find out what the potential was of a trained artist going to teach. But what about the studio people when you began considering them?

MR. BEAM: It's difficult. But so, too, is art history because a fellow can go through and get a degree at a major university in art history without ever teaching a course.

MR. BROWN: That's true. That's true.

MR. BEAM: Or in fact ever opening his mouth. (Laughter) You just have to use your best guess as to whether -- size him up and see whether he can stand up in front of a class and interest students.

We have introduced two things, though, in our procedure.

(End of tape 3, side A)

MR. BEAM: We have introduced two things in our procedure for the hiring of new faculty throughout the college. There was set up a faculty affairs committee. And we did recognize that we were hiring people with fine degrees and credentials who had never opened their mouth and had no experience in teaching. And they might not -- they might even be paralyzed or tongue-tied when they met their first class. And it's a bit of an ordeal. You don't hand a fellow a Shakespeare play and push him out on the stage, you know, without rehearsals. And there is in graduate school almost no place for rehearsals. Oh, there's a little teaching, but not much.

And so we do require -- if we're hiring an artist anyway, we require that he present a sample lecture. And we're

very tolerant about this. But you can determine certain things, whether he brings in a paper and he sticks his face down to read it and has no rapport with the group. Or whether he can't speak above a whisper, whether he turns around and talks to the screen instead of the audience.

MR. BROWN: Right.

MR. BEAM: And then after this 45-minute lecture -- well, you can even judge by the way he picks his slides out, now he can do this, and the way he explains them. He may go into great detail without saying much. Or he may have an eye for the important things, and he's going to make a good teacher.

And then at the end -- and when this lecture is set up, after the guy runs the gauntlet of interviews around campus with us and the committee, this fairly large committee of members of other departments who at least know whether the fellow could speak or not -- we hear public lectures all the time. They're good, bad, and indifferent. We all know that. All right. We comprise a sort of audience, and we invite the students to come in, too (inaudible). And we'll get 35-40 people there, so he's not just talking to himself.

And at the end of his talk, we throw it open to discussion. And this is indicative because a lot of teaching is done by one-to-one or small-group discussion. And it's a second kind of expertise. And one fellow will give a fine lecture, but he's not very good at fielding questions or talking. So there's that to be reckoned with in the school (inaudible).

And it's revealing. It also gives our students some practice in asking questions that are not pre-prepared. You know, he'll bring in a talk in his own field, and it's pretty hard to miss. And usually, a chapter from his dissertation. (Laughter) All right. That's fair enough.

MR. BROWN: Sure.

MR. BEAM: But we had him at sight-reading. The students asked questions about the slides and the talk. So he's got to improvise an answer. See how, as we say, how nimble he is on his feet.

MR. BROWN: Because that's almost an essential thing here at Bowdoin, isn't it, the dialog, the one-on-one?

MR. BEAM: I think it helps in good teaching anywhere. And as for the studio people, we would expect them, not so much to deliver a chapter from their dissertation or some article, as to bring slides of their work and portfolios of their work, and we sort of believe that if example is important, the students will follow an artist who is a good artist, rather than a fellow who can explain it but can't do it. Now, an art historian can explain a picture, but he doesn't have to create one. He may be a terrible painter, see. And so the studio people do that.

MR. BROWN: Did you ask them also to be able to try to point out what they were trying to do at all?

MR. BEAM: Well, that's a dilemma because if you know as many distinguished artists as I happen to have known over the years, all the way back to Thomas Hart Benton and Wood and Curry and that crowd, up through Walt Kuhn and so-called lecturers we've sponsored at the museum, you find out that an artist can be a very fine artist because it's a silent work without being very good, articulate with words.

MR. BROWN: So that obviously then is not a way of screening out who might be even a good teacher as an artist. A teacher as an artist is more hands on.

MR. BEAM: No. But, Bob, we're stuck with it because we decided we've got to start with a guy who is or is going to be a respected artist.

MR. BROWN: He's not -- right. That's right.

MR. BEAM: See? If he can talk and he can't do it at all, that doesn't impress the students.

MR. BROWN: That's right.

MR. BEAM: And in the nature of the studio work, the instructor is going out working around the studio. He once in awhile will give a formal lecture. But mainly, he's going around and giving little critiques of individual pictures. And if he's a good artist, he can manage that. But that secondary skill varies greatly.

We had one artist here for a time who was a brilliant etcher, but on the silent type and found it hard to get out four words. And that wasn't too happy. And, you know, after a couple of years, they go somewhere else. And we had another fellow who wasn't as fine an artist -- a different talent -- but who had a wonderful gift for words and ended up writing, I don't know how many critical articles that have been published, you see. You can't expect everything.

MR. BROWN: No. But you don't know until you have them here whether they're the silent type or the more voluble one.

MR. BEAM: We know after they come here.

MR. BROWN: That's the problem. You know only after they come here.

(Laughter)

MR. BEAM: That's why we ask the studio artists to give a little talk explaining their work.

MR. BROWN: Yes.

MR. BEAM: And anything else they want to talk about.

MR. BROWN: That's what I meant. You in fact do ask them to see if they can formulate, to a degree. You don't expect a full dress lecture.

MR. BEAM: But you know, self-education shouldn't be as scorned. I think when you get whatever degrees you get, it's really literally the commencement. If you're really going to do something, you're going to use the next 20 or 30 years doing some reading that isn't prescribed, on your own. And artists who have a good eye -- I don't know how many books Picasso read, but he certainly had an eye. And he had access to great museums. And artists in New York or all across the country now have museums available. You don't have to go too far in this country now to find pretty good museums.

And so if he wants and he likes his field, he can go and he can wander through, say, the Art Institute of Chicago.

MR. BROWN: Sure.

MR. BEAM: And he's exposed to some very great art. And silently, it's bound to have an influence on him. And so we found out through these talks that some artists who come here and who have not taken much in the way of formal art history training nevertheless have a talent, they have an eye for pictures, and will show a picture by Tission or Rembrandt and analyze it brilliantly.

The reason I go back to Pope is, Pope wanted us to combine the feeling through doing with -- to identify with the artist, you see. And these fellows can do that. And some of them point out all kinds of things in the pictures that I wish I'd seen or said myself, you know? And they can read. And in the last 20 years, we've had a wonderful upsurge in the quality of art books and color reproductions. You can buy beautiful one inexpensively. So it's available if a fellow wants it. He doesn't -- he's not stuck just because he didn't take some art courses, see.

MR. BROWN: Your chances of getting someone self-schooled that (inaudible) school are greater than they may have been some years ago.

MR. BEAM: And there is a difference, I think, that contributes because a lot of our art history students, while they're not aiming to be artists, do enjoy painting.

MR. BROWN: Sure.

MR. BEAM: They are a little reluctant to go into the studio courses because the ones there who have talent, as it were, are going to get better grades, you see. Just as the football coach is going to put the fellows on the varsity who can play rather than the fellows who are just interested in football. And if they do that, they gain some nice insights that add to their art history experience.

MR. BROWN: You mentioned a bit earlier the effects of museums. Maybe we could talk a bit about this museum as it evolved under your direction after World War II. You were the director from '39 on, till '64.

MR. BEAM: Yes.

MR. BROWN: And after World War II, was there any change in its status? Of course, did that occur very gradually? You had this core collection, one of the earliest collections in the country.

MR. BEAM: Beautiful material. Let's see if I can put it this way.

MR. BROWN: (Inaudible) European as well as American.

MR. BEAM: When I came to Bowdoin, obviously my best opportunity to develop things lay in building on what was there in the museum. A beautiful building, the oldest college art museum in the country, I think. And

wonderful material on the walls and in storage. And the -- if I'd turned my back upon that and tried to go ahead strictly by the teaching, I was starting from, you know, step one. So by -- I tried to do both simultaneously.

And then and always later I tried to use the museum as a means of study. And I at Harvard had become a little wary of preparing for art history courses by studying mountains of photographs, when there was this wonderful museum right overhead over at the Museum of Fine Arts. And if one is terribly pragmatic, he can confine himself to photographs and get a good grade on the exam. You know, what's going to be shown on the exam. But that's not really a good way.

And so I introduced very early in the teaching the practice of requiring my students to take two-hour examinations, as I had, and a final, on the material of the course, but also to write a term paper based upon actual works of art, not those they could memorize or study out of books and photographs, to force them to get out of that -- usually, things that were upstairs on the walls.

And also, as I tried to explain to them, this gave them, as it still does in our practice, a chance to, in a given course, whether it's Renaissance or nineteenth century -- to do something original. They could pick out the picture or pictures they want to study. They can focus in upon an artist, one artist who was interesting to them, or a couple, instead of the whole spectrum of the period.

So we tried to make the museum a useful adjunct to the teaching. And it was such a fine museum, compared to colleges all over the country, which at that time didn't have museums. I said, shame not to use this.

MR. BROWN: Yes. What were -- were there some areas of weakness where you set about making acquisitions fairly early or as soon as you could?

MR. BEAM: I tried to because remember this: I came in '36. What was going on in the country at that time?

MR. BROWN: The Depression.

MR. BEAM: The Depression was.

MR. BROWN: The (inaudible) would have been quite low. So if you had any funds, you could --

MR. BEAM: Well, we didn't have any funds.

MR. BROWN: You didn't have any?

MR. BEAM: Colleges were struggling to stay alive. And to put it in human terms, Bowdoin -- and I always had to see things from the point of view of the college, and still do. Bowdoin had to make it possible for young men to finance an education. And they would work in the union and everywhere earning money, washing dishes. So it would have been difficult for me to persuade the trustees to parcel out money for a drawing even, or an etching, you see, compared to the student needs.

What I tried to do to overcome this was to recognize that, if I was going to build up that collection, or the staff was, it would have to be largely from money coming from outside of Bowdoin. The college was and is generous in the teaching budget, the faculty support, the facilities, and, you know, I want an office like this, and they would come in and paint and do everything they can. But when you're getting over into, even at those times, the purchase of works of art required money versus the students lined up who didn't have any.

MR. BROWN: Yes. Yes.

MR. BEAM: It was hard, hard times. So I began to try to figure out where I could get such money. And there were all kinds of people who came to the museums, and I became friendly with them socially and culturally, who would come to the museums, people from all over the country, see -- would come, especially in the summer.

MR. BROWN: The summer people.

MR. BEAM: All right. These were people who are not Bowdoin alumni, didn't have a first obligation to the alumni fund and that sort of thing. And if they liked art and could come to the Bowdoin museum -- we made one point of this. We've never charged a nickel admission at the Bowdoin museum, see. They were impressed by that. It's only been recently the museums feel obliged to charge, but we never have, on purpose. These people could come to Bowdoin, many of them would go to the museum and almost no place else on the campus. And they would develop an interest.

So as time went by, this lady or that gentleman would begin to leave us a little benefaction in the will and talk to their friends who had money on the way to Bar Harbor, that sort of thing. And any museum director has got to be a -- sell his museum and raise funds. Can't avoid it. People say a college president today is just a fund raiser.

Somebody has got to raise funds.

MR. BROWN: So did you find that your role was increasingly that?

MR. BEAM: No, I liked it.

MR. BROWN: You had to -- did you developed campaigns? Or it was more or less this individual one person meeting another?

MR. BEAM: Fund raising is a mystery. Nobody can reduce it to a scientific formula. Even with staffs of development people and campaigns and so forth. I went to visit George O'Desamblin (phonetic) and his wife when I went down to New York. He had a place up at Bull's Bay. And he'd stop in and say hello. I'd visit him up there, and I liked them as I did Charlie Homer.

And I would go down to New York and visit them at their apartment, and there I met John Sloan and his wife and any number of artists because -- I say it's something -- Hamlin made his money in industry. But he wanted to be an artist, but he said he wasn't good enough. But he knew artists. Just -- he lived there on Washington Square, north of Greenwich Village. And he knew these artists. I'd invite them up, and I'd meet these fellows. And that was great.

And over the years, I recognized that Hamlin had a lot of money. He had a huge apartment, and it will filled with works by John Sloan. The bathroom had about 95 Sloan etchings all over the wall. It was amazing, see. And I thought -- I'd hope, well, maybe we'll get some Sloan paintings left to the college. You're always, as a director or curator, thinking in terms of what this person might leave you, either in money or objects or both.

Hamlin was a very kind and generous person. But we never talked about money. And time after time, the college will receive a gift, a sizable sum, from some person about -- with whom money was never discussed. In fact, sometimes that will turn them off. It's a very simple approach, you see. And when Hamlin died, he left us the largest -- for a college museum, the largest collection of Sloan pictures in the country.

MR. BROWN: When was this?

MR. BEAM: Oh, about --

MR. BROWN: '50s?

MR. BEAM: Fifteen years ago, maybe. Time flies. And he left us -- I'm not qualified to mention the specific sum. But it wasn't over a million, but it was not hay. And he left it to us for the purchase and exhibition of American pictorial art because of his friend Sloan and Helen Sloan. And he -- this was great because it allowed us to acquire American pictorial art and to put on these planned exhibitions.

For instance, the Homer exhibition was financed out of the interest money.

MR. BROWN: The Hamlin fund?

MR. BEAM: The Hamilton fund. So if you go around the museum and look at the label, as you do in any museum, it tells the source. And then the name of Hamlin. Well, I knew Hamlin for 20 years before he died and left the sum. So acquiring funds in support for museum from the outside is a little like planting seeds that are going to come up a couple of decades later. Sometimes they don't at all.

MR. BROWN: But you didn't really have money to, say, if you wanted something to fill in part of your European collection or your ancient objects?

MR. BEAM: Not at the start.

MR. BROWN: Not at the start?

MR. BEAM: No. Very few museums did. Bowdoin was lucky because at least it had a collection. There were hundreds and hundreds of colleges across the country, and no collections whatever.

MR. BROWN: Did you seek to get gifts in kind to fill in to certain gaps? Or was your main interest in the American field, eventually? Or did you see that perhaps you needed something (inaudible)?

MR. BEAM: Oh, no. You look at the acquisition labels. We've tried to build the collection up on the broadest possible front because we were teaching courses in the whole history of art. And we'd done reasonably well. There are some pitfalls in that route because, if you urge people to remember you, well, they might remember pictures that are not good that they don't consult. And it's the embarrassment of having to turn them down.

And it's very difficult to build up a collection through that route. You'll get many fine things, as we did, say, from John Halford, beautiful pictures. But he bought pictures because he liked them, not to illustrate the Institute of Art. So you've got a Corolla here and a Dolby near there and some fine Dutch paintings. But they are not what you'd choose to illustrate the Institute of Art.

So a museum like ours will never be, even on a small scale, able to do what the Metropolitan Museum can do, where with its funds it can fill in. See, if there is a chance to get a Goya, such as they don't have, they can buy it for a half-a-million dollars.

MR. BROWN: But nevertheless, here you have objects that can be used to a degree in teaching or as special study objects, can't you?

MR. BEAM: Oh, beautiful. Look at our Classical collection. It's one of the finest in the country regardless of size.

MR. BROWN: Yes. But even areas that are -- say, Dutch painting that don't compete, say, with the Met.

MR. BEAM: Yes. But it's not uniform.

MR. BROWN: But still, students can do some study in Dutch painting nevertheless with the objects here, can't they?

MR. BEAM: There are not many aspects of the history of art where students can't find something to write about for their term papers. They can't run over and get an array of Rembrandts. But fine Rembrandt etchings and things of that sort -- and if you go into the storerooms, it's amazing. We let them do that for their term papers.

MR. BROWN: So your aim in your acquisitions was largely to continue this as a superb teaching museum. Is that right? Or was it partly as an asset for the state's name as well?

MR. BEAM: No, because it's always been a public museum.

MR. BROWN: Oh, for the public, yes. But do you --

MR. BEAM: It has two faces.

MR. BROWN: It has a teaching role?

MR. BEAM: The façade face is the campus.

MR. BROWN: Right.

MR. BEAM: So it is a college museum.

MR. BROWN: Right.

MR. BEAM: But visitors from all over the country and around the world are welcome to come.

MR. BROWN: Yes.

MR. BEAM: And they -- if they like art, they may or may not be interested in our doing a good job as a teaching museum. So we have to address them.

MR. BROWN: And do you address the public partly then -- or have you always through special exhibitions? Do you keep the public in mind, not simply the students, when you developed your exhibition programs?

MR. BEAM: Yes, actually you do both. And there's no harm there because a first-rate exhibition is just as good for the students as it is for the public. And you don't say, "This is a student-oriented exhibition." "This is a public-oriented exhibition."

MR. BROWN: What were some -- can you recall a few of the major exhibitions that you developed or were staged while you were director, into the mid-60s or so?

MR. BEAM: Well, there was the Baskin show, which was the first and one of the very few one-man shows that was given to him. And thanks to Marvin Sadik, who I appointed as curator and who went on to do fine things at the --

MR. BROWN: Smithsonian?

MR. BEAM: -- National Portrait Gallery.

MR. BROWN: Did he come on as (inaudible)?

MR. BEAM: Marvin happened to be a personal friend of Baskin's. And inevitably, a lot of things are done through personal friendships, as my interest in Homer started with my friendship with --

MR. BROWN: Charles Homer.

MR. BEAM: -- Charles Homer. And one recognizes, too, that when people drop in on the way to Bar Harbor, which doesn't hurt, you know. (Laughter)

MR. BROWN: No.

MR. BEAM: That you're nice to them, not just to get money. You've got to enjoy people. But remember that if they don't like you, they're not going to give you money.

MR. BROWN: Did you meet artists among others that way, did you?

MR. BEAM: Oh, yes, because Maine is full of artists in the summer.

MR. BROWN: And you said in New York through Hamlin you had met Sloan?

MR. BEAM: Yes.

MR. BROWN: And you eventually wrote a book on Sloan.

MR. BEAM: Well, I met Sloan because Hamlin had a large estate up at Booth Bay Harbor, you see.

MR. BROWN: Ah. Um-hm.

MR. BEAM: And there again, I've always cultivated artists because you learn things from talking to artists that you're not going to learn either from museum people or art historians. You could learn a lot from artists. They're interesting people.

MR. BROWN: What did you learn from Sloan, for example?

MR. BEAM: Well, Sloan was a most unusual artist. Up there on that shelf (inaudible). Sloan was a highly articulate person who went on to be an outstanding teacher at the Art Students League. And students come from all over. And so he didn't care an awful lot about the history of art and its chronology and that sort of thing. But he cared a great deal about analyzing the structure of paintings, color, brushwork. And, you know, you can learn a lot from a fellow of that caliber.

He had a great interest in color organization. And he could show you a picture and tell you why he selected these colors. And a good picture is subtle. You like it. But you don't say, "The artist picked this color off the palette," and so forth. But Sloan would tell you. He had a reason. A very, very intellectual painter.

MR. BROWN: Did you give him a show here, a one-man show?

MR. BEAM: Oh, yes. A big one.

MR. BROWN: That was back in the 1950s or so?

MR. BEAM: That was when the Hamlin collection came here.

MR. BROWN: The 1960s?

MR. BEAM: For one thing, it was the first chance -- time I had money to devote to an exhibition of American art without being apologetic. Exhibitions even then cost a lot of money. Today they cost even more. Insurance rates, you know, almost break you.

MR. BROWN: Well, you published your book on John Sloan 1962?

MR. BEAM: In connection with the -- at the exhibition. And I did it because I thought I could say some things through knowing him and so on, and Helen Sloan personally. And also, when I'd go down to New York, Helen and -- Helen knew through John a great many of the leading dealers. Well, you can't walk into a dealer in New York and get a lot of time unless you're a customer. But through her, I could, you see. And I'd get back in the storerooms and see what's what.

MR. BROWN: And you began to sharpen your eye?

MR. BEAM: And I got to know John Marin, Jr., in that way. And then he and his wife began to summer up here. And I got to know Bill Zorak through Sloan. Zorak had done some teaching at the Art Students League. So one thing leads to another.

MR. BROWN: Sure, sure.

MR. BEAM: And when you're raising funds, Bob, you hope that this or that wealthy lady will give you something or remember you. But also, these people go in certain social circles and economic circles. And you hope that if they like your museum, they will suggest that friends come here. And those friends, if they like you, may -- it can grow substantially. We've done pretty well.

MR. BROWN: And the artist, too, they like you?

MR. BEAM: Yes.

MR. BROWN: Refer -- might even give you something, or at least suggest to some of their collectors that they give.

MR. BEAM: They have. They have.

MR. BROWN: What was Bill Zorak like? Do you recall? Did you get to know him very well?

MR. BEAM: Well, it was an ironic twist to his career. He lived with his wife and that wonderful family over at Robin Hood, just a short way. And we'd go -- my wife and I would go there, and others, for lunch. They were most hospitable. When I knew him, he had become, you know, a celebrity and didn't have to worry.

But there was a time, I knew, in the past where a gentleman named Representative Don Dero in the McCarthy age had given him a very hard time. And I said it's ironic because in all the years I knew Bill and Marvin Zorak, I never knew him to take the slightest interest in politics. Never discussed it. Keen on art -- and the whole family were lively. Never of all things, never about politics.

MR. BROWN: So did this show in your discussions with him, that sometimes he would refer to that era when he had been smeared?

MR. BEAM: Never.

MR. BROWN: No?

MR. BEAM: Never. I read about this indirectly.

MR. BROWN: Oh, I see. So as a man (inaudible).

MR. BEAM: I went and got out the Congressional Record and read it, the speeches Don Dero had made smearing this man in the most outlandish way.

MR. BROWN: Zorak himself, though, was simply hospitable?

MR. BEAM: Yes. And he knew what he was doing.

MR. BROWN: You said you knew the --

MR. BEAM: And he would take us into his studio, you see, and show us things in progress. This is something you don't get out of a book. You can see a statue half-developed.

Well, there was another -- if you don't mind my -- I think I know what you want me to (inaudible).

MR. BROWN: No, we're talking about various artists now, as a matter of fact.

MR. BEAM: Well, that's the fund raising side. And I think the bottom line is this: I could not have spent the money on the Sloan show with a catalog by Ann Toynton -- luckily, having that wonderful press over at Portland that I did. And we certainly couldn't have spent the money on the Homer show -- it's not secret -- without -- out of the college budget. Even now I -- scholarship needs, tuition needs, all this.

You've got to have money that's given you to strictly for the museum and even for exhibitions. And our present director has done a very fine job in joining the current trend of inviting industry and business to make a contribution. L.L. Bean gave us a generous contribution for this, and we gave them a byline in the catalog, and I don't think it hurt them. And I hope it's tax deductible. But business and industries are doing this. Maybe even a few of the 16,000 people who came to the Homer show dropped by L.L. Bean's.

MR. BROWN: That's right. It can work both ways. But no, I was asking now just about some of the artists that you've mentioned and known. How early did you get to know the several regionalist painters? You mentioned Benton and Wood and (inaudible)?

MR. BEAM: Oh, back in Kansas City.

MR. BROWN: When you were out there?

MR. BEAM: Yes. See, I went there first at the Nelson Gallery.

MR. BROWN: Right. And you met -- well, Benton was based --

MR. BEAM: Well, they all came to the museum.

MR. BROWN: Oh, they would?

MR. BEAM: Benton taught right across the street at the Art Institute where I also taught.

MR. BROWN: Right.

MR. BEAM: Sort of a course in introductory art history. So you couldn't help knowing him. And Grant Wood and John Stuart Curry came to the museum. And my duties as the young assistant to the director were to take the VIPs around.

MR. BROWN: And they were VIPs at that time, weren't they?

MR. BEAM: They were. They were well known.

MR. BROWN: Quite approved, weren't they? I mean, lots of publicity.

MR. BEAM: Three different kinds of men, very much so.

MR. BROWN: Can you characterize the three?

MR. BEAM: Yes. Benton was outgoing, almost explosive. He never harbored or bottled a thought in his life. He loved to get up there at the Institute, either in class or in public lecture and sound off. Never a dull moment when Benton is around -- a big, lusty man. He reminded me, in a way, of another person I met after I moved to Maine, Waldo Pierce, who was a good friend of Hemingway's. And he was a Hemingway type, very macho. Pierce stood about six-four, but he was a wonderful cook. And he loved to make my wife and me salads, you see. And we'd drop in on him there at Shears Port. Well, he loved to talk about art, and he'd known everybody and had a very lively career.

MR. BROWN: And Benton was likewise?

MR. BEAM: Benton was very, very outgoing.

Wood was very quiet, very gentlemanly. And Benton loved to get into arguments about art. And he'd come over to the gallery and fight in front of a picture and have a ball. And we knew it was all in good fun. But Wood was teaching up at Iowa University in their beginning -- one of their beginning art studio programs in the country. He was a pioneer there. And the university had brought him there because of his famous name. And he started the studio program, which expanded. But he came, and I remember taking him around. And he was very quiet. He would have a few perceptive remarks about the paintings on the wall, but I didn't learn much from him. I understood he was a good teacher in class in his own environment.

John Stuart Curry, I remember -- Wood was very quiet. I won't say he was mouse-like, but he was very quiet. And Curry, you could almost tell by his art, was very masculine. He had a gleam in his eye. And he was a presence. And he'd go around, and he would talk about art. He had very definite opinions. So he probably made a pretty good teacher, or a positive teacher, there at Kansas University. And he was good enough to invite me to come up there and lecture. And I had a -- he rounded up about six other people in the audience. I don't know whether he forced all these students and everybody to go. And we had one wingding of a party afterward. It was a lively place.

At that time, Kansas was teetotaler dry. And they would all come over from Kansas City, Kansas and buy their liquor in Missouri, which was not dry. And I got up to this university there (inaudible) but they sure had a lot of fun afterward. I remember that. These are part of my barnstorming days.

MR. BROWN: So Curry was a dynamic fellow, but not contentious, whereas Benton was?

MR. BEAM: Intense. Wood was quiet, and you see that in his art, polished.

MR. BROWN: Yes. But Benton was contentious at times?

MR. BEAM: Dynamic. And his work is furious, and so forth. And then we had celebrities come from all around the world. I had the duty or the fun of carrying them around. I learned some academic lessons in the process. I'm not as awestricken with the word of the specialist and scholars as I once was because I've heard too many of them contradict each other. One great authority from the Louvre came in, and he looked at this Rembrandt we'd bought from Devine. And he turned up his nose -- "I think it's a fake. Hope you didn't pay much money for it." Well, we jolly well had. And another man came from the Rikes Museum and said, "Gee, that's a fine study of Rembrandt's son." One was almost one week after another.

So when I was a young guy, I thought that when an authority spoke, that was the end of it. And they didn't know it, but they would contradict. And this went on frequently. And I was dirty enough to begin to keep a notebook and write them down.

MR. BROWN: (Laughter)

MR. BEAM: And later on it was a little embarrassing because Sir Robert Wendt, an authority on drawings, came in. And he looked at one drawing; he said, "That's a fake, you see." And I said, "Well, I don't know anything about it. But Fritz Luke from the Louvre, he told me three weeks ago, here's what he said about that same drawing. He said it's a fine one; you ought to put it on display." And then Wendt said, "Oh, did Luke say that?" And this was another thing, see, when an authority is told that another authority says something, he backtracks. So you run into this.

MR. BROWN: Which is rather daunting, wasn't it, to you? I would think that they would so easily change their opinions?

MR. BEAM: Oh, I was naïve. I was a callow youth.

MR. BROWN: Yes, but that they could change their opinion could have made you rather cynical?

MR. BEAM: It never occurred to me. Because in college, whatever -- my professor said anything, I wrote it down like gospel.

(End of tape 3, side B)

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