



Smithsonian  
*Archives of American Art*

Oral history interview with Samuel George  
Cahan, 1967 March 11 and July 12

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# Transcript

## Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a tape-recorded interview with Samuel George Cahan on March 11 and July 12, 1967. The interview conducted by Paul Cummings for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

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

## Interview

PAUL CUMMINGS: Paul Cummings talking to Samuel Cahan.

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: Today is the 11th of March.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: Well, at the age of twelve, I figured I could, I would like to make a drawing in front of a restaurant. The only way that I could appreciate it is when they come out of the restaurant, not before they come in, because they're not - they're anxious first to eat.

PAUL CUMMINGS: [Laughs] Yeah, they're rushed. Right, right.

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: And I made this drawing on Fulton Street, New York City. And I had, as I mentioned, I had no shoes. It was late, latter part of June. And I started to make the smash-up of the Maine, remember, the boat that was smashed by the British at that time. And I made the sinking of Maine.

Well, sometime, some of these men would look at it and then drop a five-cent piece to me. And I didn't depend on that because not much of it [laughs] was dropped for me.

PAUL CUMMINGS: [Laughs]

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: And a man by the name of Nelson Hersch - he was Chief Editor of the New York World. And he looked at the thing I was doing in color, and he said - I was barefooted. He said, "Have you any shoes?" I says, "Yes." He said, "Why don't you wear them?" I says, "I can't wear them because if I do wear them, I haven't got money enough to buy - in case it wears out - buy another pair of shoes. We're very poor people." I says, "I have to do what I possibly can to prevent the spending of money for things. And this is one of the things that I don't want to overdo."

And he said, "Do you live with your mother?" I says, "I do." He says, "Have you better clothes than you have on now?" You can imagine the - I was on my knees and so on. Well, he says, "Here's my card." And he gave me his card. And he says, "Bring your mother with you tomorrow." And I said, "All right." "Editor of the New York World," it said.

I told my mother. I borrowed pants and a shirt that make me look - from someone we know on the same floor we lived on. It was on the first floor. And I came along with her to the New York World. And he came out and he says, "You Mrs. Cahan?" She says, "Yes." He says, "I want to tell you that your son is very talented." And he says, "I'm going to give him a job in this building in the art department, where he properly belongs."

So he gave me - he gave the job the next day at four dollars a week. Now, four dollars a week in 1898 was a lot of money, I mean, for -

PAUL CUMMINGS: Those [inaudible]. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: - young kids, you know.

And I can't tell you exactly but - I lost the four dollars that day when I went to the bathroom and sat down, from the back of my pocket there, and it fell out.

PAUL CUMMINGS: [Laughs] Oh, God.

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: I came in the - it fell out, and I came to the - with a sad look on my face. And they all seemed to like me, you know. I would always be around with them and did what I could, you know, and all that sort of thing.

Said, "What's the matter with you, Sam?" He says, "You look sad." Well, I says, "I have a reason to look sad." He says, "What is your reason?" I says, "The four dollars that I took - got," I says, "for the first week. I lost it."

He says, "Where did you lose it?" I said, "In the toilet." [Laughs.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: [Laughs] It's gone, yeah.

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: They began to laugh. So one of them says, "Sam, I want you to - we're sorry to hear it," they said. They says, "You look very, very depressed," because I wanted to surprise my mother with the first four dollars of my life, you know, to make her feel happier.

Well, I went - they sent me upstairs where I have to give the - assemble the pictures to something else, you see. And he says, "Take that up, will you?" I says, "Yes."

When I came down, they gave me four dollars again. And I didn't know how to thank them, you know. They collected four dollars for me. I thought it was mighty nice of them to do that. Well, that's the beginning.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, how did you start drawing? What gave you the idea to draw on the sidewalk there in front of the restaurant?

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: I had that since I was an infant.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Really?

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: As young as I possibly could be.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You were always -

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: I had the trouble in the schools. What happened was this. I was so interested in drawing that I paid no attention to anything that the school gave you. I made drawings all the time while they were studying. And I was held on to the fourth grade, four times I couldn't get any higher. I was the only one. The teacher said, "You're the only one that ever lasted four times."

PAUL CUMMINGS: [Laughs]

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: And I said, "Well," I says, "I'm sorry. And you're perfectly right in what you've done because I'm interested," I says, "in art." And I says, "And I love to draw while I have to sit here. And that gave me a chance to draw."

"Well," she says, "that wasn't the place for it [they laugh] - giving you any chance for drawing; you're supposed to study." Well, I said, "That's what I did." And that's how I began, you see. And that was a very young age, at the age of six, five or six.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Did you draw at home or anything before that?

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: I did. I did. And it was continuous since I was a child. I loved art. And I drew it all the time. And I - oh, when I wanted something, ice cream or something like that, I would do it in front of the store and make a complete drawing, with an arrow pointing to - go in to there, you see?

PAUL CUMMINGS: [Laughs]

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: And I'd bring out the man who owned the thing. And he was so delighted, he said, "Now, what do you want?" And I said, "I want some ice cream." He says, "Here's some nice so-and-so," and he gave us some candy and all that sort of thing. He said, "Leave that alone," he said, "That's beautiful," you know? All in color.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's great.

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: And when I wanted it, I got a drink that way. [They laugh.] It didn't cost any money whatsoever.

Well, anyway, as I worked on the New York World, I kept on drawing a great deal. And at the age of 15 - I was 12 years of age at that time - there was no law to stop you from working in way back in 1898.

PAUL CUMMINGS: If you could work, you'd work.

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: You see? I'm 81 years, at the - reached 81. They gave me 85, you know.

And now the point is that I kept on drawing. And at 15 years of age - they watched me do it, the head of the art department. He said, "Sam, we're going to put you on the regular line," he says, "where you're going to do work for the paper." 15 years - he says, "Remember," he says, "you're the youngest artist in the history of any newspaper that ever gave anyone a job," he says, "at the age of 15." He doesn't believe there's any paper in America that would do that, that would take as young a person as that.

And at the age of 15, I got a - yes, 15 dollars a week it was. Well, at that time, 15 dollars was a lot of money for anybody to earn. You know what they were paying the workmen? A dollar a day is all they got.

PAUL CUMMINGS: A dollar a day.

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: The union wasn't formed until about 1910 or 1908, something like that - no. No, it's further over. It's about 1912, I think it was.

Anyway, at the age of 15, I kept on. And I was assigned to the trials. That's where it started.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But had you studied drawing with anybody?

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: I did study drawing at a very famous - painter. And I have the name. I had it written down. Excuse me just a minute. I'm sorry I can't, because he's a very famous man. And at that time -

PAUL CUMMINGS: He was the teacher then and had a studio in Lincoln Arcade?

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: He had a studio at the Lincoln Arcade, yes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah.

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: And -

PAUL CUMMINGS: How old were you when you studied with him? Do you remember?

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: About 30.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That was way after you had - right.

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: At 30. I'll show you the first - done in 1906, got the first prize of the National Academy.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, let's -

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: No, it's right here.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I can -

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: I'll show you the -

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well -

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: Do you want me to say that again?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, I want to ask you something else first. [Laughs.]

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: I beg your pardon?

PAUL CUMMINGS: I want to ask you something else first.

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: Yes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: So you didn't - you had no really early art training until, what, you said you were 30 before you started -

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: Well, remember, I was studying also with the artists that were there at the -

PAUL CUMMINGS: At the newspaper.

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: Watching them do things, you see, and learning a lot of things about it, of course. It was also like a school. I watched the artists working, and watching the technique. For newspaper purposes, of course. And it helped me a good deal, I must say that.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Do you remember who any of the other people in the studio were, working for the newspaper

at that time?

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: Yes. It is so terrible that I cannot seem to [rustling sound] find these things that I have - it must be in this book.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Because I didn't see any mention in any of the things that I read.

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: Yes, I know. But I thought - this is only a small piece of paper which I put the names on. And I have the names of the well-known painters that became - worked on the New York World at that time.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hm.

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: Oh, this is - [rustling sound.]

[George] Luks was a comic man of the New York World. He did comics for them.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah.

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: And he was a man that drank a great deal, been drunk very often. And we had - a dinner was given. And I can't tell you that story, better stop it, because something happened there.

PAUL CUMMINGS: [Laughs]

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: You might as well stop there.

[BREAK IN TAPE.]

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: Luks was the man whom I knew quite well.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah. Well, how old were you when you met him? You'd been working for the newspaper for -

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: How old was I at that time?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah. Was he at the newspaper when you started there?

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: Practically that.

PAUL CUMMINGS: He was.

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: I can't swear to that, but I think he was because there was, had two different departments. One was a comic department. The other was a serious newspaper -

PAUL CUMMINGS: The reporters.

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: - reporters and things and so forth.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, I see. I see.

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: Had two different departments. So - well, later on, of course, I began to know them and talk to them and so on and so forth. And that's as far as I could go in there.

And anyway, I kept on. And then they began sending me to some very well-known murder cases and other cases of that sort. And I covered so many of them, I was sent all the way up to Boston and all the way down to Washington and so on. And I have a scene there, where I make the scene where, a Washington scene where they're all in the - Washington, in those days, there wasn't any - hardly any mechanical things that makes the - they were in a - sat down with the horses would be ahead of it, you know. But they had no such thing as the modern up-to-date type of stuff, to go with a regular - well, like they go down here. They didn't have any such thing.

PAUL CUMMINGS: They had horse-drawn streetcars.

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: The horses were the thing in Washington, where the presidents were being. And I have a whole - I have a drawing of it here. I'd like to show it to you.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, let me just talk about some of these things first, because it's very choppy -

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: Well, I've slept in the hotels overnight to cover up the different things that I was assigned to, you see. And the list of the - being assigned is what I've shown you there. There's so many of them,

so I could hardly remember the names because it's so long ago.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah. But how about, oh, say, some of the artists that you were involved with or that knew - that you knew besides Luks?

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: Well, that's the thing that I'm trying to think of, you know.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Were there any - you studied at the National Academy at one point, didn't you?

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: I did.

PAUL CUMMINGS: And that was when, about? Do you remember?

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: I wonder if it's in here. I don't think so. [Rustling sound.] No. I have no other -

[BREAK IN TAPE.]

I began to increase - when I told you the 15 dollars a week, I went all the way up to Madison Avenue and 108th Street where a lot of Jewish people are living there. And I went into one of the houses and found a four-room for 25 dollars a month, at that time. And I went down and told my mother and father, who could not make any money at all. He tried to make money on the selling of keys, you know, and testing - well, I said, "Mother," I says, "We can now move," I says, "and get out of all this thing." And we did.

And I reached - and year after year, I kept on increasing. Then I had a three-year contract, another three-year contract, another three-year contract, up to 1932 when the New York World was sold to the [New York World-]Telegram. 1932. At that time, I had a three-year arrangement, and I worked a half a year of it, and they paid me two-and-a-half years of - ran it through, close to 600 dollars. At that time, 1932, it was a good deal of money.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah.

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: And I got that, anyway.

I got out of that, and I decided to do work for magazines. And I succeeded in doing it. And then I did work for another magazine, small one, all done in - just in black, with a pen. And I have over 200 illustrations that I could show you of all mine, of these magazines, these 10-cent magazines, you know.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, you showed me some from Collier's.

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: From what?

PAUL CUMMINGS: You showed me some illustrations from Collier's magazine.

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: Collier's, yes. I'd done a few things there, many - they paid very big money for it, you know. Much more than the newspapers have done. And I fell from one direction to another. Then I decided to do etchings.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How did that start? Do you remember? How you got interested in doing etchings?

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: Well, it's hard for me to tell you except that I watched someone do it one time and saw them have what they call a copper.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Copper plate, yes.

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: Copper plate, very shiny. And all they did was to put the original drawing, and underneath it would be like in the - these black things underneath, where you -

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, carbon paper, yeah.

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: Carbon - they'd fix the whole thing on the thing and then begin to copy the thing that they had originally. And this fascinated me so much that I decided to do it. Then I started, really began to get a good business out of it because there was a big demand for them. And I'll show it to you now, show you a few of the things.

Magazines -

PAUL CUMMINGS: For magazines.

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: Yes, I did that. I did different magazines, you know. You know, I have a terribly bad

memory. You know that I can't remember things at all.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, that was getting into the Depression, wasn't it? You know, 1932, when the paper was sold.

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: Well, I had to seek other things, you see. And then fortunately, I was capable of doing it, getting work from magazines. I worked for the New York Times four years, in - during the Second World War, the beginning of the World War and the end of it, 1948.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, what did you do for the Times?

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: I illustrated. And I - retouching, in other words, photographs - giving it a better tone for printing purposes, you see. I knew how to do that.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, I see. I see. Yeah.

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: I learnt that at the office. And that's about all. Kept on going.

And the story of the murder that took place on Hester Street in New York City - Hester Street was a section where they sold and they - it's a very famous place, you know. Do you remember that place, Hester?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, I know where it is.

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: Yes. And this gangster shot somebody. While there was a crowd around, can you imagine? And they saw him shoot. Someone saw him shoot. And he - and a little boy, 14 years of age, ran by him and picked up the gun and ran away with it, you see, in case they say that he'd done the shooting. "Well, how could I do any shooting? I haven't got the gun?" You know, that was the plan.

Well, one man saw this kid with the - this is the true story - saw this kid with the gun, put it inside of his clothes, pocket, whatever it was. He began to chase this little boy, until he ran, and a policeman who was nearby at the time ran several blocks. He said, "That kid," he says, "has got a gun that just killed a man below." And he says, "The man that did the killing gave the gun to this little boy." So the policeman ran after him, caught him. And held him and passed him around. And there, there was the gun.

And this gangster who did the killing - a trial was taking place and I was assigned for the trial. And the editor says, "Sam, I want you to make a very careful drawing. We want to make a good three-column story, print-out of it. That is, a very attractive-looking portrait, if you can make it." And I did. Did make a very impressive portrait - and a darn good portrait of him, too, by the way.

And I almost finished, suddenly a young man - looked like a gangster at once to me, you know. And he says, "Could I see this picture?" I says, "Yes. You could look at it." He says, "That's a good picture of him." I says, "Thank you very much." He says, "I want you to tear it up." I says, "Who are you?" He says, "Never mind who I am. I don't want you to put it in the newspaper. I know you're doing something for the newspaper."

I says, "Why?" And he says, "Because that would be identified. A lot of people could remember that face. They would come and testify against him." You know? That was his argument - which was a true argument, by the way.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Sure [laughs], sure.

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: And he says, "You tear that up." I says, "Now, wait a moment." I went to the district attorney. And he knew who I was because he saw my work all the time, you know, front pages and all that sort of thing. He says, "Mr. Cahan," he says, "Sorry, but I can't do anything." He says, "He hasn't struck you or - even if he tears something," he says, "it isn't enough to arrest him on that basis."

I says, "What should I do?" He says, "Well," he says, "the only thing for you to do," he says, "to give him the thing that he wants. Otherwise," he says, "you're liable to get attacked," he says, "sometime," he says. And I went to the reporter and told him the story, and he says, "Sam," he says, "you can't help it," he says, "You have to simply go ahead and give it to him." He said, "There's a lot of gangsters waiting on it."

And in back of the place where - the whole scene in there, they were standing in back there. And they were looking towards me. I quickly saw that I was in trouble. I says, "Well, now listen." I says, "I want to give you a little advice." He says, "What is it?" I said, "Keep away from two types of people." He says, "Who are the two types?" I says, "The two types are the police and the newspaper people. Keep away from them."

He says, "That ain't got that scared me at all," he says, "I want you to tear that up." I says, "I won't tear it up." I says, "You'll do the tearing." He says, "Sure, I'll tear it up." So he tore it up. And he says, "I ain't going to give

you any of this picture," he says, "because," he says, "I know how smart you artists are," he says, "you can put these things together again and make a drawing from it. I know it." And I said, "Well," I says, "You're right about that." He says, "I'm going to keep every bit that I tear up in my own pocket."

"Now," I says, "I want to go out." He said, "Well, you see everything is all right." He said, "You come along with me. It will be all right." So I went out, went to the editor, and told him the story. He said, "Sam," he says, "can you remember the picture that you made of him, of that gangster?" I mean the man that did the murder.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right.

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: I says, "I believe I can," I said, "because I studied him very carefully." "You go ahead," he says, "and make it." And I was scared to death of doing it because of fear that something was going to happen to me, you know. It was published the next day.

PAUL CUMMINGS: [Laughs] Yeah. Sure.

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: Not only did he do it, but he stole the story of how the artist had to tear up the original one. You know, it made the story very interesting - and how that portrait is the exact portrait, exactly as though he made it the first time.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, boy. Yeah.

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: He ran the story about me and the difficulties with this gangster. It made an interesting story, you know, about the artist. And the result was that it was published.

And I was going to get married a week after that. That was a terrible state of mind. This was in 1913. I married in 1913, by the way. We're now 55 years married.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's a pretty good number.

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: And my son is 54, and we're married 55. Anyway, in 1913 - oh yes. I was getting married a week after that. And I didn't tell my wife any - that is, my future wife - anything about it. I didn't want to worry her, you know what I mean? Her state of mind might be - keep away from the idea of making her feel so bad, thinking that I might possibly be attacked, you know?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hm, mm-hm.

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: Well, we got married. And the next day we got into a boat, went all the way down to Cuba - Santiago, Cuba. You've heard of that, haven't you, that place?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hm, mm-hm.

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: We stopped there, went around Cuba for awhile, went into the various other sections of those little islands and so forth.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: And we even went down to the famous place - between America and - between North America and South America, that thing that they have a - it goes from the Atlantic -

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, the Panama Canal.

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: The Panama Canal.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah.

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: We saw it, we stopped there. And note, it wasn't finished completely. And we went through so many places - Haiti and all those places around. It took about three weeks. We came back. And I didn't tell her. I told her months later. I was afraid, you know, that she might worry about me, you know, and possibly being attacked.

But I expected to be attacked the next day because it was published. At the time when I walked, I would look back around me. And you know what that means.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah, yeah.

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: Expecting someone to come around you and hit you or something, or shoot you. But I don't know exactly what would have happened to me. And I got out of it all right.



I have so many stories to tell you about meeting the man who was the originator of the Pan-American. It's Pan-American, isn't it?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hm. [Affirmative.]

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: He posed for me, the head of it, you know. I've had some of the most prominent people sit for my portraiture.

PAUL CUMMINGS: When did you do that Woodrow Wilson portrait?

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: In 1914.

PAUL CUMMINGS: And that was, what, the campaign?

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: He was president at that time.

PAUL CUMMINGS: So he was, he was president? Okay. I don't remember my history too well.

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: In 1914, I think, was the last of his presidency. And I made the portrait. He was at Madison Square Garden that time. I stood right next to him and made a careful drawing of him while he was talking and so on. And I studied him very carefully. And that's how I got the fine quality about that face, which - well, it became national, all over the country.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, I know that it was mentioned - you'd said that it was published in 1400 newspapers.

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: 1400 papers, yes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's fantastic.

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: They ran the story because it was the president. It was the finest thing that they had to print, instead of a photograph. It goes beyond photography.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hm. Yeah, I know that those prints made - it went all over, too, I suppose.

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: It went everywhere.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Thousands and thousands.

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: Yes. This thing went big, too, with the Albert Einstein.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Albert Einstein.

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: But nothing like this. Being the president, of course, it became much more popular and everybody heard about it.

And I have met so many people. I've covered so many people. And I'm now in comfort. I've made a good deal of money and played in Wall Street and went way ahead of it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: [Laughs]

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: I did. That is true.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's great. That's great.

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: Yes. So I'm living in comfort. And we're now going to be married for 55 years.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's good.

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: Since 1913.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's over half a century.

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: Pardon?

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's over half a century.

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: Oh yes, over a half a century. And when it was 50 years, we had a tremendous big party, a couple of hundred people.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, God.

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: Some were at our wedding and most of them died because they were elderly people, you know. Most of them were.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hm. Well, who are some of the other people that you've done portraits of besides Einstein and -

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: Well, these are the important ones. The most important ones are those that I've just mentioned to you. And, oh, there was a president. Can you name some of the presidents just above -

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, the Teddy Roosevelt one -

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: No. Teddy Roosevelt, I made the drawing of him. He didn't pose for it because he was testifying at that time, and I made the drawing [laughs], about his teeth, you know.

PAUL CUMMINGS: [Laughs]

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: Well, I could - well, this tells you here how many have posed. [Rustling sound.] Didn't you read that part of it?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah, well, I didn't know if there was more than that, but -

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: Just a moment. Here we are. Here. [Reading] "He made portraits of President Herbert Hoover." That's right. He posed for me there.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hm. Was that in New York or Washington?

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: In New York. Hoover. Herbert Hoover was later on - he was after his presidency. He was appointed in charge of the - during the war between Spain and America - took place down in Cuba. That was way back in 1898. There were wars between America, and that's where the Maine was shot, knocked down, you see.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. Right, right.

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: [Reading] "Herbert Hoover, General [George Washington] Goethals, builder of the Panama Canal." Here it is. "President [Victoriano] Huerta of Mexico, Merconi [ph], Admiral George Dewey, Albert Einstein, and many other notables." That's the - amongst the most important people that I've done. There are others who are very important, but not as well known as these people were, you see.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Who might some of the other people be? Can you think of any of those? You know, who might not be world famous?

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: Well, it's hard for me to remember because this thing falls back 50, 55, nearly 60 years ago.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah. Yeah.

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: I can't remember their names. Neither could you, I don't think.

PAUL CUMMINGS: [Laughs]

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: I don't think you would be able to remember what took place 60 years - that is, you're not that old.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah. Yeah.

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: But in the same proportion, I mean, that you would forget, because it's so far away, you know, from -

I had so many people to pose for me for the newspaper. I was especially assigned to do it, sent by this man's office sometimes or sent him to their home. I was sent all over by the newspaper, who were important people during that period of time. Some of them were running for governors and all that sort. And I've drawn them and been at the trials of one of the governors. I forget the name of who it was - who was thrown out of the governorship in the state of New York. I can't remember his name.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah. I didn't know that had happened to one of them.

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: Yes. It had. There's one governor that was thrown out. At Tammany Hall at that time, was the famous democratic - crooked. [Laughs.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hm. Well, how did you do those drawings? Is that - you know, the Wilson drawing. Was that done directly from him or did you make a series of sketches and then do the drawing?

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: Oh, no, no. Directly one -

PAUL CUMMINGS: It was just - that was one drawing and that was it?

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: One - no series of sketches at all. I made one drawing on paper.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I see. And that was it. And then it was reproduced and printed.

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: Then I would use that thing. In the example of this, for instance - the original drawing is a small drawing.

PAUL CUMMINGS: There, for the Einstein.

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: And I'll show you the first sketch I made of him, where he held a pencil in his hand. The original picture with his signature on it. And he sent me a beautiful letter, too, by the way. And I have it right - I'll show you the letter, just as you are.

PAUL CUMMINGS: On the etchings, you've made quite a number of those.

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: I have, about 12. About 12 is the total amount that I've made.

PAUL CUMMINGS: And they've all been printed in editions up to 100?

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: Well, you get 100 prints from it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, I see.

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: But now, as I mentioned before, they put it over - they put something on the -

PAUL CUMMINGS: Steel plates -

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: And they put it on and it saves - it doesn't -

PAUL CUMMINGS: Doesn't wear the plate down.

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: Doesn't wear the plates down, exactly. The amount was generally about 100. But this, you could have 200 if you wanted, you know. And they'd sell it at a pretty good - they mentioned that this artist is listed amongst the greatest of the twentieth century, and that's the way they sell the thing. It goes with a lot of people, believe it or not.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, sure, sure.

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: And I sell a lot of paintings as well.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, when did you really start painting? That was after the newspaper?

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: Yes. Yes. I wasn't painting during that. I did watercolors, but not painting.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You did watercolors?

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: Watercolors.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, what kind of watercolors? Were they landscapes or people?

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: Landscapes and some of them, faces. I have some pictures of watercolors here.

PAUL CUMMINGS: So they were a kind of different thing for you?

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: Different type entirely. But I found that the oil was a far superior thing, and I could do many things in color, you know, where I could not do with the other. In watercolor, you've got to be positive that you put the color on because you can't go over it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right.

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: It works its way in. But in oil -

PAUL CUMMINGS: You can change -

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: If that dries - if it dries, you can go right over it in color, you know.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, you've always seemed to have had an interest in color. Even the first pictures you did as a child were colored.

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: Yes. Here is a - one thing here. I lived at number 410 East 57th Street, right near First Avenue. And it's from my window. I lived on the 11th floor. And I made this scene, what I saw through there. And it's said that the French exhibitors collected art from the greatest painters, French and American painters. He knew me. And he said, "Sam," he says, "I want you to bring one of yours, too."

Well, I brought that one. It was next to the Monet. You've heard of Monet?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hm.

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: That painter that sold a - one of the paintings for \$1,400,000. You remember that, in the newspaper?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, yes, yes.

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: His was on exhibition. And mine was next to his. And I went over to the man who put it there. I says, "May I ask," I says, "why you put my painting next to his?" He says, "Because you've earned every bit of it. It's as fine a thing as his is his."

PAUL CUMMINGS: Where was that?

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: On 57th Street. They have moved up to Madison Avenue and 68th Street, I think it is. French -

PAUL CUMMINGS: What, French & Company?

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: French & Company, that's it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, yeah, yeah.

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: They held a big exhibition. And the French & Company, you remember, they had it on 57th Street. Did you know that?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes, on the corner.

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: That's where it went down, you see. I lived at 57th. It's only a short distance away from them. And this one was next to that famous painter. I was so delighted to know, you see. And it was an encouragement to keep on painting further, which I did. And I've done a lot of - sold a lot of paintings.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hm. Well, you mentioned before we started the tape that you did a project with a French line and you've done some traveling?

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: You saw the name on it. And I also did it on the - I mentioned it to you before.

PAUL CUMMINGS: With the Holland Americans.

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: Yes. Holland did their thing, and I did that job. I did six - I mentioned it to you also, six portraits. Three going down and three coming back. The finest - we had the finest rooms, again - first class of the very finest thing, you see.

And packs of people watched me do it. And I felt like - I don't know - they clapped their hands, you know, every time I - I went so fast, you know, I was able to paint - I do paint very fast when it's necessary.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, I know. Well, I suppose, from the newspaper where you really had to work.

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: Oh, well, you see, that comes - exactly. Exactly correct. It's from the newspaper, doing things in a very fast way. It fell into the brush later on, you see, in color. I think [inaudible]. I love color and -

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's marvelous. Did you - well, the National Academy, you what - you studied painting there

or drawing?

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: No. No. I mentioned to you that I got the first prize -

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, in an exhibition.

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: There were two prizes that they gave me. I think it mentions it here, doesn't it? Doesn't it? Do you remember?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, it says the first prize, it mentions.

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: I think - [reading] "He studied at the National Academy of Design and, while there, won two prizes." I did. There it is right here. Then I won another one, I won on etching again. I was a good etcher at that time. [Rustling sound.] I'm trying to find that damn thing. I don't know what happened to it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, have you exhibited very much in galleries or things?

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: Oh yes, oh yes, a good deal of it in galleries. Mostly a good deal of the galleries of these Jewish things that you've seen. Some of the Jewish sections of their churches, you know, synagogues, with whole exhibitions. And after they'd pray on Saturday, they'd go downstairs to see the exhibition, and then they'd start buying it. [Laughs.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: [Laughs]

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: Because it, you know, gave them a sort of sentimental touch, in the color and the idea of Judaism. So I -

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, you have a number of paintings to do with Judaic subjects like that. But you also said that you're not very religious. I mean, you don't have a great -

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: I'm not very religious, no. I am a very strong supporter of Judaism. But, simply, I cannot agree with many things that I've read. My reasoning seems to control me more than anything else - not in faith, but reason. There's two meanings, the faith and reasonable.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hm.

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: And mine is reasonable. Now I take a very good example. Take Adam and Eve at the beginning of everything. Adam was put to sleep. They took a part of a bone out of him.

PAUL CUMMINGS: The rib, yeah.

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: And they made a woman out of it. And I say, how can it be possible? Such a thing is absolutely nonsensical. They cannot control the whole body with all organisms out of that one thing. You see, my reasoning does not agree. I cannot accept it. And that's why a lot of things that I've read that I do not agree. But I'm very proud of Judaism, of what I am.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, I know you have lots of paintings involved with the -

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: Well, I only have -

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, there's one, two, three.

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: I'll have these two over there and this one here - three, four. I have four out of thirteen here.

PAUL CUMMINGS: [Inaudible]

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: It's like a little museum, yes, all paintings all around you, you know.

PAUL CUMMINGS: [Laughs] Right, right. Well, about your color, has your color always been as bright as it is?

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: Yes. Yes. Here's a portrait of myself over here.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That one, yeah. I've been looking at that. Did you - you didn't really study that much with anyone, specifically, did you?

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: Study what?

PAUL CUMMINGS: You didn't really study that much with any one person. It was really the group of people in the newspaper office.

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: Well, I studied as much as I possibly could because it's something that I wanted to do and wanted to be able to do it well. I studied and studied all the time. I now go to the Art Students League. And I'm a life member of the Art Students League.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Do you still go there and paint?

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: They put me as a life member of that particular thing, which is a very high honor, you see, which I -

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, that's good. Yeah.

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: You see? Here it is. Now, read that.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's great. Have you done any teaching ever? You've never taught, have you, anyplace?

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: Teaching? I have taught.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, you did?

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: But I have taught one time. And it was on 23rd Street and Broadway. You know that building that goes down like this?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, yes, the Flatiron Building

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: It went all the way up the top there - was the art students there. And I was asked to teach. Well, I taught there for about two weeks. And finally, the thing failed, and Charlie [ph] never got a dime out of it. It didn't pay. They broke.

PAUL CUMMINGS: [Laughs] Oh. It didn't work, huh?

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: They couldn't get enough students. The result was that I simply gave it up. But that's the first time that I've ever taught. And I think I taught very well. And some of the students there thanked me, says, "Your teaching is much better than" whoever it was that taught them before that, you see.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Who else was involved with that school? I can't remember the artists.

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: I can't - I have a terrible memory. If I have to depend on my memory, I think I'd - [laughs] I can't do it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: No? Well, how about Luks. You mentioned that you knew him quite well.

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: I knew him. I used to talk to him. He was a comic man that did comics for the New York World on Sunday. Sunday comics, you know. And - but he drank a great deal. He was drunk, would be, at the time, you know.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Who out there - other - Stuart Davis did some newspaper work.

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: There's another man who is - that's the thing that I must find that thing that I don't know where it is. I'm terrible -

PAUL CUMMINGS: I'm trying to think who else worked on newspapers. Reginald Marsh? I don't think he did anything.

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: Who?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Reginald Marsh. Did you know any of those people?

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: No, no, no. You mentioned the other, of course, Luks.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah. [John] Sloan?

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: No, not Sloan, no. He had nothing to do with newspapers.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah. But I mean, did you know any of those other people who were active -

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: I didn't know Sloan. I knew his sister, I think it was. I met her. But that's about all. I met some artists, of course. I'm trying to think what happened to that thing. I'll look again.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, let me just

[BREAK IN TAPE.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: You just mentioned that you'd always, when you were young, made lots of sort of small drawings and sketches and things.

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: Lots of them, yes, I did.

PAUL CUMMINGS: And then that whole group of illustrations there who were, you know, really people out of your mind?

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: Out of my mind. Everything is out of my imagination. Nobody poses for these. None of the things have been posed, in compositions, in other words, or to illustrate anything. Don't - had nobody to pose and that - everything was out of my imagination and mind.

PAUL CUMMINGS: This is in the etchings -

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: - including newspapers as well as magazines and so on, you see, and paintings as well. Most of the things in paintings I've done was out of my imagination.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, about the etchings, 'cause you said the Einstein originally was a small drawing. Well, did you then make a large drawing and transfer it to a plate?

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: Yes, yes. I promised to show you the original drawing.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, well, let's talk about this first, because I, you know, we can get it going. You did a small drawing. And then how did you work?

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: I enlarged it, you see.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah. On the copper plate?

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: I enlarged it. From the small drawing, I enlarged the drawing to this size and added more than what - that is, I added more than what I remembered of that face.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Uh-huh.

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: In the lighting, for instance, and all of this is purely my own, you see. But I remember his eyes. I remember his nose, I remember his mouth, and I remember the shape of his head. But that's -white, practically white hair that fell back. But I have the drawing here. I have the original. Oh, wait a minute.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Did you draw that directly on a plate, then?

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: No, no.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Was it transferred?

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: I made the drawing first on a regular-size - this size, on a drawing first, on thin paper. So when I put it on the copper, I had that black stuff, you see. And then went all over it, just traced the whole thing so that I could remember exactly what to do. And that's the answer to your question.

PAUL CUMMINGS: And then made the plate?

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: What do you call that black stuff that's -

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's like carbon.

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: Yes, black carbon, yes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah, yeah.

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: And I had them, and I put it underneath the drawing. And then I laid it on, right straight on the collar. I had everything all ready for me to work with a very fine needle. This is the needle, exactly. I have the -

PAUL CUMMINGS: But then you went over the drawing, though, and incised it.

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: I'll show you everything that I use. I'll show you a plate.

[BREAK IN TAPE.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Okay. This is really part two, on July 12th, Paul Cummings and Samuel Cahan again.

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: Well, I think his name is Robert Henri - I'm not sure.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah. Right.

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: Is it Robert Henri?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes, yes.

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: He - I began painting at that time. And he came over and looked at the thing. And he never took a brush out of my hand. He talked to me. It was more valuable than a brush. He gave me so many ideas in painting that I learnt actually from what he told me. It entered my mind for many, many years later on, you see, in what I've done. He never - again I repeat, that he did not take the brush out of my hand, like many teachers do, you know. They take the brush out and show how, you know, what to do.

He spoke to me about a flesh color to get certain qualities in it, you know, and so forth. And he spoke in so much detail that I could hardly even now remember because most of the detail that he spoke about, I used, you see. He was really my - the man that gave me a section to walk through, in other words, safely. Well, I use the word "safely" in the works of art. I've tried to do my level best.

Now, I haven't showed you any of the actual paintings that I've made, outside of what you've seen on the wall.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. How long did you study with him?

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: I think it's about three months.

PAUL CUMMINGS: About three months?

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: About three - no, no, a little longer than three months. It's close to four months, I would say.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Do you remember any of the other students there?

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: Well, there was a student, which I've been trying to remember, a very famous artist. He made the famous knockout of the - remember the famous -

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, [George] Bellows.

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: Bellows studied there, too.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah. Yeah.

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: He studied with - he was taught practically by Robert Henri, Bellows was. And may I call your attention to Walt Kuhn. Have you got that list?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah.

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: Walt Kuhn is the man that I - when he heard that I was going to - oh, I mentioned that meant, going to Madison Square Garden. He asked me, can I take him along with me? Because, first, it won't cost him anything. He knows that I being, having a card from the -

PAUL CUMMINGS: The paper, yeah. [Laughs]

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: From the New York World, that I'm an artist representing them and so forth. It doesn't cost anything to go in. And he came in. And I told you the story, how he connected himself and went around drawing the - what do they call it?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Acrobats. Clowns.

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: Yes, yes. And a great deal of his paintings, if you notice, have been of that and only that for a long time. Have you seen any of those?



PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, yeah, sure.

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: He had - he painted them later on, after they got through. They sat for him. And he did a lot of paintings. He actually got some of the paintings - he got it from them, composed in that same -

PAUL CUMMINGS: In that costume.

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: Yes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah.

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: And I made one here myself, had one pose also. And I have the painting. I can't find it right now. The peculiar thing about it is I can't seem to find it, and then I begin looking, and at last I do find it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: [Laughs]

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: Well, anyway, Luks is the other man.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, did you know -

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: Now, Walter Kuhn was a comic man.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah.

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: Now get that in - and Luks also was a comic man before he became a famous painter.

PAUL CUMMINGS: A painter.

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: That's interesting. It's an interesting line, by the way.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, they both drew for the Sunday comics, both for the World.

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: Yes. Both were doing comics for the World because I was on the World at that time. And as I told you, the departments were different, you see. And I came down to see them and talk to them and so forth, you see.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. Were there many other reporters like you who went around and drew? You know, did they have somebody who covered other than crime reporting?

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: You mean, as the artists you mean?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah, yeah.

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: Hardly. Hardly any. They depended on me because the results that I got in my drawings was well-liked by the editors, and so forth and so on. Hardly any of them would go. Some of them sometimes would go.

Now, I wanted to show you - been in Washington.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, I'd like to just talk some more about these people.

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: Well, I can't talk to anymore more about it than I spoke to you about. That is all that I - I don't know where I got the name Jack Dempsey because I saw Jack Dempsey fight. He was the champion at that time. And I saw him fight.

Henri, Luks, and Walt Kuhn are the three that I only have and could tell you about.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, did you see any of those three, you know, frequently? I mean, did you know any of their friends or anything?

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: Yes. I met their friends and so forth, but that's about all. At that time, I wasn't painting at all because it was later on that I took on - when I mentioned the Henri school there.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How old were you when you went to Henri?

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: Oh, heavens.

PAUL CUMMINGS: [Laughs]

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: It's a rather difficult thing because I've reached the age of 81.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah.

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: Now, try to throw me back about 60 years. [Laughs.] It's really quite -

PAUL CUMMINGS: Now, how - had you been at the newspaper for a long time?

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: Thirty-two years.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, I mean, by - when you went to study with Henri?

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: When I went where?

PAUL CUMMINGS: When you went to study with Henri? Had you been at the newspaper very long?

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: Yes, yes. I was on the newspaper at the time I went to study with Henri, yes. We went there at night.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, at night?

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: Yes. And on Saturday, of course, it would - I would - it would be daytime, you see. And he was wonderful. I mean just as wonderful as his pictures were you know, because he had a tremendous personality, you know, with the students. And they listened to him just as - well, as a god would stand there and tell him things, you know. They seemed to digest everything that he said.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hm, Mm-hm. Well, did he get you interested in any Old Master artists? Or, you know, are there any old painters you -

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: No, I don't think so. Now, it's so hard for me to remember.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah.

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: So many years back, you see, that it's rather difficult for me to say yes or no.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, have you ever been interested in any, you know, Old Masters? Besides Rembrandt; I think you mentioned him.

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: Oh, yes, of course. I went to the museums, you know, and I used to study the technique and everything else as I possibly - and I'd listen to him, and then I'd - he would advise to go to some of the museums and study some of the things, which was a good advice, by the way. I mean, it gives you an idea of what some of the artists, the way they painted, and so forth. And yes, that all helped me. I must say that it did. And I went to the museums many times.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Did you make drawings in the museums [inaudible]?

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: No. I didn't make any drawings, and I didn't copy any paintings like some of the artists do. You see, they'd copy the same thing. No, I didn't do that.

Here. I want you to meet my wife.

[BREAK IN TAPE.]

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: I was painting a scene in Central Park, somewhere from 67th to 66th Street near Fifth Avenue, the rocky section there, do you know the section I'm talking about. I began painting that, with the buildings in back, you know, with trees in back. But there was one tree in the foreground I didn't like. So I took another tree, practically, and painted that tree and put it in front, you see. And I kept on painting.

Suddenly a man which I didn't know it was in back of me, tapped me on my shoulder. He says, "Mr. Artist." I said, "Yes, what is it?" He says, "You have made a mistake in painting this picture of yours." I says, "Why, may I ask?" He says, "You didn't put the right kind of a tree there where it belongs, where it properly belongs."

And I says, "Can I tell you something? Something that perhaps you may remember?" He says, "What is it?" I said, "An artist is not a camera." He stood there a minute. "Gosh," he says, "That is wonderful," he says, "I didn't think of it. An artist is not a camera."

"An artist creates things in his own mind, what he thinks makes a finer painting or finer picture." I said, "Remember that." He says, "Right. I'll never forget it." And he walked - he says, "Thank you very much." And he

walked away and kept on talking to himself. I heard him, "An artist is not a camera. An artist is not a camera." He kept going, it got thinner. [Laughs.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: [Laughs]

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: It's a little humorous touch of the art end of it, but I think it was a very good thing to say, that an artist is not a camera. He understood exactly what I meant. I said, "An artist is creative, remember. If he doesn't like something in front of him or in back of the picture, he creates something else in order to harmonize the entire thing, you know." That's really the truth, because it's exactly what I do.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, you mentioned yesterday that you are a life member of the Art Students League.

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: I am.

PAUL CUMMINGS: When did you get involved with the League?

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: Well, I've been with the Art Students League, I went there years and years and years ago and stopped. Then I - about 10 years ago, I started again. And they made me the - in charge of the studios. Not that I taught anything, but had me in charge of the people coming in with their tickets and so forth and so on - I've had complete charge of it for 10 years. This is the tenth year that I've been there.

But I paint all the time. And I do that; it doesn't cost me anything, you see. I don't have to pay for the thing that I'm doing for the museum - for the studio.

MS. CAHAN: You chose the models, too.

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: I'd choose the models as well, you see. So it's not work at all. It's hardly anything to do. Yet it doesn't cost me anything.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah. Well, you have a place to paint there?

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: Oh, yes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You do? Oh.

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: Oh, absolutely. I'm number one to choose the place, you see. And the balance of costs of the names that they - each one writes his name down. One, two, three, four, five, you know. And each one has to take their place. And then I choose the model and arrange for the model to sit in certain positions. It takes a little while sometime.

And I ask the class. I says, "Do you like it? Please raise up your hand and let me know whether there's a majority there or not." Well, some would raise their hands and others would not. And I'd change the thing, you see, until it would be almost 100 percent. And finally, they'd agree, and then they would begin painting.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, what are they going to do.

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: Then I'd tell the model after every 30 minutes, "Rest." And then, "Pose." Two words, you see, which I - and that's all. I haven't very much at all to do. But I was chosen as that by the office downstairs. They chose me.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What did you do before that, at the League? You know, the first time you were there?

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: Oh, I was painting before that. You remember that I've told you that I've been with - what's his name again?

MS. CAHAN: Robert Henri.

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: Yes. Been with Henri years before that, you see. And I was there in 1935 also. After I left Henri, I came to the Art Students League. You see, they made me - because I'm an old-timer, in other words, they made me a life member. And they don't do that for many of them at all.

MS. CAHAN: In the interim, you painted [inaudible], you painted -

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: What?

MS. CAHAN: In the interim - oh, I don't -

PAUL CUMMINGS: No, go ahead.

MS. CAHAN: You painted Justice Linton [ph] hanging in the state capitol at Trenton. You asked what was done in the interim, you see. And several -

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: Well, that's the one I - you mean that judge that I made?

MS. CAHAN: Yes.

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: Yes. I showed him that thing.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes.

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: He saw that picture.

MS. CAHAN: But that was all done in that interval, you see. And there were groups of various women in society, names of which are not important, except the fact that he did them - and children. And men associated with other - like banks and important organizations. All these things. But that was in the interval. And he still continues to do it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: [Inaudible]

MS. CAHAN: Have you seen any of the things [inaudible] in it?

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: No, I did not show him- except for what he saw that was on the walls. But he did not see the paintings that I promised to show you.

MS. CAHAN: Would you be interested?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah.

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: I don't know of anything else that I could -

PAUL CUMMINGS: I just want to see if there's any more to talk about.

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: Well, do you think that the things that I've told you - do you think is sufficient? I mean, is that what you're -

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, I, you know -

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: Is it enough?

PAUL CUMMINGS: The more I can get, the better it is, you see.

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: True. But, you see, I have to think these things over very carefully before I tell you about it, you see. And - for instance, I sit down and think and think and suddenly the story of this park thing came to my mind. A lot of other things have happened to me, of course. But nothing injurious, in other words. [Laughs.] I mean, I haven't been beaten up or anything like that.

I did one time sit in a restaurant [laughs] - saw sort of an ugly-looking woman, you know, seated that way, and I made a caricature of her. And when I was sitting, the person that was - we were around the table - grabbed the picture and brings it over to her. And she wants to know who did it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: [Laughs]

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: Well, she came over to me, pointed to me. Oh, she could curse. [They laugh. ]She was mad. She says, "How dare you insult me," you know. And that's about all. The only part of the humor that I've been through, of course.

PAUL CUMMINGS: [Laughs] Okay. I don't know if I could ask you about the - We could [inaudible]. But you still keep on painting and you do -

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: Oh, yes. I paint all the time now.

PAUL CUMMINGS: All the time?

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: Yes. I do nothing else but paint.

MS. CAHAN: He just got through down in the country a few weeks ago, with a lovely landscape.

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: Oh, I'll show you that one, too. It's not, I haven't got a frame for it.

MS. CAHAN: Well, that's nothing. I'm sure he's seen without the frames.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, yeah. Okay.

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: Well, I'll bring you - I don't think that I could give you any more than what I've said.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah.

SAMUEL GEORGE CAHAN: I might disappoint you, perhaps.

PAUL CUMMINGS: No, no. no.

MS. CAHAN: What is the deadline, Mr. Cummings, on hearing everything?

[END OF INTERVIEW. END OF TAPE.]

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