



Smithsonian  
*Archives of American Art*

**Oral history interview with Lawrence A.  
Fleischman, 1970 Feb. 28-Mar. 9**

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# Transcript

## Interview

**PC:** PAUL CUMMINGS

**LF:** LAWRENCE FLEISCHMAN

**PC:** We'll start by saying that it's February 28. Paul Cummings talking to Lawrence Fleischman. This is your office in the Kennedy Galleries?

**LF:** Right.

**PC:** Why don't we sort of start at home and you tell me something about the family background, if your parents were involved with art or collecting, or anything?

**LF:** No, my parents were not involved with art or collecting. Actually, a few years ago I got my father interested in art. He acquired some works of art. I actually got interested when I was going to school. I was president of the camera club when I was thirteen and I actually operated a little business. I'd take photographs of my fellow students and I'd put them in mats and sell them to the person photographed. As a matter of fact, I had the school business going so well that I hired a school photographer. Then the administration stepped in and said that I was there to study and not to operate a business. I reached an agreement with them.

**PC:** What school was that?

**LF:** That was Western Military Academy in Alton, Illinois. Incidentally, Thomas Hart Benton went to that school. It was quite a good school.

**PC:** How did you happen to go to that school? Because you were . . . ?

**LF:** Just because somebody from Detroit went there and recommended it. I had a very good headmaster by the name of Pershing. I think he's still there. The school emphasized college preparation. I found the school to be quite good. As I said, it was while I was president of the camera club that I first began thinking about art.

**PC:** How did you get interested in photography?

**LF:** It was just a hobby. The debate started to rage: can a camera take the place of the hand? And these debates and discussions stuck with me for some time. I felt that certainly photography was an art; but that painting, the discipline of the hand and the eye and the creative ability of a person, was far greater and more interesting. So I became very involved in the arts when I was about fourteen, fifteen, sixteen. I went to Purdue University when I just turned seventeen. At Purdue I was studying engineering. Of course then we were in World War II. I didn't want to be left behind so I volunteered. Actually I had an occupational deferment, but I tore it up. Also, my eyes were such that I could have been deferred medically. But I memorized the eye chart and I got into the Army. While I was in Europe during World War II, I met a doctor in Dijon, France. He was quite interested in art. I had some hours off. He was very kind to me.

**PC:** Was he American or French?

**LF:** He was a French doctor. Unfortunately, I don't remember his name now. He took me in and introduced me . . . . We used to discuss art. And that got me even more involved.

**PC:** It sounds already, by this point, that you had read a number of books and seen a number of things.

**LF:** Yes, I had. When I got out of the Army I went to the University of Detroit and majored in physics and got my degree. But already I was starting to collect etchings. I bought a Matisse etching, Picasso's Three Graces. I used to work at night and save money so that I could buy these things.

**PC:** Do you remember the first things that you bought?

**LF:** Yes. At first I used to buy reproductions. Among the very first things I bought were the Matisse etching, a Toulouse-Lautrec poster, and the Picasso Three Graces. I met my wife in Detroit and we were married and I got my wife very interested in art. During this period I used to work at night in the family carpet business -- my father owned a carpet business. And I got the idea of trying to improve carpet design and I hit on the idea of a carpet design competition. I went to the Detroit Institute of Arts with this idea of mine. We formed a jury consisting of Charles Eames and Saarinen, the architect, and Hollis Baker, the furniture manufacturer. I got my father's company, the Arthur Fleischman Carpet Company, to sponsor it and put up the money. It was the first time in history that a carpet design competition was ever held.

**PC:** Where did the idea come from? Or was it just that you were interested?

**LF:** It was just my own idea. I was interested in design. I didn't like what I saw; I thought it wasn't imaginative. It was in working out this idea that I first met Bill Woolfenden and Edgar P. Richardson. This goes back to about 1949 or 1950. Our friendship became very strong and still exists. Edgar P. Richardson is one of my very close friends and has had a great deal of influence on me. And of course Bill Woolfenden is a very close friend of mine.

**PC:** Did you ever think what as a teenager got you interested in the visual arts?

**LF:** It was nothing very dramatic like the burning bush or any dramatic event like that. It was a constant involvement. It just grew by meeting different people, by going to museums. I just got a kick out of looking at works of art, whether it was a Grecian vase or a Picasso etching or an American work. I remember how much I admired Thomas Eakins and John Singleton Copley. But I had very little money. As I said, I had to work at night. Out of my interests I got interested in television. In my twenties I organized a syndicate and I built a television station in Milwaukee. I got that in the black. Always the visual approach to communication interested me. While all this was going on I met John Marin and I used to visit him in Cliffside, New Jersey. I found him quite stimulating. I remember many stories. Once we went to lunch together. We were discussing certain trends in art. He said that he didn't care about the styles but he said, "I'm sick of those johnnies (that's just a word he would use) who close their eyes and just stick out their hand and say, 'Paint, hand, paint,' and think that they can just completely shut themselves off from nature or the world around them." About this same time I met [Charles] Burchfield and I saw a great deal of him. When I was with Mr. Richardson we used to discuss the problems of the art world. I used to see him many times in the course of a week. We used to talk about various aspects of history, its relationship to the art of the 19th Century. I became quite interested in Washington Alston through Ted Richardson. And of course I used to see Bill Woolfenden a lot. We used to talk about art, the art

experience. All of these things constantly grew and grew and grew.

**PC:** You started collecting Early American things, 19th Century, and 18th, didn't you?

**LF:** Yes. Actually I became more interested in the art of our own country and started to specialize in it because of the lack of funds and because American things were relatively underpriced. It was far easier for me to acquire a great work of art in the American field than it was in the European field.

**PC:** That's changed though, a little bit, hasn't it?

**LF:** Yes. Well, the American field I think is still underpriced but it's certainly growing.

**PC:** I heard that major David Smiths are now going for \$250,000.

**LF:** I don't know what they're going for. I do know they're going for a great deal of money. For example, Ben Shahn prices are starting to rise. Thomas Eakins, Winslow Homer, Hopper -- prices are rising on all of these. But when you see what the Europeans are bringing in the price market, I think the American are still underrated. It's not a question of whose art is better, a French artist or an American artist. I think we've had an inferiority complex about our art for far too long. I think we still do.

**PC:** I think particularly in the 19th Century and early 20th Century art.

**LF:** Yes. Right.

**PC:** Everybody says, "Oh, it's all the Cubists" and everything else came afterwards and they don't realize it's even quite different sometimes.

**LF:** Yes. Well, when we think of what a marvelous landscape artist Frederick E. Church was; if we think of John Singleton Copley and how great those portraits are that he painted in Boston, it's remarkable. And think of a fantastic character like Charles Wilson Peale. But getting interested in all of these people, I became suddenly aware that there might have been a thousand books on Picasso, hundreds of them saying the same things over and over and how few people were writing about American art. At that time of course, Edgar P. Richardson's book on American Art appeared and Lloyd Goodrich brought out his books on Eakins and Winslow Homer. And John Baur, who was at the Brooklyn Museum at that time, brought out a few good catalogues such as those on Theodore Robinson and Eastman Johnson and so forth. And there was Virgil Barker. But, considering how big this country is and how much interest there was, there were just very few books. I couldn't understand this. And I kept on questioning why. The answer was that nobody would publish such books. Or thought that you could spend ten years gathering the material. I remember talking to one art historian who told me in disgust that he went to a certain place and he missed obtaining very important letters by just a few days because the descendants had saved the pictures because they thought they would have money value, but had burned a diary and letters which would have given background information and more insight into the artist. In the years 1949, 1950 and 1951, I kept hearing all of these things over and over again. For example, there was no Chair of American Art History in the United States. There are still very few.

**PC:** Are there any? Where are they?

**LF:** Wayne State University in Detroit has one which was originally established by The Archives of American Art. And now Yale is starting to do a great deal in American Art studies. But if you wanted

to get a Ph.D., you either had to write on a fourth-rate Old Master because the professors knew nothing about American art history, or you were discouraged because they said there was simply no interest or future in American art. Very few museums would have a curator of American art. And the visual arts of the 19th Century that the United States produced are fantastically individual. And the way they looked at landscape, the genre painters, the portrait painters, we can be very proud of this contribution to total world culture.

**PC:** It seems that you got very interested in the artist as well as in his work very soon.

**LF:** Yes. Living artists became my close friends: Stuart Davis, Franklin Watkins came and stayed with us for the summer of 1955 and painted our family portrait. On occasion I used to see Edward Hopper. Ben Shahn also became a very close friend of mine. Ben Shahn both as an artists and as a human being had a remarkable influence on my thinking, on my outlook. During the twenty years preceding his death, my wife and I used to see him. We'd have dinner together. We had discussions on the telephone.

**PC:** Let's go back to the late Forties. Who were the first Americans that you became interested in and really started to collect?

**LF:** The first Americans I bought were John Marin, Stuart Davis, Ben Shahn, Charles Sheeler, Franklin Watkins, Mark Tobey, Morris Graves. I had an Abraham Rattner self-portrait which is now in the Detroit Institute of Arts. I collected John Sloan etchings which are also in the Detroit Institute of Arts. Let me say here that when I began buying these I borrowed money, foolishly perhaps sometimes. When I saw a work of art that I liked I bought by compulsion. In the process of buying the work of these artists I'd look at them, they made me feel good; I just enjoyed having these things. And I started to become interested in where they came from. I started to go very heavily into the 19th Century as well as the 20th Century. For instance, I acquired a very beautiful Copley which hung in my living room. At that time Copleys were unbelievably inexpensive. I bought Quidor and Bingham.

**PC:** Which Copley is it?

**LF:** I owned a whole group of them. One is Mary Philipse, Mary Philipse was the first Copley that I ever acquired. It was painted in the 1770's. It is now in the Wintertur Museum. I remember that hanging in my living room, and there was a Stuart Davis, a Copley, a Marin, and a Thomas Eakins. Then I got interested in people like Eastman Johnson and Quidor. I had in my possession at one time four Washington Allstons. I used to work day and night. I was always in debt. At that time the demands of art were not as extensive as they are now. Also, the price of money was not as expensive. Those were the days when interest rates were three percent, plus the fact that dealers weren't doing any business. I used to go to them and they would give me extended payments, which would be a little harder to do now. Fortunately, my wife backed me up in this and literally every dime that I could earn . . . at that time to earn a living. My TV station was doing fairly well. I bought some land and sold it. I was only loosely connected with the family business. I used to work there but I never drew much of a salary. My rebellion was such that I wanted to show that I could do everything by myself. Luck was with me. I was healthy and I was able to do it.

**PC:** That's terrific. And then you spent all of your time collecting pictures.

**LF:** Yes. I got interested in Elihu Vedder. Every moment I used to read everything I could, or mix with artists or be in the company of somebody like Ted Richardson, occasionally with Lloyd Goodrich, Jimmy Flexner. Later on, I used to talk a great deal to Frankfurter to learn more about Harnett and

Peto. I used to read everything I could read. I collected a file of photographs of my own to study; although I never did like working with photographs. From all of this . . . .

**PC:** After the photo club you gave up the photographs.

**LF:** Yes. Also it was John Quidor that started me thinking about the Archives of American Art. The reason was, John Quidor turned me... of course there were other things in the back of my mind; Ted Richardson had difficulty publishing books. Also, he had to spend ten years gathering facts; he had to go to Boston to collect a fact, he had to go to Philadelphia to collect a fact, to Washington to collect a fact. Lloyd Goodrich used to tell me about the amount of time and trouble it took to gather information. This of course sort of stuck with me; I didn't think too much about it at the time. But I got interested in Quidor. I was looking through John Baur's catalogue on Quidor and saw how much material was missing, and how scattered it was and how difficult to find. As I was thinking about these things the idea came to me: how come we don't have a national repository? Why isn't there a central place where records could be saved? This was about the time that MacBeth started talking about going out of business. I began thinking of all the valuable letters between dealers and artists that were being lost. One day, as I was driving somewhere, the thought suddenly struck me; why doesn't Detroit become a national repository? I turned my car around and went to see Ted Richardson. He was home that day recovering from an attack of hepatitis, but he was well enough to see me. I started talking to him about my idea. I remember his eyes lit up and he said, "This would be a great thing to do." I had the idea of doing it on photostats. He said "Microfilm is such a wonderful tool -- now with microfilm it would be possible to go, for instance, to Philadelphia. . . ." In fact, Philadelphia was one of the first places we did sweep to get records on microfilm. We talked about this for two hours. As the discussion proceeded, we thought about what name we should call it. Ted said, "We ought to call it the Fleischman Archives." I said, "No, let's not use Fleischman. I'm not that rich, and I want people to contribute money to this." I suggested that we call it "The Archives of American Art." I wrote a check. I went to some of my friends for contributions. That actually established us. Then Ted went to Mrs. Edsel Ford with our idea. She liked the idea and gave a check for some thousands of dollars. Mrs. Ford later became one of my closest friends and is someone I'll never forget. Because later, after Richardson left Detroit in 1962, and when I became President of the Arts Commission for the City of Detroit, she was always there to help. The story of how we built the new additions to the Detroit Institute of Arts is a story all in itself. But that's how the Archives of American Art got started. In the beginning we had just one staff member. We got different people to give contributions. Then, since we had to raise funds, I thought why not make it a membership institution so that there would be money coming in from that source. Now, of course, the Archives is a membership institution. Later on we got the idea of operating airlifts as a way of bringing in more funds and getting people to go to see art treasures all over the world. We really were the first to start that type of thing.

**PC:** When did the airlifts start?

**LF:** We started those I think in around 1960. As a matter of fact, the first airlift was sort of in reverse. Detroiters were accustomed to going to New York. But we operated an airlift whereby New Yorkers came to Detroit to see the Flemish Exhibition held at the Detroit Institute of Arts. The plane was sold out. This trip from New York to Detroit was sponsored by the Archives. The Archives chartered a TWA plane. At that time TWA was not flying into Detroit. But this plane landed at the new airport that was just ready to open -- the Wayne County Airport. I remember that was the first time a TWA plane landed in Detroit. I think that was about 1960; I don't remember exactly. Of course now TWA is operating to Detroit. We formed a Detroit Chapter of the Archives that got a great deal of local interest. It brought in people like Harold Love, an attorney who was very active with tool and die manufacturers. Mr. Love had a unique idea for raising funds: a "machinery auction,"

an idea that had not been used since. He went around and got machinery donated to the Archives; he got warehouse space donated. This machinery was auctioned off and the proceeds were given to the Archives. The Archives has operated auctions of antiques. The Archives established a special fund-raising dinner called "Lundi Gras," which is still held annually. We operate any device we can to bring in funds so that we can conduct research. Of course, the Archives has a special problem. If you give a painting to a museum your name is put on a tablet as a memorial. But if you give to research you don't get a memorial; you just get satisfaction. That's how the beginnings were developed.

**PC:** That's interesting. I'd like to go back a bit here since we're moving up through the years quite quickly. What about the finding of some of the 19th Century pictures? Were they all acquired through dealers?

**LF:** No. Sometimes I acquired pictures through dealers. Of course I got to know many of the dealers and the experience of dealing with them obviously helps me now that I myself am a dealer to day. At that time, of course, I never dreamed that I would eventually become a professional dealer. This was a very surprising turn of events, a happy one for me. But at that time it was the farthest thing from my mind. But I did meet dealers and I watched how they operated. Some dealers, like Curt Valentin and Jacob Hirsch (who is an antiquarian), or Robert McIntyre, I thought very highly of. But other dealers I felt didn't love what they were doing; they didn't love their works of art. They themselves were not collectors and I had a very low opinion of some of them. But in my collecting, in most cases, I would come across in my reading, say, in an old book, a picture that I thought was quite wonderful. If it was owned privately, I would go to see it; I'd write a letter about it. Sometimes in the conversation with the owner I would learn that, "We really don't like this picture anymore; if you're interested, we might sell it." In some cases I'd say, "If you're ever interested in selling this picture, I'd like to buy it." And I would do that. I'd fly thousands of miles to see an exhibition. Sometimes at exhibitions I'd meet the owners. I wouldn't fly just to buy; I'd fly because I wanted to see the pictures. People will go hundreds of miles to see a football game but somehow they have to learn to go hundreds of miles to see a great work of art because that, too, is an experience.

**PC:** More people I think are beginning to do that.

**LF:** Yes, I think so too. I'm optimistic, not pessimistic. I think there are a lot of things that are wrong but I think if we had a balance sheet we'd find that we are better off today than ever before in this approach. I mean, I think there are a lot of superficial things, a lot of public relations baloney. But also there are more people really interested. You've got to weigh things. We tend to exaggerate either way. Sometime we get too optimistic; sometimes we get too pessimistic. I think right now we're too pessimistic.

**PC:** You've mentioned Marin and Shahn and all those people. They were all represented for the most part by Edith Halpert, weren't they?

**LF:** Edith Halpert represented Marin and Shahn. Burchfield and Hopper were with Frank Rehn at that time, with Frank Rehn who was still alive then. John Clancy used to work for Rehn. Of course, when Rehn died, Clancy took over. Occasionally I used to acquire pictures from Antoinette Kraushaar, but never her living artists. The pictures I acquired from her might be, for instance, a New York John Sloan painting, or a Prendergast. From Curt Valentin I bought Flannagans. From Weyhe I bought the head of John Marin by Lachaise. I was pretty well spread. Some of the men who later became extremely close friends of mine were people like Burchfield and Hopper and Shahn and Marin. And they all were very strong individualists, and I used to listen to their tales about collectors. An artist is very sympathetic to and likes anybody who's interested in his work. And I used to hear

these artists' strong, sometimes bitter, feelings about dealers. In some cases they had a great deal of respect for their dealer. I've known Edith Halpert quite well since 1949.

**PC:** As a collector starting out, how did you find dealing with her?

**LF:** I found her quite stimulating. I'm very interested in salesmanship; I think it's a creative thing. I'm talking about salesmanship in the positive sense where you really want to instruct somebody about your product; I don't mean trying to sell twenty sacks of potatoes. When you believe in a painting and you get so much out of it, you want to communicate that to somebody else. Edith had her own sales technique. She was quite a good saleswoman. However, her particular sales approach irritated me. If she hadn't represented the artists that he did I would never have gone back. We used to see each other frequently because I wanted to learn from her. To her credit, she did a great deal for American art.

**PC:** Oh, fantastic.

**LF:** I mean in her salesmanship she stimulated interest in her group of artists. The unfortunate thing was that if you were interested in any artists other than those she had in her gallery they weren't any good. Of course I think that was natural. But she did do a great deal for American art. She was certainly a stimulating force in her field. Then some years ago she got a little ill and too old and so forth. Her health has declined in the last ten years. But in her day she did a great deal for American art. I have respect and admiration for her. Professionally I have disagreements with her. I was surprisingly in agreement with her selection of artists. On the whole -- not in every cause -- the kind of artists she selected were the kind of artists I still like today. But then her background came from Alfred Stieglitz; she took these things over from him and she was heavily influenced by him and his group of artists: Marin, Dove, and so forth. I remember that John Marin, Sr. would rarely go into the Downtown Gallery. Shahn never did like Halpert. But I sort of liked her.

**PC:** Stuart Davis used to have trouble with her once in a while, too.

**LF:** Yes, that's right, he did. When I first met Stuart Davis I already owned four of his paintings. My wife and I went up to see him and I was waiting for words of wisdom from the great master. He looked at me. He said, "Oh, yes, I've heard of you; you're from Detroit. By the way, what's wrong with the Detroit Lions?" He spent the next twenty minutes saying something to the effect that they needed a better quarterback or a halfback. Of course when you went to his studio, you practically had to knock the door down because jazz music was playing. But it was a fantastic thing.

**PC:** Who was the first artist you really got involved with as a person? Was that Burchfield?

**LF:** No, they were almost simultaneous. There were Marin, Burchfield, Shahn were my earliest very close friends. By "very close" I mean you have a lot of friends but these were people I saw frequently. Then Franklin Watkins and Hopper and Stuart Davis. Later I was on several art show juries with Jack Levine.

**PC:** What was it like being an active collector of Early American things in the late 1940's and 1950's?

**LF:** It was a marvelous experience! As we talk these things come to mind. For instance. at that time I met Carmen Delizio, the old man from the Babcock Gallery. Between you and me, I think there was a deterioration at Babcock when Carmen died. But in the old days Carmen Delizio was a marvelous man. He loved these things. I'd go into his place and he might have twenty Thomas Eakins's

sketches around. There are none there now. Of course the whole makeup of the gallery, the personnel, is different. And he loved art. And at that time when you'd go to Knoedler's and Charles Henschel was alive and you might see three American Copleys. I went to Wildenstein, the dealer in old masters, and surprisingly enough I found they had the best collection of Winslow Homers and they were the cheapest. It may have been because they were dealers in old masters. But old man Wildenstein, who has since died, was very interested in Winslow Homer and acquired a number of very good ones. I bought a Copley and a couple of Homers there. The only frustrating thing was . . . I love those things so much and it was frustrating that I couldn't buy them all. But it was a marvelous time because then things were easily available. I think great works of art will always be available. But particularly at that period it was very easy and they were extremely inexpensive. I bought a very great Frederick E. Church for \$2,000. I bought great Edward Hoppers for \$500 and \$600, great watercolors, which today would be about \$35,000 or \$40,000. I remember talking to Frank Rehn, of course at that time he was already drinking very heavily, but he, too, did a lot. He recognized Burchfield and Hopper and Watkins. This was about 1950. I purchased Burchfield's Black Iron about that time. It was painted in 1935 and it was considered one of the great Burchfields. I paid \$1,200 for it.

**PC:** That's fantastic.

**LF:** I bought many Burchfields for \$800 or \$900. And they were magnificent works of art. So it was a wonderful time. And you didn't have the baloney that's going on today with art critics who know nothing about art. For one thing, there were more newspapers so you had different art critics and you had different points of view. Now we're stuck with one newspaper and it's a pretty sad situation. On the other hand, today in my experience as an art dealer I think we have a surprising number of more knowledgeable younger people who don't follow the fashion, the gimmick art you're hearing a lot about. But there's a lot of good buying going on, too. But things aren't as available and they're more expensive and getting scarcer.

**PC:** You owned quite a number of Burchfields at one time, didn't you?

**LF:** Yes, at one time we had thirty-four.

**PC:** That's a lot.

**LF:** Yes. I kept on buying them through the years. You see, I never sold anything until I began to realize that I would be a dealer. When I realized that -- I think perhaps we should arrange to discuss this at another time as it's a story in itself -- I was determined . . . I couldn't stand dealers who would say, "Well, here's a great thing but I'm not selling it; it's going into my apartment." That means that anything they offer you would be second. I was determined that when I became an American art dealer that I was going to be a dealer in every major picture I'd find. I felt loyalty to my clients. But I still had to have works of art so I've kept some of the American things, which I still have. Now I collect things like Greek vases and Renaissance bronzes. But to me the American artists are fantastically talented.

**PC:** I'm still interested back in the 1940's and early 1950's.

**LF:** Sure. I'm glad you are.

**PC:** What about Richardson? Because you said that you met him rather early on.

**LF:** Yes. I met him just as he became . . . The first time I met him he had just become director of the

Detroit Institute of Arts. As I recall, that was about 1946.

**PC:** And how did you meet him there?

**LF:** Well, just by walking into the Museum and being interested in art. The real association and friendship with him started around 1949 and 1950. At that time I used to see him at least twice a week. We'd just talk about art and history. This went on until he left Detroit in 1962. So this went on over a period of twelve years, and even since he left Detroit I still see him frequently to this day and we have great discussions. He is an individual in his own right.

**PC:** What were his great areas of interest in things that interested you?

**LF:** The American field. He was one of the first of the writers on American art. He wrote on Burchfield and Hopper. He coined the phrase "luminists" that we hear used so much in lectures today. He wrote a book called *The Way of Western Art*. He was writing in the late 1930's and 1940's things that are just being written about today. He was way in advance of his field. And he was interested in Washington Allston. He told me he had a great deal of difficulty. The publisher would print only a short run of his book; nobody would want to buy them, they had to be remaindered. Of course, today this book commands a big price because everybody wants it. At that time you could buy a Washington Allston for \$1,200, \$2,000 for a real good one.

**PC:** That's incredible. You must have built up a large library in the midst of all of this. Did you?

**LF:** Yes, I did. I acquired all the books that I could. In the American art field alone I had about five or six hundred books and catalogues. By the way, my personal library will go to the Kennedy Galleries. We have a very large library here upstairs with three librarians. We're one of the few art galleries that have that. But the problem was that so many of the American art history books were very poorly written and so inaccurate. Of course, there are some that are very good, like Dunlap's *Rise of Progress*.

**PC:** Boy, they're expensive. I bought one last week.

**LF:** Yes. Did you get the reprint or the original?

**PC:** The Goodspeed.

**LF:** There's a reprint of that now.

**PC:** No, this is the 19 . . . .

**LF:** You got the original. They are expensive. I mean that was an exceptionally good one, for example. And I remember Isham was quite good; he was right after the turn of the century. Tuckerman was surprisingly good, I mean when you consider . . . . But on the whole they were just sort of slapped together. On the whole, they were about as bad as what's being written today, coffee table books, books that are written for a mass market, the publishing racket, where instead of giving research and thought they just quickly dash out books.

**PC:** Three thousand words and three thousand color plates.

**LF:** Right. Exactly. But today there are still good writers. And I think there are more good books coming out now than formerly. Eichholz's book just came out, and other books. We're ahead of the game. But again there's a lot of slop being written. Well, that was also the case in the past.

**PC:** I think people knew . . . . Just through my association with the Archives, I've noticed that historians come in and say, "You mean there's really all this stuff here?" And they're astounded by it.

**LF:** I remember Lloyd Goodrich coming in to the Archives one time. I was standing there with him as he was going through the microfilm. And he found letters of Winslow Homer's on Archives microfilm. You may know that the Archives has on microfilm the records of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. Lloyd said, "You know, I wrote the Pennsylvania Academy and they told me they didn't have anything." Of course the Pennsylvania Academy was very sincere in this statement; all this material was in boxes and so forth and they didn't know themselves what they had.

**PC:** How did you pick the Pennsylvania Academy as an early place to start microfilming?

**LF:** We were very interested in Charles Wilson Peale and the Philadelphia Academy was the first art School and so forth and had Thomas Eakins and so many of our great artists. And there was so much there at the Pennsylvania Historical Society. And Charles Coleman Sellers, oh, he was another person I got to know quite well. We used to discuss his ancestor, Charles Wilson Peale. But we just thought that Philadelphia was a city that we would use experimentally to get under way. We got -- What was her name? -- Francis Lichten? I'll have to think of her name. She wrote a book on Pennsylvania Dutch arts. She has since died. She and Sellers were put in charge of the project. I think she was recommended by Charles Coleman Sellers. I remember Ted Richardson and I went there. And that area was really the first city where we started to get records. From there on we did more and more and more. We developed some plans. We ran short of money all the time. Why don't we set up another session?

**PC:** Well, do you want to stop now?

**LF:** Yes, if you don't mind.

**PC:** Everything is going to start going.

**LF:** Yes.

**PC:** Okay. [END OF SIDE 1] [SIDE 2 (FOR REEL 2) March 2, 1970

**PC:** It's March 2. Could we have some of the anecdotes that you got from Marin or Burchfield or people you saw a great deal of?

**LF:** OH, yes. I have a great many. I remember one time my wife Barbara and I visited John Marin in Cliffside, New Jersey. This would be around 1950, 1951. We drove somewhere to have lunch. Marin turned to me and said, "Larry, why did you marry Barbara?" I thought for a second and said, "Well, because she's just a great cook." Then I said to him, "John, why did you marry your wife?" (Of course his wife had been dead for some time but it had been a happy marriage.) John thought for a few seconds, a smile reached from ear to ear, and he said, "Because she was the only person who knew how to cut my hair." Now if you remember Marin's haircut, it was rather strange. Also, I remember, for example how Marin at that time was very concerned about the superficialness of what was going on in the art world. He continually emphasized this. I don't know if I mentioned this before, about abstracting from nature rather than closing one's eyes. But I remember his saying, "Those johnnies, they close their eyes to life and the world and they're so smart they can hold a paintbrush and with blindfolded eyes, say 'Paint, brush; paint!' and then they could get a work of art." He said he couldn't do that.

**PC:** He always needed a real object to start with.

**LF:** Right. Marin told me he was also quite irritated with some of his neighbors who used to come around and ask if they could have one of his drawings that he'd thrown in the wastebasket. Everybody was looking for a handout. Marin was quite interested in organ music and had an organ in his house in Cliffside, New Jersey. Another time I remember meeting Marin for lunch -- we used to go to the Cafe St. Denis. As we were walking down the street that day, he looked at the Lever Brothers Building and said, "That's an interesting building over there, some people call it great but I call it interesting." He was very witty and, in his own way, he was very generous. But he had a Yankee sharpness. He used to talk about the circus; how he'd go to the circus to paint some of his pictures. He said he couldn't do it from Photographs. He wanted to go there and do the drawings. And as he talked, he'd be drawing with his hands. He said he wanted to catch the elephants, or the lion act, and, as he'd be telling about this, his hands would be gesturing. In various discussions he'd tell me that he couldn't relate to France as many of the American artists did. He went to France twice, but he said he had to paint in this country. He felt he was attuned to New England and New York. Two years he went to New Mexico and painted. I've had other artists tell me the same thing about Europe. Of course, many American artists have painted extremely well in Europe, but there are those who simply have to paint in their own country. Now, getting to Burchfield. I remember once visiting him at his home in Seneca, New York, which is just outside of Buffalo. He was having a great deal of trouble with asthma. But he said that, if he had to stay in bed, he'd die. He had to paint. His doctor told him once that he had to rest, to preserve his strength. He didn't like the way that was put so, as soon as the doctor left, he crawled out of bed and went straight to his painting just to see whether he could do it or not. Which he did. He died six or seven years after that. But he was really painting right up to the end. He was an enormously gifted man, a simple man when you saw how he dressed. I remember how he talked about his car. It was a Chrysler -- not a late model, probably about five years old. He said it was the only model he could get into without bumping his head. So he kept that old model.

**PC:** A good practical way of doing things.

**LF:** He always wanted to paint what he knew. We could go on and on with these anecdotes. I remember Franklin Watkins talking about how in the 1920's he had to sell water to the City of New York to survive.

**PC:** How did you get to meet Watkins? Because we've just mentioned him once or twice here.

**LF:** I first saw his work in the Detroit Institute of Arts. I found it very interesting. I discussed him several times with Ted Richardson who thought very highly of him. I got hold of the catalogue of a show of his work that was done in 1950. In fact, I got hold of the catalogue just about a couple of years after that. I saw his work in one or two museums, and I found it very subtle and very striking. I wrote him a letter. The result was he came to meet me in Detroit. I asked him if he would paint a portrait of my wife. He said he only wanted to paint portraits only where people knew his work, because he didn't paint like some of the photographic type artists; he painted in his own style. He wanted to make sure that I understood how he painted, that I wouldn't expect the picture to come out looking like some artists that are quite sweet. I assured him that I knew what his paintings were like, so he agreed to paint the portrait. He and his wife Ida came and spent three months with us. That was the beginning. He painted my wife and myself and our three children. It was the first five figures that he ever painted. He explained the intricacies of doing this: if you have one person, you have one picture with various relationships going on. But if you have two people in the painting you have to do the composition with the relationship of the two figures to each other. It was blazing hot in Detroit that summer, I think it was 1955, one of the hottest summers ever in Detroit. I think it was

the summer of 1955, or maybe 1956. We had all the windows open; we were wet with perspiration. My collar was wilting, which you can see in the portrait. My daughter was walking around eating all the time; so he portrayed her in the portrait biting into an apple. It's a remarkable composition. Watkins was a very sensitive person, as most artists are. He was deeply hurt by a certain art critic who criticized his show at the Museum of Modern Art in 1950 so severely that Watkins actually went to Italy for a year or two just to try to restore his confidence. He always had strong confidence in what he was painting and always had numerous supporters. Some of the best connoisseurs in America had always considered him among our great painters. But he still was shaken by this criticism. I was curious as to why this particular art critic was so harsh in his criticism. I went to Rehn and started to investigate. It turned out that this particular art critic wanted one of Watkins' pictures and the dealer quite rightly refused to give it as a gift. In this connection, I think there's room for a great deal to be done regarding the lack of art criticism in the United States and the unethical aspects of it that have been going on for some time.

**PC:** It's like in Europe, it's a difficult way to make a living.

**LF:** Yes. But most people are not aware of the corruption of art critics and how these art critics are not well trained. Of course, there are those that are very sincere; there are those that have a sensitivity. But in my opinion, art criticism is at its lowest point ever right now, and has been. Nevertheless, when Watty came back from Italy, he went into a very strong period of painting again. In Italy he, too, couldn't paint properly. He felt he had to paint in his own country. When he returned from Italy, he did this portrait that I've been telling you about. But Watty used to tell me a lot of stories about Carles and some of the other Philadelphia artists. He was a very generous man, always available to talk with art students. He had a sort of open door policy for practically anybody who wanted advice. I remember vividly one of the strengths of this very sensitive man. In appearance he is tall and looks delicate; he's tall, and very sensitive. At one time I was on the United States Information Agency's Committee on Fine Arts. This was after a very successful lecture that I did for them in South America, Greece, and Iceland. We were working on a joint venture with a committee from the State Department, planning a show in Moscow. It was very intricate but it was worth all the trouble. One of the things we decided to do was -- this show was to be held in 1959 -- to have professionals make the selections for the show. We chose Lloyd Goodrich, of the Whitney, the sculptor Roszak, Franklin Watkins the painter, and Hope from the University of Indiana. We had this professional jury make all the selections for the show that was going to Moscow. Now anytime you do something like this, two things happen: You have those people who think that we shouldn't do anything with the Russians, and you have those artists who aren't included in the show who get embittered and say it's a plot. So that was why we decided to have this completely professional jury. No one had anything to do with it but those four people. They selected a very good show. They selected people like Ben Shahn, Jack Levine, Edward Hopper, Charles Burchfield. They went back to the period around the 1920's and included some of the best artists. The show looked good, both the painting and the sculpture. As soon as the selections were announced the uproar started. It was said that the artists selected were Communists, which was not true. For example, Ben Shahn was one of the most bitter anti-Communists I ever knew. He would have no truck with the censorship of the Russian government. He couldn't stand any kind of totalitarian state. There was no leeway with Communism. He was a very liberal man but he was not pro-Russian. He saw Russia as just another totalitarian system. The criticism mounted. Some people ran for cover. I remember that Lloyd Goodrich stood his ground and fought. And I remember that Franklin Watkins, this delicate man, who was supposed to go away for a few days, stayed by, answering his phone. The calls came in: Why didn't this one get in? Why didn't that one get in? And he stood toe to toe and fought it out. Whereas I must say that some of the academic people ran for cover. I have a very low opinion generally of university professors and the academic world. In my experience working with

them, I find that they give forth with most of the words and less of the action than anyone. And when it really gets pinpointed to getting something done, they're not there. But Lloyd Goodrich entered this fight very strongly. And so did Franklin Watkins. And so did Roszak. Another person we called on was Senator Phil Hart, a Senator from Michigan. He gave a wonderful talk on the floor of the Senate as to the effect that "we cannot have a Pasternak case in the United States." Well, the show did open in Moscow. The Russians did not like it. We were there for the opening and remained for two weeks. The Russian people came through in throngs and you saw young people interested in art staring at the exhibition. Russian officialdom had professional agitators there trying to irritate you; even literally walking off with pamphlets, and so forth. The Archives of American Art had gathered the material for the catalogue. Quite a good catalogue was prepared and it was translated into Russian. It is now a collector's item. It's very much sought after in Russia. So, while officially there was a lot of protest, you saw that the people were interested. When I got back I remember seeing that The Wall Street Journal gave that show an extremely good review. Now that show was part of an overall exhibit. This was at the time of the famous battle between Nixon and Khrushchev. I was there. That's where they had an American kitchen, low-cost Sears & Roebuck pre-fab house, and so forth. On the whole I thought the exhibit was very effective.

**PC:** Did you get any sense of the reaction of the citizens towards the show other than the crowds?

**LF:** Yes, of course. I talked with some of these people. They liked it. But every now and then, a Russian speaking perfect English would come in and say, "This is all nonsense. It shows the degeneration of Western art." When we finally got the show over there after a considerable amount of debate, someone said, "Where is this picture that your government censored showing bad generals?" (This of course was Jack's Levine's picture.) So we took him over to look at the picture. We said, "It's right here. In our country we have debate. Nobody stops anything. We brought the picture and hung it." Then I looked at him and said, "Tell me something. Where are your satirical pictures of your military or of your politicians?" That stumped him. You know, a surprising number of Russians speak English. And I saw a couple of Russians there looking at him very sharply. Then he said, "We have no bad generals in Russia so we have nothing to satirize." This was his reply but he was taken offguard. Then I saw these young Russian artists coming up and asking a lot of questions and looking very intently at the paintings. They wanted to know if they could get more books about American painting. This was very difficult for them.

**PC:** So the show had a terrific attendance?

**LF:** Yes. Constantly, there were . . . Crowds after crowds after crowds came to see that show.

**PC:** How did you like Russia?"

**LF:** Well, I enjoyed the Pushkin Museum in Moscow. It is absolutely fantastic. And the Hermitage. These are great institutions. I like the Russian people. I can't stand the Russian form of government. On the whole, talking about the Bolshoi Ballet, which is perfect technically, I happen to like the excitement of the United States. To me, there is no comparison between the two countries. And I like London; I love London. I like Paris. I must say that I was glad to get out of Russia because I felt everywhere these subtle restrictions which you don't feel in London or Paris or Rome. Even with all our troubles I think the most exciting place is right here. C: This is still where it's at.

**LF:** Yes.

**PC:** Have you been to Russia since then?

**LF:** No, I haven't. But my wife went on the Archives Airlift to Russia in 1964. I wasn't able to get away. As a matter of fact, she spoke in the Kremlin. Again, a great deal of profess has been made. They treated her very nicely. She met some Russian artists. I think that Airlift was in 1962 or 1963 or thereabouts.

**PC:** You had an exhibition in 1953 at the University of Michigan. Was that the first exhibition drawn from your collection?

**LF:** That's right. In 1952, the University of Michigan came and said that they would like to have an exhibition of our collection. At that time Barbara and I owned Thomas Anshutz's Steelworkers Noontime and Burchfield's Black Iron. We had a Hopper, several Demuths, and about four Marins, a John Sloan and a Stuart Davis. That was the show that went to the University of Michigan. That was the first showing really of our private collection. Then, of course, over the years there have been many other exhibitions.

**PC:** You've been very good about lending pictures to exhibitions.

**LF:** Well, at that time I just felt that all the exhibitions that I was seeing were so concentrated on European work, that I felt that I should do anything that I could to stimulate the showing of American art. When I traveled around the country, I always used to think how much farther ahead the Detroit Institute of Arts was. In those days, they had shows called "Work in Progress." These were many small shows. If you look into the kind of shows of the artists who are so famous today, you'll see how many of them were shown in these little shows at the Detroit Institute of Arts. That was one reason I loaned paintings at that time. I felt I should do anything I could to help increase interest in American art or in the particular artist. Of course, I was always concerned about the condition of the painting. I always tried to make sure that they were well looked after and that whoever was borrowing them had experience in handling paintings. I must say that we did try to encourage exhibitions of a lot of American artists; sometimes at some inconvenience to ourselves.

**PC:** How did you like seeing the paintings at the University when they were out of your house and in a different kind of setting?

**LF:** That was the first time I got jarred. They looked very strong at the University. I realized what a difference it makes where they're hung. The most important thing is the work of art itself, but the way they're hung, the kind of light that falls on them does affect them very much.

**PC:** Oh, tremendously. Surely.

**LF:** I enjoyed the show very much and I enjoyed listening to the comments of people who came to see it. After that show, many of our pictures were shown in other major museums in specialized one-man shows. The next big show was in 1956 at the Detroit Institute of Arts. Then I had a show at the Milwaukee Art Center, one in Arizona, and at the Metropolitan and at the Whitney Museum and the National Gallery. Many of our pictures were shown in different shows at these places. From 1956 to 1959 I stopped lending a number of pictures because that's when the United States Information Agency sent me a letter and asked me to come to Washington. They said somebody had heard me speak and would I consider sending our collection to South America and making a series of lectures.

**PC:** How did that all come about? How was that? Because it went to numerous countries, didn't it?

**LF:** Yes. It came about because of that 1956 show. Several people that I didn't know saw it and

liked it so well that they made a comment about it. I gave a couple of lectures in the Detroit Institute of Arts galleries. I gave several lectures in smaller institutions, too. And somebody heard the lectures and liked them. And the United States Information Agency . . . . At that time Lois Bingham and some of the other people checked on the collection and did research on it. And from that sprung the idea that I would go down to South America for three weeks -- if I would give up my business actually -- go to South America for three weeks, come back and take care of my business, rotating every three weeks. Which we did. The first show was in Mexico City. Both the New York Times and Time magazine gave very good reporting on it. They thought it went quite well. We had huge crowds. People lined up at Bella Arte in Mexico City. We used simultaneous translation. All the lectures were fairly well filled. From there we went to Cuba. This is still 1956. From Cuba we went to Venezuela and Bogota and Ecuador, Santiago, Lima, Buenos Aires, Montevideo, Sao Paulo. Then we went to Athens and lectured there. We lectured in Turkey at Ankara and at Istanbul. Then to Tel Aviv and Jerusalem in Israel. And to Reykjavik, Iceland.

**PC:** What kind of reaction did you get in these various cities from people?

**LF:** They wanted to see more. They had a very narrow concept of American painting. They were completely unfamiliar with people like Thomas Eakins, who they thought was tremendous. Or Winslow Homer. They had never seen a Charles Burchfield before. They were more familiar with the abstract school because the Museum of Modern Art had done some shows but they were not as familiar with, say, John Marin or Ben Shahn. Although in England, Ben Shahn was already fairly well-known and he is very highly regarded in England and Japan today.

**PC:** That's interesting. What can an exhibition of American painting mean to people in South America? Because it's so different from . . . .

**LF:** What happened down there over and over, they are so used to thinking in two terms, economic and military. They knew the power of American economics. They knew how successful the big plants in the United States were. They knew about our standard of living. They knew about airplanes and the Navy. But they had never spent much time thinking about the cultural activities of the United States or the orchestras that are spread throughout this country, that every little town has a little symphonic group of some kind. They had never spent much time thinking about American painters. When I was in South America, the Red Chinese were active all over. The Chinese would take over artists and scholarships to Red China and so forth. The artists gave our paintings a very good reception. They were impressed by them. They recognized that there was something personal about them. That show we started with Copley. We even had Bingham in it; Thomas Eakins, Winslow Homer, Frederick E. Church, Cole, Quidor, Ryder, John Sloan, Prendergast, Hassam, Demuth, Mark Tobey, Morris Graves, Ben Shahn, John Marin, Edward Hopper, Charles Burchfield; I believe Baziotes was in it, Lachaise, and others too.

**PC:** That's interesting. Did you notice a great difference in each of the countries there?

**LF:** Yes, there was a great difference. There was a great difference between, say, Argentina and Mexico. There's a surprising amount of difference between these countries. We group them all together as Latin America but we forget that in Argentina the majority of the people are of Italian descent. The Argentineans literally massacred the Indians. There is a very small Indian population there. The population is nearly all of Italian descent. Whereas in Peru, for instance, you see a great many Indians; particularly if you go up to Cuzco. In Mexico they are very proud of the fact that the population is over ninety percent mixed. The Mexican is probably the most advanced of all the people that I saw. But all of the exhibits were extremely well attended. That was fascinating to me. This was the case even in Ecuador.

**PC:** What kind of press did they get?

**LF:** Very good press.

**PC:** But I mean there was not that much . . . .

**LF:** No. What they did was show photographs and so forth. And regarding some of the writers I think it was better that they weren't art critics. They approached it with a fresh point of view.

**PC:** How did you like the experience of working with the government, or a government agency?

**LF:** Well, I was kind of lucky because there was a group of people there that I found quite easy to work with. There can be hassles, but not with the people I was working with. But in the beginning, they were worried that perhaps we should control what kind of pictures left the country. I refused to take any pictures out of the exhibition. So we won these battles. But the people we worked with were very devoted. It was quite easy to work with somebody like Lois Bingham and Streibert. Even Larson I found quite easy to work with.

**PC:** You didn't get involved with abstract expressionism ever, did you?

**LF:** No. I met Jackson Pollock. Of course I knew Baziotos. I met all of them at one time or other. Of course, I think it's a very valid form of art and these artists are very sincere. There are as many phonies working in realist art as in abstract expressionism; I mean mannerists who are simply copying somebody else's technique. Personally, I think that Jackson Pollock's work is very valid. I like Gottlieb's work very much. And others, for example, Kline. But personally I have been drawn to the kind of work of, say, Edward Hopper, or that period, or Ben Shahn, John Marin, Morris Graves, or Mark Tobey.

**PC:** How did you get involved with Tobey? Because he's sort of on both sides of the fence in some ways.

**LF:** That's true. But somehow I just like his work.

**PC:** Do you like the abstract ones? Or the figurative ones? Or . . . ?

**LF:** Somehow I react more to his white letters and some of his Exploding Universe-type things. I just react to them. And I like some of the very early I. Rice Pereira, and Loren MacIver. Women artists, I enjoy them very much.

**PC:** There are not many women artists that hold up, are there?

**LF:** No. I think that may be because they don't pursue the career; some of them get married, or one thing or another. When you stop to think about it, there's Georgia O'Keeffe, Constance Richardson, Loren MacIver, I. Rice Pereira, Helen Frankenthaler, Grace Hartigan. These are names that come to mind. I don't know that I think that highly of Grace Hartigan, but nevertheless, she's a well-known name. There are others that don't come to mind at the moment. But, comparatively speaking, there aren't that many important women artists.

**PC:** When you're involved with meeting an artist, do you buy a picture beforehand and then meet him? Or do you meet the artist and then acquire the pictures? What is the sequence?

**LF:** No, I usually . . . . Well, I may not have bought a picture but I've already been drawn to the artist's

work. I am interested in the artists whose work interests me.

**PC:** Oh, I see. So it's the work first?

**LF:** I wasn't interested in just meeting a lot of personalities; I was first drawn to the work. By accident I've met artists whose work I never did like. But if I liked an artist's work and was drawn to it, I immediately got interested in the kind of person that painted that picture. And the relationship of what comes out in the work of art is mostly the individual who created it.

**PC:** How did you get the idea of writing letters to the artists asking them for statements about specific pictures?

**LF:** I didn't really ask them for statements. I wrote letters to them giving my opinion of what the picture meant to me, sort of discussed the picture with them. In other words, I don't think that I wrote . . . at least I don't recall that I did. I might have asked a question about a segment of a picture or, if it wasn't dated, I might ask what date it was done, or discussed what it meant to me. And that stimulated a lot of discussion on what it meant to the artist, and so forth. I don't think I just coldly said, "Will you give me a statement?" This is going on today. I am still doing this today. For instance, I might write, let's say, to Richard Lippold or Alexander Calder, saying, "Would you give me a statement about this particular work that I'm interested in or that I just bought?" I think it is more a discussion about it, where I had certain feelings about . . . .

**PC:** Because museums tend to ask that question.

**LF:** Yes.

**PC:** "Give us a statement about your picture."

**LF:** Yes. And a lot of times that's kind of hard for an artist to do. After I became a dealer, I began to realize a lot of things. I have noticed over the years that many times an artist has finished a work of art but still hasn't named it. He didn't name it until after the work was finished. Whereas, in many cases, an artist will want to start with the name. In other words, they want to know, is that a dream? Is that a chair? Is that a bowl of apples? They want to start with an already preconceived thing that they know. They want to start with the title and then go on to the work of art. You're supposed to go over that work of art and see this experience. Automatically it's going to be relating with your past. So you should try to get as fresh a point of view as possible. The title is really secondary, but a lot of people make it primary; they want to start with the title and go into the work.

**PC:** The title explains the picture.

**LF:** I would say that the vast majority of artists title the work after it's finished. The artists that I've watched see the problem. They want to catch the light on a stone staircase. They want to get the feeling of loneliness, or the beautiful spring, or the atmosphere, or the clearing storm, and so on. And they see that as a problem. They don't relax about it; it's a problem they must solve.

**PC:** Do you do a lot of traveling now? Or don't you?

**LF:** Yes. Now?

**PC:** Yes.

**LF:** I do a great deal of traveling. I go to Europe at least several times a year, maybe as many as

four times. I've started to do business in Japan so I go there. Twice a year I crisscross the United States.

**PC:** What interests you in Japan?

**LF:** Well, in Japan I established a dealer who owns his own gallery but does work with us. He buys from us. There I've sold Kuniyoshi and Ben Shahn, Abraham Rattner, Miro prints, Alexander Calder. Right now I'm arranging for this show which is opening in May in Japan, the first large Ben Shahn one-man show that's ever been held in Japan. It's going to be in the National Museum in Tokyo and it's going to be in several other museums.

**PC:** Do you find there's a growing interest in American art there?

**LF:** I hope so. We're certainly trying to promote interest. We've got a lot of things in progress. We sold a very beautiful Gilbert Stuart to the National Museum in Stockholm. I sold a Ben Shahn to the State Museum in Copenhagen. I've been doing work in Italy. If I took all that time and concentrated my efforts here I would make a lot of money. But to me it's very romantic and it's a challenge to get American art better known; not to give it to them, but to get them to realize how good American art is and make them want to buy it. This is a challenge I'm working on now.

**PC:** That's terrific. Getting back to Detroit, you've mentioned before about the new addition to the Detroit Institute of Arts which you were involved with. Which is a whole story in itself.

**LF:** Yes. That's a story in itself. And how I became a dealer is a story in itself. Do you want to get that the next time?

**PC:** Well, we can go on as long as you like, Whatever you like.

**LF:** Are you going to be free next Saturday?

**PC:** Yes. That's this week?

**LF:** Yes. If you want to, we could start at nine o'clock on Saturday and go right through for an hour and a half and I could tell you how I became a dealer and the story of the Detroit Institute of Arts. Which is a very interesting story.

**PC:** Right. Do you want to do some more then? Or not, today?

**LF:** I thought if you'd like we could stop now. Of is it too early for you to stop? [Machine turned off. The tape runs blank for about two minutes. The interview is then resumed on March 7 - Page 40.]  
[CONTINUATION OF TAPE 1. SIDE 2 OR PART 3]

**PC:** It's March 7. This is part 3. Could we start by talking about the building of the wing on the Detroit Institute of Arts and how that came about?

**LF:** For some time we realized that the Detroit Institute of Arts needed greater facilities. Interest in the Museum was growing; the collection was growing. We were very concerned because we were expecting that several major collections would come to the Museum and we didn't know how we could house them. In February 1962, the Mayor of Detroit asked me to serve on the Arts Commission.

**PC:** How did that happen: Were you involved with politics?

**LF:** No. I was already a trustee of the Founders Society of the Detroit Institute of Arts. Ted Richardson left Detroit in the fall. A new mayor came into office. He had several interviews with me. First I refused the appointment for several reasons. A very nice young man, Jack Lord (who died of a heart attack not long after), came over and talked to me. And Rux Chapin came to my house and talked to Barbara and me. Both of them urged me to accept the appointment because they felt that the Museum was in a situation where a little extra stimulus would help a great deal at that time. They urged me to go on to the Arts Commission. Well, I finally did accept and became president of the Arts Commission. We began to attack different problems. First of all, I thought the salary setup was all wrong and we tried to improve it in such a way that it would attract a greater staff. I think since that time the Museum has a very young staff and a very good one and a growing one. We created higher benefits. We got the idea of working with the Founders Society and got the cooperation of its president, Bill Day, who was president of Michigan Bell Telephone Company. We got increases from the city government, and we got extra help from the Founders Society, which is a private fund-raising arm of the Museum. We got the idea that the Museum staff should have their expenses paid to Europe and even once a year have their wives' expenses paid to Europe also on the theory that in the family unit there's that much more interest in the job. That was one of the first problems we tackled. Then we tackled the fact that there was no place in the Museum to eat and to relax. After a great deal of debate, we converted a little court in the Museum into a tearoom. Later it was made into a restaurant, and I think it's one of the most beautiful restaurants in the country. It has worked out quite satisfactorily. All day long you'll see students sitting around drinking coffee or tea or having a sandwich. You'll see families gathered there every day. We got the Volunteer Committee to take it over and then the Founders Society. It did not lose money for the Founders Society; in fact it made some money. And it is a great convenience. After we licked that problem, we had to do something about parking. We got everybody mobilized. The assistant to the Mayor was Fred Romanoff. He was put on the Arts Commission. We went to City Hall where we had the help of Fred Romanoff and did a great deal of persuading. The first engineering report said that a garage next to the Museum wouldn't work. We went down to the city fathers and said that, "We're going to do something even if we have the Arts Commission own the land (even though technically the Arts Commission would operate it for the city). We're going to go ahead and build a garage one way or the other." The Mayor was quite sympathetic. An underground garage was built and it was funded with bonds. It is all packed with cars. It is not large enough now; it's doing quite well. Incidentally, the New Yorker carried a cartoon - not a cartoon -- a little quip saying, "Culture comes to Detroit. They get an underground garage for the Museum." But it is very convenient to simply drive into the garage and then go right next door into the Museum. Then we had the problem of enlarging the Museum. The Detroit Institute of Arts was built in the 1920's. With this growing interest, how were we going to build an addition? Many people thought we couldn't go into a fund-raising campaign; that it would be too difficult. One day I was driving with Charles Blessing, the City Planner. He had a problem and wanted some help on it from me. In our conversation, it came out that there was a meeting at the Mayor's office on a workmen's employment acceleration program. I learned that anything that is owned by the city, if the city would put up half the money, the Federal government would put up the other half. They were trying to use these facilities to get better developments in Detroit. When he said that, I began thinking. I said, "Wait a minute! The Detroit Institute of Arts is a city-owned building!" My mind started clicking. I shot down to the Mayor's office. I said, "Look, this is a city-owned building. Do federal funds have to go only to roads and sewers? Here we need a three-and-a-half million dollars for a new wing to the Museum. Can't the city put up half and can't the federal government put up half? After all, you own the building; you own the collection after it's turned over to the Arts Commission." Well, they were sort of taken aback. Because, as I say, all the strategy had been for roads and sewers and schools. We had only two days to go before they had to file on most of the plans, their preliminary thinking. So they began thinking about this. The following morning Fred Romanoff called me and said, "The Mayor is quite

interested. If you can get a million dollars pledged by tomorrow morning, the city will put up \$750,000 or 800,000 more which would make \$1,850,000; then we'd get \$1,850,000 from the federal government. Well, to get a million dollars in twenty-four hours was kind of difficult. My wife just walked into my office while all this happened. She said I jumped three feet in the air trying to figure out what to do. I thought of Mrs. Edsel Ford. She was a fellow member of the Arts Commission, and she was always a very close friend to me. We had had many conferences together and she had really a great effect on my thinking and on my life. She's a gracious human being and a very intelligent one. She was aware of how hard we were working at the Museum. I called her at her home and said, "Eleanor, for the first time we've got something within our grasp." I explained my ideas -- how this had never been done before for a Museum -- " . . . but it looks as if we could work out something since the Museum is owned by the City. The Museum would put up half the money and the Federal government would put up the other half. But I need a million dollars by tomorrow morning, and if you will lend us the million dollars, I will work day and night to repay you by having a fund-raising campaign, but we're so close to the deadline for filing under this Act. We only got the idea just now; we've got to get a pledge of a million dollars." There was a hesitation on the phone. And Mrs. Ford said, "Larry, I'll give you the million dollars." I said, "You mean you'll lend us the million dollars?" She said, "No, you and your friends have worked so hard that I'm going to give you the million dollars." Well, I was just shaking. The first thing I did was call Bill Woods, the Director of the Detroit Institute of Arts. I said, "I want you to call Mrs. Ford right away and thank her for this. Also I want confirmation that I am not out of my mind!" By the way, this is very typical of Mrs. Ford. She used to grasp principles very fast. And if you have a clear idea and a clear presentation of it, she'll give a very quick answer. She has a very skillful probing manner. Then I immediately called the Mayor. He had never heard of anybody doing such a magnificent thing! So he called Mrs. Edsel Ford and thanked her. Then the city committed their half, and began filing the preliminary plans to a department of the federal government located in Chicago, which got all shaken up because they never thought this applied; yet they couldn't find any legal reason why it couldn't since this was city-owned. But then, the following week, the Mayor suddenly called us into his office and said, "Well, you did great by getting the million dollars but I can't come up with the City money right now because we have so many other commitments. But if you could get the entire fund which is necessary . . ." (You see, that million dollars would go to the city; the rest would go to the city and the total would become city money which would match the amount to be given by the federal government). ". . . If you could raise the entire amount, Larry, I will see that you get the North Wing addition which you need (we have been talking about the South Wing addition) built in a few years paid for by the City." Well, I shot over to see Bill Day for a long conference. Once again Bill understood this principle and the Founders Society committed itself to raise the difference. So we went ahead and gave the money to the City, so the entire half of the money was raised privately and given to the City of Detroit as a gift. And that became the matching funds of the City of Detroit whereby they were able to get matching federal funds. And that's how the south Wing was built and opened, and very well done. Mayor Cavanaugh, to his credit, lived up to his word. I remember how pleased I was when ground was broken for the North Wing. When I left Detroit . . . . The North Wing was well under construction when I left Detroit to become associated with, became a partner and vice-president of the Kennedy Galleries. Those were great days. Those were the days when we were all meeting and we were all very enthused and we had the wings going on. Not only did we build the North and South Wings, we also began building larger acquisition funds. We acquired a great Terborch, and a great Rubens. Time after time Mrs. Edsel Ford, and other people, too, came through with very substantial cash gifts, not only giving gifts of things they had in their collections, but substantial cash gifts. I remember many touching incidents. I remember when we were trying to think of a name for the South Wing. I personally wanted to call it the "Eleanor Ford Wing." I had long talks about this with Robert Tannahill, an important Detroit collector (who incidentally was a cousin of Mrs. Edsel Ford). He also became a very close friend of mine. Mr. Tannahill said, "It's a good idea

but I don't know if it can be done." Mrs. Edsel Ford said, "Oh, I couldn't have it named after me." I said, "Well, how about naming it for your husband" Let's call it the 'Edsel Ford Wing.'" Eleanor Ford said, "No, no, no, no, no." I thought that was just too modest. I used to ask the entire Arts Commission to show up at budget hearings of the City Council. The Commission was just a handful of people. I felt that by having all the members of the Arts Commission present the City Council would see the kind of interest that the lay people had. Some of the members of the Commission were Mrs. Edsel Ford, the President of Michigan Consolidated Gas Company, Harold Love, an attorney. Even our advisors attended these hearings (I had started an advisory system consisting of people like Alvan Macauley and Ed Rothman). All of these people would show up at the council meetings. One day, after a budget hearing where we explained why we needed money from the City for certain things (and here I must say that by using this technique the city Council became quite understanding and started to increase our budgets and to enable us to render even better service to the city of Detroit). I asked Mrs. Edsel Ford to come into Mayor Cavanaugh's office. Fred Romanoff and Mrs. Ford and I and a few others were there. The Mayor said to Mrs. Ford, "Mrs. Ford, we'd like to name this wing, which really became possible so quickly through your generosity, either the 'Eleanor Ford Wing' or the 'Edsel Ford Wing' to honor what you've done." Mrs. Ford said, "I only gave the money. You people did all the work." And even the politicians . . . even Mayor Cavanaugh was stumped and his eyes glistened for a minute. I'll never forget that. And that wasn't said with false humility. You know, a lot of people put it on, but Mrs. Ford really meant it. And in this case what she said wasn't exactly true because Mrs. Ford not only gave money generously -- at least while I was on the Arts Commission -- but she attended all the meetings, she was available for conferences, and she was very much part of the thinking. But I'll never forget that as long as I live. So in the end the wing is just called the "South Wing." As I said, the North Wing is nearing completion. They are already starting to move into it now, and that's the story of the South Wing and the North Wing.

**PC:** Well, it obviously had been in a planning stage though?

**LF:** No.

**PC:** Nothing?

**LF:** No. Everything started, all the planning, everything started from scratch. We got in a man named Birkerts from Birmingham, Michigan, and the whole thing was planned right from scratch, completely designed and all. However, the need for space, of course, was known for some time, but there was the question of how much money we could raise. If you figure the cost of the garage and the two new wings and other remodeling done on the older building (which is still a very beautiful building), you're talking about, oh, twelve, fourteen, fifteen million dollars or something like that.

**PC:** That's a lot of money in a short space of time.

**LF:** Yes. Detroit has a great collection and with these wings they have very fine physical facilities to house it.

**PC:** That's terrific. Sometime later you got involved with a Mrs. John F. Kennedy Committee. Was that subsequent to . . . ?

**LF:** No. This was going on after I got a call from Vosburgh who was head of the Fine Arts Committee for Mrs. Kennedy. Evidently Anne Ford (formerly Mrs. Henry Ford II), who had moved to New York, and who also had become quite interested in The White House and knew Mrs. Kennedy quite well. They asked me to come to the first meeting at the White House. I joined the Fine Arts

Committee. Henry du Pont headed the entire group. Vosburgh handled the painting section, which was the one I was on. There was a handful of us at that time. At the first meeting there were present Vosburgh, Joseph Pulitzer, Stanley Marcus and I, as I recall. Later the Committee was broadened and they brought on Ted Richardson, Lloyd Goodrich and some others.

**PC:** What actually was the purpose of that committee?

**LF:** The purpose was to help in the selection of paintings for The White House, to figure out the financing, how to get the paintings and have them become part of the permanent collection at The White House. Jacqueline Kennedy used to attend our meetings. She was quite interested. After the President was assassinated, Mrs. Lyndon Johnson called us all together right away and said that she wanted to continue this. I remember she gave a very moving address as the first meeting. I talked to her for about twenty minutes then. She asked some very probing questions. She didn't have the background in art but she had a very analytical approach and felt it was important and wanted to do a good job. Then we had the Fine Arts White House Festival. Mrs. Johnson stayed all day; she really supported it. I continued on that Committee and resigned when I became an art dealer. In 1957 I was asked to serve on the United States Information Agency's commission on the fine arts. That was the result of those earlier tours that I mentioned doing for them that took place in 1956 through 1959.

**PC:** Was the Kennedy Committee successful, do you think, in its activities?

**LF:** Yes, I think so. There were some points of disagreement and so forth, but I think that many fine paintings went to The White House. The White House is a very beautiful federal building, after all, and if you lay it out on the balance sheet, it's rather remarkable what was done to the interior of it. I thought it was very successful.

**PC:** What kinds of things did you do at the Information Agency when you were on the committee?

**LF:** There I was always fighting against censorship of exhibits. I didn't believe there should be such a thing. By the way, as a result of some of this work I got quite a low opinion of academic people. I found that they were long on verbosity and short on action and the people who really were doing the work were the lay people who were well-informed and quite interested in this project. For example, as a result of the McCarthy Era there was a great deal of hesitancy about sending certain American artists in exhibitions that were sponsored by the federal government. Of course, with exhibits sponsored by a private museum there was not this problem. But where federal funds were used to sponsor an exhibit, there was a great deal of leering. In connection with our exhibit to South America I wouldn't stand for anything. I mean I didn't even think about the politics of it. We had the art. We thought if these were talented American artists they were in the show. And the U.S.I.A., to their credit, understood that and accepted that condition and there was no censorship of our exhibit. When I was finally appointed to this committee, we debated this subject a great deal and we finally broke the censorship. Of course, one of the big things we did was to form a joint committee with the State Department for the show in Moscow in 1959. This was the time we had to decide, in the first place, who would be willing to go to Russia, who would not take a salary, who would be able to handle the Russians. As I was able to glean from what happened before, they were quite difficult to make arrangements with, locations were canceled, and there were very severe restrictions on what could be done. So, with a large exhibition area where we would be short of carpenters and electricians and tools, we had to figure out who would be strong enough to hang an exhibit . . . and have had enough experience to hang an exhibit. So I thought of Edith Halpert and suggested her. Everybody grabbed this idea right away. Edith is a strong personality.

**PC:** Right!

**LF:** She could get the screwdriver and get the things hung; she had experience hanging pictures. She didn't have to be paid; she was sufficiently well off and she could speak Russian. She accepted this for the first few weeks. She was replaced by Richard McClenathen when they rotated around. So that problem was sort of solved. Also, the committee reached an agreement that the show would not be censored by anyone, that we would get a top jury to select the things (It is difficult; we have a great country with many talented artists but we could send only a few), so we decided in a professional jury. We chose Franklin Watkins, a painter; Theodore Roszak, a sculptor; Lloyd Goodrich, a museum man; and Mr. Hope, of Indiana University, an academic man. These four men comprised the jury to select the work for this show. The agreement with the Soviet Union was that the government could not print the catalogue, so they asked me if the Archives of American Art would write it.

**PC:** Who suggested that?

**LF:** I think it just came out of discussion of the committee since they knew I was president of the Archives. The discussion went back and forth; I can't remember specifically how the idea came up. The Archives had nothing to do with the selection of the work but it did write the biography of each artist and prepare the catalogue. In fact, the catalogue was printed with the seal of the Archives on the back. The catalogue was very popular in Russia even though there were great problems in distributing it.

**PC:** Really? For what reason?

**LF:** Well, the Soviet Union wasn't too keen on having books selected and having our things distributed in Russia.

**PC:** What was their main objection about American books or catalogues?

**LF:** The people didn't object; it was the Russian government restrictions about the distribution of books. That's always been the case. I remember when we went into the Soviet Union one of the things we had to declare was whether we were bringing any magazines or books in. That's been part of their restrictive policy. It always existed and still exists to a great extent.

**PC:** But once they accepted it, was there distribution in Russia?

**LF:** No, there was not. Only at the exhibition. Of course there were a couple of million people who came to the exhibition.

**PC:** Really! That many?

**LF:** Oh, it was thronged all the time. My father was there when I was there. He understands Russian. The waiter would say, "Do you have any tickets for the Fair?" Of course I didn't have any tickets. Besides, I felt that the Russian government should do the distributing and I didn't want to get involved with it. But the waiter wanted tickets. He said, "Well, you know, you've got to be really high up to get things like that." It was kind of funny because it sounded something like you hear in New York.

**PC:** You can't get a ticket unless you know someone?

**LF:** Yes, something like that.

**PC:** Maybe there are similarities in lots of ways. That's interesting. One thing you mentioned in our first session that we didn't really finish was the rug design competition that you were involved with. What was the result or the outcome of that?

**LF:** Well, the Congoleum-Nairn Company bought some of the designs and actually used them. And it made a lot of people think. I know C. H. Masland company had discussion about it. I think it did have an effect on the design of carpets. In fact, the Carpet Institute gave us an award for thinking of the idea. Not that the award . . . . But we had the satisfaction of doing it. I just felt that something had to be done and we took the steps to do it. And I think it did have its effect on design. We had two competitions: one domestic and one international. Both of these toured the United States and I think other countries, if I remember correctly.

**PC:** You feel that it did have an effect?

**LF:** I do, yes. After all, we had a very good jury. We had Eames and Saarinen and Baker and also a carpet expert, young Mike Masland from the C. H. Masland Company. I thought it was a good jury.

**PC:** Were they happy with what they saw?

**LF:** Yes.

**PC:** One of the things I'd like to talk about for a second is Bill Woolfenden. He was --what? -- at the Institute of Arts?

**LF:** Yes. Bill is an old friend of mine.

**PC:** Where did you meet him? At the Museum?

**LF:** Yes, I met him at the Museum. The first time I met him, he was in the Education Department. I first met him through the carpet design competition. I liked Bill right away. We used to spend hours talking about art. We became fast friends. That friendship began long before the Archives of American Art came into existence. The way that Bill got associated with the Archives was that in 1954 after we organized the Archives and got it going, we didn't have any staff. First we got a part-time librarian. Then we got a full-time person going on it. Then we got a little bit more money and we got a grant from the Ford Foundation to do a certain amount of work. With that money we were going to bring in another full-time person. One time I was talking to Bill and he said, "You know, Larry, that's the kind of thing that I would like very much. I'm very interested. After all, American art is my field." I said, "Gee, Bill, I think you'd be terrific for this. I didn't even know you'd be interested." So I went straight to Ted Richardson and Bill became assistant director at first, and later on Ted thought Bill should be the director of it. So Bill became director of the Archives, a position which he still retains.

**PC:** So you've known him for quite a while?

**LF:** Oh, yes. I've known Bill for about twenty-one years.

**PC:** Well, do you want to stop? Because I'd like to get involved with how you became a dealer and all that.

**LF:** That's another full story. When do you want to do that?

**PC:** We can do it any time. [END OF SIDE 2] [TAPE 2 - SESSION 4] TAPE-RECORDED INTERVIEW

WITH LAWRENCE FLEISCHMAN AT THE KENNEDY GALLERIES MARCH 9, 1970 INTERVIEWER:  
PAUL CUMMINGS

**PC:** PAUL CUMMINGS

**LF:** LAWRENCE FLEISCHMAN

**PC:** Today is March 9. This is Session 4. I wonder if we could talk some more about the development of your collection and, oh, specific incidents on acquiring, say, some of the major old master paintings.

**LF:** Well, actually, when I was president of the camera club at Western Military Academy in Alton, Illinois -- as you recall, that's the school Thomas Hart Benton went to; in fact, I think he was kicked out. -- in our youthful debates there I used to argue about whether or not the camera could do everything that the eye can. Of course, photography is an art form. At that time I used to argue that a camera could duplicate anything that a human being could do. But, after some of these discussions, I slowly began to swing the other way and I got so interested in creations by man's eye and hand, the combination of the two, that I got more interested in painting than I had been in photography. At that time, when I was about fifteen, I bought a few reproductions. Then, when I was in college, or about then, I don't remember the exact year, I bought a couple of Toulouse-Lautrec lithographs and some other things. When I was in the Army and stationed at Dijon and at Bascon in France, I met a doctor who was very nice to me. He spoke English well. He took me in and introduced me to his family.

**PC:** You don't remember his name? Because you mentioned him once before.

**LF:** Unfortunately not. I lost contact with him after a few years. That's why the Archives is so good: it gets these things down because so much of it is being lost. We used to talk about various artists and I went around to some of the old Roman ruins in Besancon. There's a Roman bath there and other things. I got increasingly interested. In fact, when I got out of the Army I almost wanted to go back to England and study the classics. But my brother had died in 1942 at the age of eleven. And I was then the only son and I felt that I had to go back to Detroit as my parents were all alone. So I returned to the University of Detroit, majored in physics and was graduated from there. While I was a student there, I got very interested in lithographs and prints. I bought a Grant Wood print, a Thomas Hart Benton and a Federico Castellon. At that point I began to be interested in Ben Shahn. The girl I was going with then, Barbara Greenberg, who later became my wife, was more interested in theater but I used to talk to her a lot about art and she also became interested in art through me. We were married in December 1948. I immediately bought her a print as a gift. I used to work day and night and with what money we saved we bought two Matisse prints. We bought a lithograph of Picasso's Three Graces. At about this time I met Joe Jones, and I got very interested in George Grosz, so my wife and I acquired a Joe Jones watercolor and several George Grosz's. We found that he was interesting. This was about the time that I began to meet the people at the Detroit Institute of Arts -- Edgar P. Richardson and Bill Woolfenden.

**PC:** Were all these purchases made in Detroit?

**LF:** No, they were all made in New York. I used to go to New York just to see art exhibits and just to go to the museums. Practically every day I used to be in the Detroit Institute of Arts. I used to travel down to Toledo to visit the museum there. Always studying. This gave me much pleasure. Luckily my wife was interested and went along. About this time I met John Marin and Ben Shahn and I used to spend a lot of time with them. We acquired on credit -- I loved these things so much -- we

borrowed money and acquired a Stuart Davis, oh, this was right around 1950. In the area of 1949-51, I remember we bought a Stuart Davis, several John Marins, Burchfield's Black Iron. Though I never did understand Black Iron, I thought it was one of the best things he did. It sat in Frank Rehn's gallery from 1935 until I bought it in 1951. No one bought it, but I thought it was good. So, of course, I wrote immediately to Burchfield and started a long correspondence. I bought several Edward Hoppers. From then each year, I became increasingly involved. To me art was a timeless experience. If I was looking at a Rembrandt I was experiencing it at that point. If I was looking at a Stuart Davis (who was alive at that time) or if I was looking at a Jackson Pollock, these to me were all contemporary experiences. I enjoyed looking at all of them. But, as I got so interested in the 20th Century, I also became interested in the American 19th Century artists. My most important teacher, of course, was Ted Richardson, but also at this time I met Billy Suhr, the restorer for the Frick. I used to go to his studio and we had long discussions about connoisseurship and so forth. I met Lloyd Goodrich and we used to talk about Thomas Eakins and Albert Ryder and Winslow Homer. I met Jack Baur.

**PC:** What do you think was the most important influence in developing your interest in the 19th Century -- in the earlier American painters?

**LF:** It was almost spontaneous. I'd look at a man like Edward Hopper and people like Charles Burchfield and John Marin and I'd start to wonder: where did they come from? What was the stimulation of the American scene? What happened just before them? And I kept going back and back and back, all the way to Copley. I remember having long discussions with Ben Shahn. Now Shahn was always interested in people. Some years later he once discussed with me how he enjoyed going to New Zealand. I said, "Gee, the scenery must be beautiful." He said, "The scenery was beautiful but the cities were dull." To Shahn it was the throbbing of people in the cities. The last day that he was ever out of the hospital in March 1969 I rented a car and a driver. He said, "All I want to do is drive through the streets of New York and Brooklyn." He looked at the people and the life on the streets and the buildings and everything. He said, "What a great city this is! How marvelous!" To him it was people and buildings. With John Marin it was the storm and buildings and the light that he loved. He was interested somewhat in the city but never so much in the relationship of the people to the city as he was in the buildings. In a lot of the John Marins you see the buildings pressing against each other. Shahn was always interested in people and their relationship to the cities. I had many discussions with Edward Hopper. He was a very lonely man. He was a great admirer of Thomas Eakins and talked a lot about him. Always there was a loneliness about him. He was very sweet, very gentle, and very deep. I used to drive up to Seneca, New York to see Burchfield. He was a man who was primarily interested in the sounds of summer and the temperature. He was always listening to sounds and talking about light or something. During the 1930's he was very depressed about the Depression. That's when he did his famous Parade. I got a letter from him. He used to talk about cracks in it. In that picture you see a bridge and looking through the bridge you see an unemployment parade, very peaceful; sort of that there was nothing they could do. There was a crack in the structure. That was in 1932. He painted it in blacks because he said he felt in that mood. His relationship to the cities was one of industry and rainy streets. One of his early paintings is of a steel mill town. But I found that primarily he was interested in the sounds of summer and the heat waves. To him heat waves were visual. Or the sounds of the katydid he would actually paint visually. Stuart Davis was another artist who painted really what he knew. All these great artists were to me very simple men; not plain men; oh, no, they were very sensitive, very bright. They were in the simplicities of life. They weren't in all of this type of, to me, over-complications that so much is being made of. When I look at Stuart Davis's paintings, I actually see the man. I actually hear how the music was roaring in the studio. Davis had a child late in life. He was a very interesting man. On the other hand there's a man like George Schreiber who is doing

quite well with graphics right now. And he's also doing a lot of large watercolors. Schreiber was always interested in a visual philosophical thing. He did a watercolor called *The War Bride and the Widow*, and it's quite an interesting water color. And he did a lithograph of it later. It shows a bride dressed in white at one end of the picture and at the opposite end of the paper a widow dressed in black. In the distance there is a group of people walking on crutches. And there's a piece of paper floating in the air. I would say that Schreiber in my opinion is almost more related to the intellectual French. In fact, he speaks French fluently. American painting is very direct and frank. Franklin Watkins is like Ivan Albright; he's all by himself. I first got interested in Ivan Albright through a picture I saw in the Art Institute of Chicago that shows a hand just turning a doorknob with a wreath on the door. I started to look at more and more Ivan Albrights. I wrote letters to him. One time he invited me to his studio in Chicago. A friendship came out of this. He began calling me Larry. He would say, "Larry, I am the greatest collector of dirt." But perhaps that's a little ahead of the story. I remember that when I first wrote him and said how much I liked his work and that I'd like to meet him, he said that he was going to be in Detroit. So I invited him to dinner. We wondered what kind of man was this who did the *Portrait of Dorian Gray*, who did this *Hand*, who did all of this painting in black and all of this sort of decayed flesh-type things or still-lives that are black and with a lot of dust and dirt and cobwebs on them. I had never happened to see a photograph of him. I pictured him as a tall, thin man, perhaps morose and quiet. My wife and I were curiously awaiting his arrival that evening. The doorbell rang; I opened the door and I looked right over his head. He's sort of a short man; and he has a round face and he was smiling from ear to ear. All that evening, instead of being morose, as we expected, he was just cracking one joke after another. Over the years since, I have wished I could crack some of those jokes. He told us that, when he went to the Pennsylvania Academy, he used to stand by the heat register in the floor because it used to blow the girls' dresses up and he was always interested in that. He was really a marvelous man. Contrary to what people think, he makes very elaborate drawings and studies. He has forces and reactions. He has arrows showing the way the thing should run in a still life; whole sets of drawings. There is very little known about this. When I went to Chicago and saw his very elaborate setup, I saw these things. I remember once there was something missing in one of his still-lives. He wanted a certain type of lamp. He searched for it for six months. All of a sudden he discovered it sitting right there in one corner all the time in a pile of junk. He has always said, "I am probably the world's laziest painter." But he isn't. He thinks a great deal about it. He works very slowly. As an artist, he's such a strong individual that the so-called art writers have trouble putting him in a slot. He's not a part of any school. He's simply an individual who paints the way he sees it. Now Franklin Watkins in his own right is a very strong individual. He is a very delicate, sensitive intellectual who thinks a great deal. I remember being out on his porch in New Jersey. We were looking at a satellite going over. It was one of the first satellites. He said, "Look, Larry, how it goes on and off, on and off." And his hands started going and tracing the pattern in the air. He did a painting of that called *Making a Monkey Jump*. It's a very famous Watkins oil painting. It shows a lady holding a hoop and a monkey sitting on a table and the lady is trying to make the monkey jump through the hoop. But the monkey has got his head sort of turned away as if he'll have no truck with what's going on. Now the monkey to Watkins was a symbol, a medieval symbol, of the lust of men, the mischief of men. The whole idea of trying to make the monkey jump was that at that time they were having a great deal of trouble with rockets exploding on the pad and the failure of the first experiments. Watkins was always interested in science and the things that went on around him. He was always peculiarly interested in the stock market for the excitement of it, or the tips he got on it. He got pleasure from it. He'd have *The Wall Street Journal* delivered to his house. In other words, all these men were simple men but they were aware of the world around them. Not one of these men that I thought were great found it necessary to walk nude in the street; or, say, have to talk through a lady interpreter; or have all kinds of antic showmanship like some of the art has become today. It's more a performance rather than a contemplative, reflective art.

**PC:** They did their thing and that was enough.

**LF:** That's right.

**PC:** You started collecting portraits of artists?

**LF:** Yes. I was always interested in the artist looking at himself. I had an Albert Ryder Self-Portrait. Then came O'Hare. I had Aaron Bohrod do a portrait of Ivan Le Lorraine Albright. I have a self-portrait of Billy Suhr, of Franklin Watkins, of Heliker, of Louis Bouche, of Worthington Whittredge, of Chase; of many different artists. Wherever I could get a self-portrait. It's always interesting to me to see the kind of statement that an artist makes about himself through his own art.

**PC:** Do you have a Tobey? Because he's done so many.

**LF:** I have many Tobeyes but I don't happen to have a self-portrait. I wish I did. I think Tobey is a great artist. I'm very interested in Tobey; he's a very interesting man. I think Morris Graves is another one. What's so exciting about art is that there are so many of these individual approaches. That's why I so resent people trying to put cliches and group everybody together. These artists are individuals who don't say that "I'm a part of the New York School" or anything else. They sit down and paint the certain way that they want to. Lately some of the people have tried to be part of a school and so forth. And their art reflects it, too. It's rather boring and over-generalized in style.

**PC:** Yes, they have to break away if they're really going to do anything.

**LF:** Yes. I think so.

**PC:** How did you come to collect the self-portraits? What was it that got that going?

**LF:** Once I got interested in the artist's work, I got interested in the artist and I was then interested in how the artist would paint himself. It was sort of . . . but not exactly . . . . I remember when I was in high school, the teacher would say, "Write an analysis of yourself." Well, this was sort of a self-analysis of the artist's own style. It was interesting to me to see how many of those artists painted themselves in a most sober, devastating way. For instance, Walt Kuhn's self portrait. The Kennedy Galleries has just acquired a Self-Portrait of Raphael Soyer. They're all very sober approaches to themselves. I think that perhaps, as I remember, Rembrandt didn't; he had some quite sort of whimsical or joking portraits of himself. As some of the other Dutch artists did. And, of course, there are some Americans, too. But most of those that I've seen produced in this country are very straightforward.

**PC:** Didn't Bohrod do one with all kinds of material . . . ?

**LF:** Yes, he did. And it's very interesting. And there he used symbols. I have that one. And Aaron Bohrod's Self-Portrait shows a head of him and in the background he reproduced the mirror self-portrait, and then he's got a heart with a pin going through it; in another part he's got a hand with a brush in it, and in another part he's got an eye. The hand, the eye, and the heart in the self-portrait.

**PC:** Do you still collect those?

**LF:** Yes.

**PC:** Were there any especially interesting experiences involved with the older pictures like the Peale, or the Copley, or Alston?

**LF:** Oh, many. to get the Peale paintings I dealt with the Peale family. To get Allstons I dealt with private individuals and I dealt with dealers. But I'd really go after a particular picture. To get the famous Hopper Lighthouse that now hangs in the Met I went after that particular picture. My going after was a certain training. In 1959, Ted Richardson said to me, "You know, what the American art field needs is a good dealer." I laughed that off. He mentioned it another time; he said, "You know, you're peculiarly trained, you're interested in research." Being a good friend, he complimented my natural eye very much and the energy and all. He said, "You have factors that would do a lot for American art if you became a dealer." I just laughed it off and completely forgot about it. In 1960, Barbara and I went on a trip to Europe with Rudy Wunderlich and his wife, just as friends. Suddenly one day Rudy said, "You know, you ought to come into the business and be a partner with me." I laughed that off. Then, all of a sudden two years later, in 1962, with my whole life devoted to the study of art, I was getting a lot of people interested, and I wasn't making any commissions. I would send people to dealers. I refused commissions. I refused gifts from dealers as long as I wasn't a dealer. But I stimulated a lot of people. That used to give me pleasure to see somebody get started in art; to see his collection grow. Then in 1962, I suddenly began talking to my wife about the possibility of becoming a dealer. At that time my dad had a real estate undertaking in Detroit with which we didn't completely agree with him on. I thought it was great that my dad wanted to do something, wanted to build a beautiful building for Detroit. But I felt that somebody had better stay there and sort of back him up. Then another thing happened: at the beginning of 1962 the new Mayor called me in and asked me to go on the Arts Commission. At first I turned this down, but, on the insistence of some of my friends in Grosse Pointe, I saw that as a challenge. They needed buildings that they didn't have, and one thing and another, so I decided to accept that. And I postponed for four years the idea of becoming an art dealer. Then a few years later, my mother died and I felt again I had to back up my dad. But in about December 1965, in fact it was January 1966, I thought, I am now forty years old; if I don't do this move now, I never will. And I thought I had a lot of experience working in the Museum and with the Archives of American Art to become an art dealer. And I really wanted to do it. I saw it as a very challenging thing. So we finally made up our minds. In April 1966, the first persons I told Mr. & Mrs. Edsel Ford and Bob Tannahill, my friends, that I was going to resign from the Arts Commission in June and that in July I would be moving to New York to become a professional dealer. The next person I told was Bill Woods, the Director of the Art Institute. And of course I told my in-laws and I told my father that I was going to move. I had my own business interests anyhow at that time. In May 1966, I resigned from the Arts Commission, from the Founders Society. I resigned as Treasurer of the Society of Arts and Crafts (we had built a new building for the school). And I resigned from The White House Committee on Fine Arts. I just resigned from all of the lay person things that I was giving money to and working for over the years and I turned professional. We sold our house and, in the middle of July, I took the family to New York to start a whole new chapter in my art life.

**PC:** A great Change.

**LF:** It was a great change and a fascinating one. I have many friends in Detroit; I like the city. I think anyplace you go you make the city exciting to you. And I think a lot is being done in Detroit; I found it very challenging. I've made many friends in New York and I love New York; I like the people in New York. I think anyplace one moves to, whether it's Detroit or New York or Denver or anyplace, you bring a lot to that place, too, and a great deal of what you make out of it is up to you.

**PC:** What was the quality that interested you in becoming a dealer?

**LF:** Well, I felt that the American art field left a lot to be desired. I always wanted to do more in publishing. That's why last year, we finally started The American Art Journal. I felt there was an approach. I was sick and tired of some of the cliches that I was hearing up and down Madison

Avenue. Now let me set this straight: There are a lot of good art dealers, but I felt that in the American art field there wasn't enough. And I had an approach of my own. My approach was that if you support an artist that's thirty, that's good. You support an artist that's seventy, that's good. And I saw art as a continuous thing. I didn't believe in saying that you buy art done in 1960, nor do I believe you buy art done in 1760. I think you buy something that's very beautiful, very good, in 1760 and 1960. And this total approach is what I've been working on, and also stimulating people. I felt there wasn't enough done overseas. Really, most of the pictures overseas were either given away as gifts or begging European museums to buy them, and so forth. Well, while it's still a very small part of our total business, I'm quite happy that we've sold a Gilbert Stuart to a national museum in Europe. We sold Ben Shahn's to national museums. They paid in their own currency, these weren't gifts. I've been doing work in Japan and South America. Then, as a dealer, I got interested in improving graphics. We went into the business of publishing graphics. These are all things that stimulate me. In other words, merely sitting and selling a commodity isn't interesting enough. My thrill comes from working with a collector, stimulating him, educating him. And also new kinds of challenges such as doing business abroad, such as publishing graphics, such as getting more people to understand somebody like Elihu Vedder. When I was in Europe in 1962 I found a lot of Elihu Vedder correspondence which I gave to the Archives of American Art. I bought a lot of his paintings, too. These are the kinds of things that make being a dealer exciting.

**PC:** Did you have any idea before of possibly working with another gallery or having your own kind of thing?

**LF:** The idea first came to me that I would open up my own gallery. But then I saw that with a good partner that perhaps you could even do more and you could even be freer to work where you'd be . . . it's a very personal business. Now let me state that, in the past year, I've had several Funds come and offer me fortunes in stock and so forth that would go into a great deal of money, if I'd operate art funds for them. I've turned all of this down. Many people have discussed this with me; all of them I've turned down. In fact, now I won't even discuss the matter with anybody. At first I gave them a courtesy hearing.

**PC:** There's enormous interest in that sort of thing.

**LF:** Yes. I'm violently opposed to it. The thing that interests me about art is the personal approach: you select the work of art; you sell the work of art. That's what's exciting to me. Otherwise you might as well sell shoes and so forth because those are standardized selling procedures. Personally I want to keep it small and personal. Kennedy Galleries has thirty-seven employees but we still have very tight control here. We have different divisions. A good part of the quality selling is done by me personally. I have my own clientele.

**PC:** How did this change affect your collecting?

**LF:** Very much. When I finally became a dealer, one of the things that I was determined to try to avoid was the mistakes of other dealers. Then I started making plenty of mistakes of my own so I didn't need to follow their mistakes. For example, I remember visiting several dealers and hearing them say, "This is a beautiful picture but I'm putting it in my own collection." In other words, it's so good that it isn't for sale; he's going to own it personally. Or I'd be invited to a dealer's house . . . . May I state at this point that I've always been shocked at how few dealers actually live with art objects in their homes! This has always been shocking to me. But every now and then a dealer will have it set up, they invite me to their home, and all of a sudden a picture will appear on their wall that I know wasn't there at another time and he would sort of make an innuendo that because it was I, this picture was for sale. I didn't like that whole approach. So when I became a dealer I was

determined that I would no longer collect American art; that I'd keep the things I wanted to keep, and sell off some work if I needed funds. I decided that I would collect Greek vases, Renaissance bronzes, Dutch or Venetian paintings. These things appealed to me enormously, but I was not selling them. Consequently I considered them as my hobby, they were not my professional bent. And when I discovered a Bingham or a great Winslow Homer or an Eakins or a Ben Shahn, I didn't pull out, say, one of the great ones, one of Ben's great works, and send it to my house. So my customers knew that I was loyal to them; I didn't say to them, "This is so great but you can't buy it. In other words, you can only buy second best. I have first pick." And many of my clients have told me that they respect that. Another thing: when my clients come to my house, it's a personalized experience; nothing there is for sale. Also, let me state that I don't have all my clients come to my house. Only those that have become my close friends; and some have.

**PC:** So you draw a line?

**LF:** I definitely draw a line on who gets into my house. I even draw a line on who I wait on in the gallery. I don't care about the amounts of money. I have clients who could spend millions; I have clients who could spend maybe a thousand dollars in two years -- five hundred dollars a year. It's their interest that counts with me. And my own personal motivation is working with them. I have kicked clients out who are multimillionaires who are only interested in can they make twenty percent or thirty percent, and there's no real spark there. Now I don't care whether or not they know anything. The fact that they want to know something is what interests me. I mean, they're not supposed to know; I'm supposed to know. I have twenty-five collectors that I'm very close to, who are building very great collections. And I think I've motivated them into really looking at pictures, thinking about pictures, studying pictures, learning about the total thing, the economics or history, the social background. That's what's stimulating.

**PC:** That's interesting because I've been approached by people on these Funds and all the stuff that goes on. And it's my feeling and I keep saying, "If you're going to sell a Fund idea, making a percentage in dollars on an investment period, after a year or two, people are going to get bored because they want a new stock and it's just another thing."

**LF:** Right.

**PC:** I say, "If you're really involved with what the paintings are about, that goes on forever. You never learn enough. There's always something else."

**LF:** That's right.

**PC:** But that's a little difficult for them to take, at least so far.

**LF:** Right.

**PC:** What do you think of things like that? Do you think people really are going to set up mutual funds?

**LF:** Well, several already have been set up. I think very little of them or of the people that are doing it. There's one Fund going around using my name. I just casually met this guy and he discussed the matter with me. I turned the whole thing down. The next thing I knew he was going around saying he was a great friend of mine. That's one of the great difficulties: your name is batted all over and everybody uses your name. Some of these people you don't know at all; others you may know slightly. Others you have nothing at all to do with. But they don't hesitate to use your name. But

categorically I am opposed to every approach that's been taken on this. Just like my partner and I have been offered a great deal of money to go public. I know that by doing so we could make millions, but we have refused to do so. This is our personal business. We're in it; we like it. Our clients expect us to make a profit; they expect us to find them the best works of art. But I just want to stay "us." Today, when more and more things go public and there's increasing complexity, I like to keep business as simple as possible. Even trying to keep it simple on our scale is complicated. But I like it this way.

**PC:** I'm curious, how did the situation with Da Capo start? How did you select them for . . . ?

**LF:** Somebody came to me and said . . . . We had just started The American Art Journal. For some time I had known Milton Esterow, knew his writings. He came to me one day, oh, a couple of years ago -- after I was in New York for about a year and a half -- and he said that he had written for the New York Times for many years of his life. In fact, when I first moved to New York in 1966, he did a lot of research and he wrote a wonderful story in the Times. You're always afraid of what they're going to write. But he wrote a very fair, very well-written story. I read other stories of his. His reputation was always of a very fair writer. He would go into the depths of a story. He came to me and said that he was interested in leaving the New York Times; that he had been there since he was seventeen or eighteen years old, that some twenty or twenty-one years had gone by and he wanted to make a change, and that he wanted to become associated with the arts. Well, this appealed to me immediately because I was already thinking along the ideas of expanding our publication program. We had been publishing the Kennedy Quarterly for some time. It comes out four times a year. But that's the selling end. It's a catalogue of certain paintings that we have in stock (although our best pictures don't even get into the Quarterly; we sell them too quickly). Then we have our exhibition catalogues which we've been trying to make fully visual so people can see, less words but more looking at the picture itself. But I was always interested in doing something that would have nothing to do with the commercial aspect of Kennedy Galleries but encourage young and old scholars to have another outlet for writing, and not have slick layouts, but content. With that idea The American Art Journal was born. Just before this, Milton Esterow joined the staff of the Kennedy Galleries. And he and I now are co-editors of the American Art Journal. We have subscriptions from all over the world. You must pay for it. It is not given out to our best customers.. Everybody has to pay for it, museums, and everybody. It's a point of pride with me. We give our exhibition catalogues and so forth. Somebody came to us and started talking about reprints and so forth. I was interested not only in doing reprints but in doing other books. So Da Capo came and said, "Can we put up half the money? You can have all the control you want and so forth, but we'll put up half the money for the magazine." Since our magazine doesn't carry advertising (it's purely on subscription) we were set to lose so much money. And, if they wanted to carry half the loss, that sounded good to me. I mean, as long as we control the articles, which we do, and we publish it. So it's purely a Kennedy Galleries concept. But they own half of it. Then they said, "How about going half on reprints?" We've done that. The idea of the reprints -- we've done Henri's Letters, and Copley. We've one things like various books that scholars want and, because there are short runs of them, they have become artificially highly inflated in price. We're able to reprint those for scholars and so forth. Again, it's not a money-making venture but a service. Certain books are now becoming available that never have been before. Also, now we're going to bring out a couple of original books. A book of Ben Shahn photographs is coming out. We are not trying to duplicate what has been done already, just fill in the gaps.

**PC:** Oh, there are a lot.

**LF:** Right. And while I was thinking about all that, I was very dissatisfied with all the rotary press type of graphics being done in offset. That's when I got interested in publishing our own graphics.

We got Miro to do a great one for us. We got four by Calder where he did all of the image-making himself. We got Chagalls where no chromos were used but Chagall did all the colors himself. Of course, we published Shahns. And Rattners. Our own artists we published with Murlot. A great friendship developed between Ferdinand Murlot, Jacques Murlot and me. We control the quality. They're done on handmade paper. They're limited editions. The plates are destroyed. They're our standards. This is another thing that interests me.

**PC:** That's interesting about the Calders because so many of his have been printed after gouaches and things.

**LF:** Many of them have been printed after gouaches. Many times they're reproductions. But not for us. For us he made his own plates or stones; he did all the master images himself. He even worked on transfer paper himself.

**PC:** That's terrific. Are these out yet?

**LF:** Yes, they're out. Two of them are just coming out next week. They've been highly successful. They run about seven colors. That's another thing: our artists can use one color or three colors or fourteen colors. It's up to them how many plates or stones they want to make; they have a completely free hand. Murlots like it. Because I want to do the best and they know that. As I say, a great personal friendship has grown between Ferdinand Murlot and his son, Jacques, who has moved to New York in the last few years.

**PC:** How do you think that your interest in scholarship, the Da Capo projects, and all these things are going to affect the American art market?

**LF:** Well, let's think about The American Art Journal step by step. The American Art Journal has affected the market because Henry Steele Commagee wrote us how great the magazine is. And there are younger people who've never had a source, who were always complaining that there were so few outlets for their articles. Merely its being there has made people think more about writing and doing research in American art. Our exhibition catalogues have had a great deal of influence on the thinking. We're going to do an exhibition on Vedder. We've got an exhibition running now on Worthington Whittredge. We've taken some of the younger artists like Peter Paone and we've been building a better understanding of his graphics and so forth. Consequently, I'm quite excited about what we're doing. We arranged a big exhibition for museums in Japan. This is the first time a dealer has done this. A Ben Shahn exhibition will open in May in the National Gallery in Tokyo. And we have other things like that planned. For example, Kennedy Graphics, which is a division of Kennedy Galleries which publishes things, arranged for a show in January in San Juan, Puerto Rico. The show practically sold out. So instead of the North Americans just flocking and buying everybody else, North Americans were sold actually to other people outside this country. We had Calder and Shahn, Miro, Chagall, Colleen Browning, Peter Paone, Seymour Lipton, Joseph Hirsch -- these were our originals that were being sold down there.

**PC:** Have you had much interest in sculpture? You haven't collected very much sculpture, have you?

**LF:** Yes, I'm very interested in sculpture. As a matter of fact, we represent Jose de Creeft and Ibram Lassaw. We're having a big Jose de Creeft show next month. We have an Ibram Lassaw show coming up next year. With 19th Century sculpture we did a lot with Rimmer. Then at the turn of the century with MacMonnies and August Saint-Gaudens, and people like Samuel Murray is a great friend. I'm very interested in sculpture.

**PC:** Did you collect much sculpture?

**LF:** Yes. I have had Alexander Calder, Richard Lippold, de Creeft, a small piece of Henry Moore's (I'd like to have more) and King. Then also I had 19th Century American sculptors too. I think this is a big field.

**PC:** Yes.

**LF:** And I think interest in it will constantly grow.

**PC:** What about dealers outside the New York City area? Do you find that the quality is improving? That there are more galleries opening?

**LF:** There are definitely more galleries opening up all over. The worst thing, though, is the menopause gallery. That's both in New York and outside. That's the lady who has absolutely nothing else to do in the house so she decided it would be nice to be an art dealer. She knows nothing about it. So suddenly she wants to be an art dealer. She's never really collected art or lived with it. Her husband is willing to get her active and will put up money for the gallery but it's not a real professional operation. We have much of that. But in addition to that we have some galleries opening up throughout the United States which are really quite sincere operations, where they're trying to do a good job, trying to get the best art. Much of that, of course, they're still buying from New York dealers. I think in Chicago and Detroit and St. Louis, in all of these cities, there are menopause galleries and a handful of really sincere intelligent operations.

**PC:** Yes. Well, are there scholars that particularly interest you who do research or who write for publications?

**LF:** Oh, yes. Bill Young, the director for the Columbus, Ohio Museum; I like Flexner very much. Of course, for me Edgar P. Richardson is tops; and Lloyd Goodrich and Jack Baur. Then there's a young man, Marvin Sadik, who's just become director of the National Portrait Gallery. I have a high regard for him and his abilities. And there are other young people like Ted Stebbins who's starting to write. There's a man out at the Los Angeles County Museum, Larry Cierry, whom I've met several times. I find him quite an interesting person. I'm beginning to sense that there are more people going into the American field. Not superficially, but really going in, in a serious way.

**PC:** Will you handle European artists here? Or no?

**LF:** For the first time in the field of graphics, we have a European, Minault, who is a French living artist. But we will always specialize in American artists. We have one or two European artists. For example, behind your head now is a beautiful Rouault Still-life. We have always had an occasional European picture. And our Print Shop, which is different from our Graphics publishing division, has always handled Rembrandt and unique prints like Ensor or Munch, and so forth.

**PC:** You don't plan to go into 20th Century?

**LF:** Not on a heavy scale. We may add on one artist we like -- I wouldn't say -- but we will always specialize in American art with perhaps one or two European artists. So far we're strictly American but we are considering one right now. That's why I happen to mention it; but never will we give up our specialty.

**PC:** Do you think your relationship to the artists has changed now that you've become a dealer?

**LF:** Yes. Not with my real friends like Franklin Watkins and, even though I became Shahn's dealer three years ago, he always was my friend to the day he died. And so was his wife. Not somebody like Abraham Rattner, whom we represent, or Brenda Kuhn, the daughter of Walt Kuhn, or Jimmie Kearns, or Jose de Creeft, all of these artists. They're still my friends, but there's no question that being a dealer, being responsible to guide the artist and advise him financially and so forth, being responsible for his work, is a kind of relationship that exists. You're still friends. Peter Paone is a very close friend of mine. But it's still an added responsibility that goes in depth. It's almost like being a father to the artist, which is different than being a peer.

**PC:** Yes, that's true. What about artists, though, who are friends, or whose work you had purchased and don't represent now?

**LF:** Some of them are still friends. Others would like to come here and of course we're so jammed, and you can only do so much -- that when you don't take an artist on, the situation unfortunately gets a little bit strained.

**PC:** You've been dealing here now for about four years. Have you been able to develop very many people from scratch as collectors?

**LF:** Yes, many. That's the greatest thrill of all. I've developed many from scratch who've come in who've heard of me, or by recommendation. There are others who perhaps have collected only European artists that I've been able to get more interested in North American artists without saying they shouldn't be interested in European artists. I mean they should be interested in European artists. I think our country is a very exciting one. American 19th Century art was very creative, very personal. I think that of our 20th Century artists. I think they should be interested in it. I'm interested in this kind of stimulation to make people realize how great the American visual arts really are. My being a dealer has caused me to lose even more respect for most dealers. It's a sad thing. Of course, there are those dealers that I have a great deal of respect for, but it's unfortunate that many of them don't care what they sell as long as they make a sale. I'm not talking about those of us who make honest mistakes. If you do anything good you make so many mistakes, but they're mistakes. But there are dealers who are just indifferent to anything; they don't care.

**PC:** They could sell shoes or automobiles or something.

**LF:** Right, that I don't like.

**PC:** How many dealers do you think there are across the country that you've dealt with as a collector and now as a dealer who are really important people for exhibiting things?

**LF:** There are only maybe three dealers that I respect in the American field, and maybe about the same in the European field. There are eight hundred galleries in New York. Another thing that has bothered me a great deal is that there are many people, scholars, that are actually amateur dealers. They buy art and they sell art. And still they're supposed to be representing an institution. I consider that highly unethical. Many don't. But there is some of that. Some day I think that people . . . I'm very leery of the academic world.

**PC:** Well, that seems to be such a good way for them to make extra money, too.

**LF:** Yes, but it affects their thinking. And it isn't right because they try to hide it. You see, a dealer who I think performs a real service says, "My job is to buy and sell works of art and educate my clientele." These others say, "No, I am above the commercialism." But really they are not. Not all of

them are. Some of these people are very, very sincere; some of them are great. But there is too much of that going on. I don't give a damn if they all become dealers but they should say so. In fact, the more good dealers there are, the more it would help each of us.

**PC:** What do you think of all the private dealers, quasi-private dealers, there are around?

**LF:** I think a lot of people have been burned by them. I think some of them are good. I think you've got to be very careful. Regarding Kennedy Galleries people should think: why do we have a reputation? There's a lot of mudslinging. One museum director will be jealous and sling mud at another museum director. And yet real quality stands up, and through all of this you can see the really good ones. And some people think that by going to a smaller dealer they're really better off. But they can be wrong. A smaller dealer is usually buying from a larger dealer. They should ask: Why does, say, that attorney have a good reputation in the first place? It has to be because he has successfully handled certain projects; otherwise he wouldn't exist. When somebody buys from a well-established gallery or something . . . I like to do business with somebody who has a lot of pride in himself because that means he wants to protect his reputation and he backs up his mistakes; his reputation is worth more than money. To me humility is somebody who knows his worth. I don't believe in all the mumbling and false humility and I don't believe in the idea of buying something off the street corner. I always went to the best -- the people that I thought were the best. I'd go to the largest gallery or the one with the best reputation; or to a small one if he had a good reputation. But the small one would usually be . . . if he was really a good dealer. It wasn't a question of price because he'd be just as expensive as one of the big dealers. It would be simply because he had a particular work of art that I was interested in. One of the things that I've been working on here is developing our scouting system. We have full-time scouts on our payroll. To my knowledge we are the only people who do that. Most of the time somebody brings you something and you buy it. In addition to that, I pay people to go out to do research. Another thing we did at Kennedy Galleries, we have three people in our library department. Unfortunately, most of the American art galleries so far don't have any librarians. They have a few books sitting around. Wildenstein's and Knoedler's have art libraries but they are connected with the old masters and American, but primarily with old masters. I think we are the only American specialists that have a full-time librarian and assistants and a big collection of microfilm and books. We are that interested in making sure about American art and doing research.

**PC:** Well, do you have documentation on the pictures then when they're sold?

**LF:** Yes, we do. But I always train the buyer to think: the documentation is interesting. But the first thing is to look at the work of art; do you like it; do you not like it? Why is it good; what about the color; what about the style; what about the composition? Then, after you've decided that you like it, then the documents and so forth become interesting. But one of the things to remember is that most real fakes have very heavy documentation. I've never seen any fake that wasn't signed.

**PC:** Yes. Very few fakes outlast a generation.

**LF:** That's right. On the other hand, I've seen great works of art that we don't know who did them. There's such a thing as buying a very fine painting and the artist is not known. Americans are very leery of buying an anonymous painting. And this is a mistake because they could get for a lesser price a very fine beautiful painting but it's simply not known who painted it.

**PC:** Well, they like labels. I mean buying an anonymous painting requires a certain degree of connoisseurship. Which is difficult. **OF:** Right, that's what we have to stress. You see, we spend a great deal of money and there's more art being bought. But I think the connoisseurship level is

something that has to be worked on.

**PC:** Do you think that art is something that really can be sold? I mean, if somebody comes in and says, "You know, I'm interested in early 20th Century American paintings. What do you have?"

**LF:** I think it would help motivate them. I think the sensitivity is there. And I think different people have different degrees of it. But I think anybody's level can be polished off by motivating them. And sometimes I have seen a guy who is a very self-made man who came in for all the wrong reasons: say, he wanted social status and so forth. But after working with him, art grabs him and he becomes the strongest collector for all the right reasons, and he doesn't give a damn about the social status any more. And it has added a great deal to his life. So I am a little broad-minded about that. What I don't go for is, say, a syndicate of doctors or lawyers or anybody else who come in and say, "We have \$500,000, Mr. Fleischman. We want you to buy the art." And then they want to . . . I'm not interested in that. If somebody comes in and says, "I really am interested in a picture, and even if they want a name -- and I know they want a name artist because they're unsure of themselves -- I'm ready to work with them.

**PC:** What if they want an investment? You know, that's what they want?

**LF:** That's right. But I've had some clients buy for investment. I know it was for investment, but they still bought them individually. They were still willing to listen, and they won't sell all of it. They learn that there's an excitement out of the art experience and an enrichment of one's life; that you can replace the money faster than you can these experiences. The experience of love can't really be bought for money; the experience that one gets out of looking at a great work of art. If you have that ability, you enjoy these things and you're very fortunate.

**PC:** Are there any sort of areas that we haven't touched upon here that you think we should talk about?

**LF:** I don't know of any at the moment. I think collecting trends are an interesting pattern. I think there's a change going on in the type of collector.

**PC:** In what direction, what way?

**LF:** Better. We have all the crummy reasons but I think there are more and more people really wanting to get something out of life. They're looking for something to build up their own environment. After all, with a work of art you build your own environment. You live with it. Today you go out -- and it's no one's fault though we tend to blame everybody -- but there are simply more people on the street and we've just gotten bigger than we can handle. We haven't learned . . .

**PC:** Population explosion.

**LF:** That's right. But in your home, in that one-room apartment or ten-room apartment, you have built around you the books and the works of art. And that's your castle. It's crummy but true. That's what it has meant for you and I think for other people too.

**PC:** Yes. Do you think that all the college education has made a tremendous difference in collecting? Or doesn't it make that much difference?

**LF:** I think that it is a contributing factor. I think there are a lot of things: the fact that people have leisure, more education, more is written about art, and so forth. But a lot of it has done harm, too.

**PC:** In what way?

**LF:** I think the New York Times and some of these magazines have emphasized slick layouts, the latest fad. And you've got writers who look for sensationalism and they have a nervous tic for youth and so forth. I think they do a lot of harm. I think that amateur art, this kick about "everybody paint your own" has done harm. A professional artist sees that it's a struggle and he sweats and labors over his art. An amateur artist relaxes.

**PC:** He copies somebody else.

**LF:** Yes. Or even if he doesn't copy somebody else, he sits there and relaxes: it's not a problem to be solved; he doesn't have that drive for perfection of expression. So there's good and bad. But on the whole I think it's good. I have not yet felt that the level of scholarship is where it should be in ratio to the cost. I think in the Twenties and so forth we had perhaps a little better scholarship than we have now.

**PC:** It's interesting because, in doing a series of books, I've been interviewing editors and I'm just staggered at the quality of students that come out of Columbia or the Institute of Fine Arts and places like that. It's amazing.

**LF:** Yes, that's true. On the other hand, let's look at something else. You have a guy coming out of school. He's thirty years old. He's got his Ph.D. He had to write his thesis on a third-rate old master because there's already been so much written on the great ones that to be original he's forced into this. There aren't too many professors who know anything about American art, so they discouraged him and forced him to write on the third-rate old master. Of course, now that's begun to change somewhat. But the worst thing is that all these years he's been working with books and photographs. Over and over I see these kids coming out and they can't look at a real work of art. They say, "Who published it?" They don't say, "Gee, that interests me!" Or "That excites me." They're more interested in the signature, and that's all wrong. Another thing is they go to school so long without working with the art objects. In the Twenties we all experimented and have learned what we wanted to do. I'm still learning, still experimenting. I think that artists in their forties and fifties many times are greater. They really learn how to hold their media. I'm just learning expression now, what I want to do, and so forth. But my twenties were a great period of experimentation. By the time you get out of college and are in your thirties you're inundated and you're already trained incorrectly. I think any art historian would be better off not to study art history but study the classics as they do in England and work at a much earlier age in a museum, or with the actual objects. To me the art historian has destroyed . . . I'm not impressed by the art historian of today.

**PC:** They become statisticians.

**LF:** Statisticians is right, and rehashing what has been published. They're more interested in publication. So consequently I think this is having a negative effect, not a positive effect. I think there are going to be changes in this, though. But I think that, in general, people go to school too long. We all need to have an education. I remember how boring it was in school because we had to do . . . keep on waiting for the average students in the class. Someplace along the line we're going to have to have a system where we separate the higher education type and let him go on to higher education and work hard. And a general education for everybody. I think everybody should have a general education. Everyone should know something about history, something about the arts to enrich his life. But only so many people are talented enough and we should stop deluding ourselves, diluting our talented professors and spreading them around among mediocre students. So I would say that the greatest thing that can happen to art history is that we stop giving Ph.D's in art

history. And if we'd stop contributing to . . . I know the art historians . . . . But when I think

**PC:** No, I think the problems of scholarship really haven't started. I think the Archives in ten years or twenty years . . . .

**LF:** Well, I think the very fact that the Archives exists stimulates scholarship. I think the whole system now . . . . I think we're in a convulsion there. The whole idea of what is an education has got to change. We're still working on the same basis as we were fifty years ago, and we can't work that way. On the other hand, I don't agree with those who say we don't have to learn how to read and write and do arithmetic, because that's all wrong. Arithmetic is part of your daily living, and communication is. And those who want to throw out ancient history are stupid. We should learn more about ancient history. But nevertheless I do think we have to reevaluate what is an educated man. Personally I would say that the most boring guy in the world is one who has a Ph.D. in art history and he is the most ignorant about art.

**PC:** They wear dark glasses and don't see anything. It's amazing.

**LF:** Yes.

**PC:** Let's see, I've kind of run out of questions here. Are there any other things that you'd like to talk about?

**LF:** Not at this moment, no.

[END OF INTERVIEW]