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Oral history interview with Nina Cullinan and
Mary Boice, 1980 January 15

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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with Nina Cullinan and Mary Boice on January 15, 1980. The interview took place in Galveston, Texas, and was conducted by Sandra Curtis Levy for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

The Archives of American Art has reviewed the transcript and has made corrections and emendations. This transcript has been lightly edited for readability by the Archives of American Art. The reader should bear in mind that they are reading a transcript of spoken, rather than written, prose.

Interview

MARY BOICE: Now you're going to ask me questions?

SANDRA CURTIS LEVY: What I'm going to do first is I'm just going to say that it's January 15, 1980, and we're in your Galveston apartment with Mrs. Mary Boice, with Nina Cullinan and Sandra Curtis. We thought today, we would begin by discussing Mrs. Boice's arrival in Houston. Do you remember the year you came to Houston, Mrs. Boice?

MARY BOICE: Well, we were married in 1912. It was about five years after that. We lived in Fort Worth, and the war came on, and my husband had a government contract to build five oil barges. Had to start with buying the land, and building a mold loft, and I don't know what all. We got one built when the armistice came on. We liked Houston so well we lived here after the war. Always lived here.

NINA CULLINAN: Where did you come from, though?

MARY BOICE: From Fort Worth. We lived in Fort Worth first, for five years.

SANDRA CURTIS LEVY: Were you both native Texans?

MARY BOICE: No, I came from Missouri. A little town Chillicothe, Missouri. A great many of the old-timers came from there, the Burtons [ph], and Lingos [ph], and Wapples [ph]. I don't think you want all that.

NINA CULLINAN: What about your husband? Where did he come from? Where did your husband come from, Arthur Boice?

MARY BOICE: I gave you that. From Jefferson.

NINA CULLINAN: I see. Texas?

MARY BOICE: Uh-huh [affirmative].

SANDRA CURTIS LEVY: Right. And when you came to Houston, your family was in Houston then?

NINA CULLINAN: Yeah, we were living then near Rice University. In 1970, she said she came. My family—well, they moved in 1990, I take it back. [00:02:00]

MARY BOICE: Well, how—

NINA CULLINAN: Two years after they came, my mother and father moved into the house they built in Shadyside, which eventually the Hobbes [ph] built up an bought. But it was across the street from—across the fountain by the Warwick Hotel. You know what Shadyside is?

SANDRA CURTIS LEVY: Yeah, right.

NINA CULLINAN: And my father set that whole property, that whole area out there—

MARY BOICE: It was a lovely house that we're talking about.

NINA CULLINAN: Yeah, but she was trying to get something on the—

MARY BOICE: Right across from the Warwick.

NINA CULLINAN: —times. Well, she again—and you want to ask me, ask me later. Pick as much as you can up from me.

SANDRA CURTIS LEVY: Right, I will. I just wanted to get correlation—

NINA CULLINAN: I will tell you one thing Mary Boice can make vivid again, is the fact that there was a foreigner, so-called, American foreigners, out-of-state people, have such mixed images of Texas and Houston. But I can say, which she bears out, that around the—1915, 19—just before the 1920s, there was, because of Rice, largely—it was sort of a focal point, I guess—there was that generation of people definitely interested in the mind, and the cultivation of the mind, and the fun of reading, and the fun of acting, or whatever. There was a so-called, in quotes, intellectual group gathered here and built, as I said, largely because of Rice's having come, and they found congenial people on the faculty. But these native historians, like Mr. Ford and the Boices, and many other names that she's mentioned in this, were trying to do this—they were all in their similar taste, and they did cultivate a little theater, they cultivated readings, anything that had to do with the life of the mind. But they weren't humorless people. They enjoyed life. That's my image of them, anyway.

MARY BOICE: Now, Caroline, where Mr. Clayton lived—the Claytons had a whole block, and that was just a gravel street. [00:04:07] And the Watkins—he was the architect you told them about.

NINA CULLINAN: For the museum.

SANDRA CURTIS LEVY: Right.

MARY BOICE: And James Chillman helped, too. That was just that little gravel street, and I used to walk into Hermann Park, and the quail [inaudible] up. It was just a cow pasture that— Calumet [ph] Drive—it's Calumet now Well, anyway. I'm no good at dates, and I haven't a good memory—

SANDRA CURTIS LEVY: Well, what we'd like to get is some—

MARY BOICE: —for it. It's these flashes that—

NINA CULLINAN: Yeah, but the dates aren't the thing.

SANDRA CURTIS LEVY: No, not as important as the ambience and what was really happening. Because like Ms. Cullinan says, there are so many misconceptions about Texas, and especially early Texas, as being completely roughneck and boisterous, and it's nice to get some history and perspective, and find out that, indeed, there existed, around Rice and around near the beginnings of the Museum of Fine Arts, and the cultural aspect of Houston that's generally not known, and it was really—

NINA CULLINAN: It was really there, and quite a nucleus. Because I was another generation once. These people, just a set of years above me, so that I absorbed all that and I knew it, somehow, to hear about these names and what they were interested in, and the little theater groups, and their reading groups, and even to the garden club. Garden club came somewhat out of that nucleus, didn't it, of those people?

MARY BOICE: Mr. Godwin [ph] says—

NINA CULLINAN: So there were some very civilized people here.

MARY BOICE: —that Rice and the garden club and the Shabby Shop were the three things that [they laugh]—

SANDRA CURTIS LEVY: What was the Shabby Shop?

NINA CULLINAN: Oh, famous antique shop, with a very sophisticated woman who ran it and really knew antiques. [00:06:04]

SANDRA CURTIS LEVY: Where was it?

NINA CULLINAN: First of all, it was in her house, in the Montrose area, and then from there, she went over across the Trinity Church on Main Street.

MARY BOICE: It's her attic. [Inaudible] attic. That's where I bought a rocking chair.

NINA CULLINAN: But that was the beginning, anyway. And then she moved over to—on Main Street, Main and Holman, across the street, side-by-side of Trinity Church, on the next block.

SANDRA CURTIS LEVY: And her name was what?

NINA CULLINAN: Mrs. uh—

MARY BOICE: Well, they were—

NINA CULLINAN: No, no, no. Let me try and think of her name. I mean—Shabby Shop. The woman who invented the Shabby—

MARY BOICE: Williamson?

NINA CULLINAN: Yes, Mrs.—

MARY BOICE: Ruby Williamson.

NINA CULLINAN: —Ruby Williamson. Then, with her, for all those years, was Ms. Hattie Mathee.

MARY BOICE: Hargrave [ph]. She married.

SANDRA CURTIS LEVY: Hattie Mathee?

NINA CULLINAN: Ms. Hattie, H-A-T-T-I-E, Mathee, M-A—

MARY BOICE: M-A-T-H-E-E. Hattie Mathee.

NINA CULLINAN: Hattie Mathee, who was a schoolteacher and unmarried, but Mrs.—and who worked very well with Mrs.—what was her name?

SANDRA CURTIS LEVY: Williamson.

NINA CULLINAN: Williamson. Because Mrs. Mathee was sort of scholarly and correct, because she taught school, and then Mrs.—

SANDRA CURTIS LEVY: —Williamson.

NINA CULLINAN: —Williamson had the flair, the eye and the flair. But that woman could pack it up, so they made a wonderful team. They'd go to Europe every year, every spring, I guess, wasn't it, and travel all over—well, not Europe, but England, and pop into Ireland and Scotland, and pick up antiques. They didn't go in for French, mostly English.

MARY BOICE: Well this might interest you for the early days. The way we heard artists was the two women's choral clubs. Do you remember them?

NINA CULLINAN: Yes. Oh, yes, I do.

MARY BOICE: I remember Heifetz [ph]. There were all these women in white, banked, and then the artist came out and sang, performed ahead, in front of them. [00:08:05] I remember Heifetz gave us—he was irritable anyway—coming out and kind of tripping over one of these women [laughs] and kicking out at her.

NINA CULLINAN: I bet he did.

SANDRA CURTIS LEVY: For Pete's sake.

NINA CULLINAN: That was his way.

SANDRA CURTIS LEVY: And they brought people like Heifetz and who else? Two women's choral—

NINA CULLINAN: Not [inaudible]. You know, the—

MARY BOICE: Ruby Williamson had a beautiful voice that she—

NINA CULLINAN: Yeah, but she asked what other artists besides Heifetz. What about—not [inaudible]. Was an actress. Who was the famous woman who came through here? Who did *The Dying Swan*. Who was that? Who was the famous dancer, the ballet dancer?

MARY BOICE: Oh, Pavlova.

NINA CULLINAN: Pavlova, yes. She was in Houston.

SANDRA CURTIS LEVY: She came to Hou—Anna Pavlova?

NINA CULLINAN: Sure, I saw her do *The Dying Swan*.

MARY BOICE: That's the first ballet I ever saw—

NINA CULLINAN: At the Scottish Rite Cathedral.

MARY BOICE: —was Pavlova and Fokine [ph] with the Russian Ballet.

NINA CULLINAN: Was that New York or where?

MARY BOICE: That was before I was married.

NINA CULLINAN: Yeah, but I saw—what am I trying to say?

SANDRA CURTIS LEVY: Pavlova?

NINA CULLINAN: Pavlova in Houston, and she did *The Dying Swan*. I remember that.

SANDRA CURTIS LEVY: Incredible.

NINA CULLINAN: I think it was at the Scottish Rite Cathedral.

MARY BOICE: Yes.

NINA CULLINAN: Cathedral, which is a—Scottish Rite Auditorium, it's called.

SANDRA CURTIS LEVY: And now it's been turned into artist studios.

NINA CULLINAN: Oh, is it? Is it? I didn't know. They had a very good theater here. I remember they had—who was the famous woman who did *The Little Minister* at the Prince of—

MARY BOICE: Novinia [ph]. Who do I want to say? The Russian actress. She was in the movies later. Nozimiva [ph].

NINA CULLINAN: I said Nozimiva. She was the actress. I'm trying to think about the dancer. She was—

MARY BOICE: I saw her faint in *Little Eyolf*, and they lowered the curtain open and knew she'd fainted. [00:10:02] She did it so beautifully. She really fainted and fell.

NINA CULLINAN: She really—unplanned faint.

MARY BOICE: On the stage, she wore these long, trailing garments, and I always thought she was a tall woman. Then she came out in the movies, and she was short. Oh, she was really an artist.

NINA CULLINAN: Who was it that did *The Dying Swan*? I've got my artists mixed up. That's Nozimiva, I think we called it. Well, it was the actress, but—any rate, some famous woman—dancer—did *The Dying Swan* and she came to Houston.

SANDRA CURTIS LEVY: But not Pavlova?

NINA CULLINAN: Perhaps it was Pavlova. Was she just turn-of-the-century, like 1920s, probably?

MARY BOICE: Last of the charter members.

NINA CULLINAN: That's what I wanted.

MARY BOICE: There were five of them.

SANDRA CURTIS LEVY: The last of the charter members of the Houston Garden—

MARY BOICE: Garden Club of Houston. It was Madge Roberts, Mrs. Herbert Roberts—do you want those names?

SANDRA CURTIS LEVY: Yeah.

MARY BOICE: Mrs. Herbert Roberts, and Mrs. Card Elliott, and Mrs. Harry Hilliard, and Mrs. Arthur Boice. Now I need one more. I've got four, haven't I?

SANDRA CURTIS LEVY: I didn't count. Maybe you have five.

MARY BOICE: Sometimes the word I want goes off and hides around the corner.

SANDRA CURTIS LEVY: For all of us. We can get that later, but what were the functions of the garden club?

MARY BOICE: Dr. Robert—Mrs. Robert Morris. I had her, didn't I?

SANDRA CURTIS LEVY: I should have written them down. I don't think so.

MARY BOICE: Well, that's the missing one.

SANDRA CURTIS LEVY: So there were five founding—

MARY BOICE: Five of us.

SANDRA CURTIS LEVY: Five charter members.

MARY BOICE: Yes.

NINA CULLINAN: Would you like to turn that off again? Would that help? I don't know if it's helpful.

[Audio Break.]

MARY BOICE: —Roberts came in very soon after that, but those are the first.

SANDRA CURTIS LEVY: Okay, and what were your functions when you founded the club? [00:12:02]

MARY BOICE: Well, we all liked to garden, and then we got so we had little flower shows. We had prizes, and then we got so we had them in the art museum. And then we got bigger and bigger, and then—Mrs. Mary Elliott wrote a book, a garden club book, for Houston, and Mr. Will Hogg paid for it, financed it. Then the Garden Club of River Oaks—we went into the garden club.

NINA CULLINAN: Federation of Garden Clubs.

MARY BOICE: The national one. And then the other—the River Oaks one wanted to use that—they thought they should use that club, because Mr. Will had paid for it. But Mary Elliott and Blanche Sewall had done most of the work, probably.

NINA CULLINAN: What club do you mean?

MARY BOICE: The Garden Club of Houston.

NINA CULLINAN: What did Will Hogg have to do with that?

MARY BOICE: He paid for the book publishing.

NINA CULLINAN: Oh, I see. I see. So then, from that—I didn't get that train of thought.

SANDRA CURTIS LEVY: From the transition to the River Oaks Garden Club.

MARY BOICE: Yes, that—well, I got out of the club because of some of this. You could see how they would claim it, and we had claimed it, and—

SANDRA CURTIS LEVY: Claim the book?

MARY BOICE: The book, yes. But that was something that made us eligible for membership in the national—

SANDRA CURTIS LEVY: National Federation.

MARY BOICE: —garden club, yes.

NINA CULLINAN: There was a way-back rivalry, and there was a little down-nosiness on the part of—well, maybe on the part of both sides. Wasn't there a little bit down-nosy attitude, somewhat, when the second garden club was formed? Weren't there sort of some dissidents?

MARY BOICE: Yes.

NINA CULLINAN: Or people who'd like to have been a part of the garden club, Houston Garden Club? [00:14:02]

MARY BOICE: The big gardens were in River Oaks, you see.

NINA CULLINAN: There was a little undercurrent as I picked up.

MARY BOICE: I just went out on grass, because I didn't have the muscle, a strong right arm, or the money. It got

to be very expensive.

NINA CULLINAN: Yeah, and it became somewhat—what is the word?—antiseptic, in that people weren't the dirt gardeners, the way you people who founded it, were, you know?

MARY BOICE: No. I had big places in the, um, well—

NINA CULLINAN: And became sort of a—well, it became a thing to be—

MARY BOICE: But you don't want to put all that in.

SANDRA CURTIS LEVY: Are there still two garden clubs in Houston?

NINA CULLINAN: Yes. Oh, yes.

SANDRA CURTIS LEVY: There still are?

NINA CULLINAN: Oh, yes.

SANDRA CURTIS LEVY: Which one still maintains the museum?

NINA CULLINAN: The Houston.

SANDRA CURTIS LEVY: It's the Houston?

NINA CULLINAN: The original one.

SANDRA CURTIS LEVY: The original one, your club that you founded?

NINA CULLINAN: That's right. The other, River Garden Club, their headquarters is at the former Civics. You know where that is, on Kirby and Westheimer.

SANDRA CURTIS LEVY: That's right.

NINA CULLINAN: Charming place that Will Hogg gave to the city and saved that house. And then they keep up the grounds at Bayou Bend. So they're very worshipful of the Hoggs. So they're very worshipful of the Hoggs—a little bit of—you know. I mean, Ima Hogg became such a cult, and she didn't like it. She didn't want it. But she became a cult. So the Hoggs did anything, beginning with Will, and Ima did, but then it was pretty hot stuff. But not people who were the more sophisticated. She was a great woman. I'm not putting her down.

MARY BOICE: Well, it's sort of a—

NINA CULLINAN: Oh, no. Great.

SANDRA CURTIS LEVY: No, I know. It's the cultism.

MARY BOICE: It was sort of a religion with her to make the name permanent, I think.

NINA CULLINAN: Oh, I don't mean Ima ever had any vain values. I don't think she did. I think she adored her father and wanted to do everything to justify—I mean, to—justify how she felt about him. [00:16:08]

MARY BOICE: Her name was Ima Hogg.

SANDRA CURTIS LEVY: I know.

MARY BOICE: I was with her at lunch. We were up at—oh, that little town where her first—her grandfather's first house was.

NINA CULLINAN: West Columbia?

MARY BOICE: No. Not—some little thing that began with "C."

NINA CULLINAN: Some small little—some very remote little town.

MARY BOICE: And this woman came over in the restaurant and said, "I wish you'd straighten something out for me. Did you have a sister named Youra?" Well, that was just—she came up against that all the time, and I think part of it was just to make this a beloved name, to take away the stigma of Ima Hogg.

SANDRA CURTIS LEVY: It was sort of a cruel thing to do to someone.

NINA CULLINAN: Oh, of course it was. It was so dumb. I mean, I don't know why people thought that was such a big joke. They made it up, of course. I'd hear it in these—"I hear you have someone called Ima, and she has a sister called Youra Hogg." I'd hear that, and it made me so bloody impatient, you know. Just big joke. And Ima was a really very intelligent, very sensitive person.

MARY BOICE: Well you know, even Mr. Will—

NINA CULLINAN: Plenty intelligent, and enormous taste.

MARY BOICE: I was on the steamer coming back from Catalina to the mainland, and here was Will B. Hogg. Well, that, you see, could be something, too. I mean, unpleasant. Will B. Hogg.

NINA CULLINAN: Yeah, but his actual initial was Will C. His actual initial was Will C. Hogg.

MARY BOICE: Well, maybe it was Will C. But Will C., it's the same—

NINA CULLINAN: He was a man that I certainly knew, because he was in our house on Rusk [ph] Avenue. [00:18:01] He adored my father. And Father had been an associate to the oil company of the Hogg-Swayne Syndicate, and then he started Texas company. At any rate, the Hogs were legitimate friends of ours, from way, way back.

MARY BOICE: Yes, of course.

NINA CULLINAN: I don't remember Governor Hogg at all, because I don't think he was ever in Houston, or at least if he was, I never saw. But Will Hogg, being a bachelor, was at our house all the time on Rusk Avenue. He'd come for meals. He loved my mother dearly, and he loved the table she set.

MARY BOICE: People just adored him.

NINA CULLINAN: But he was just a great guy, and I don't think he's ever been understood. He had definitely, I think, as I saw him, as much of an eye for the good, and a feel for the good, as Ima had. Of course, she—

MARY BOICE: A big Texas feeling, a wonderful feeling.

NINA CULLINAN: She was very broad in her tastes, and I think Will Hogg was, too. He was a very lovable man.

MARY BOICE: They had good taste.

NINA CULLINAN: He had a good—and Mike didn't. Mike, the youngest son, was very lovable, but he didn't have any pizzazz about this thing that Ima and Will Hogg had. Will was more of an intellectual, like Ima, than the other brothers.

SANDRA CURTIS LEVY: It was Will who started collecting the Rearingtons [ph], wasn't it?

NINA CULLINAN: Oh, yes. He was doing it not because it was fashionable. All this was out of his own head. They were the two stars—there was another brother, Tom, who was apparently had a very difficult time with his eyes. I didn't know him.

MARY BOICE: Well, he swore all the time. I've heard Ima tell this.

SANDRA CURTIS LEVY: This is Will?

NINA CULLINAN: No, no.

MARY BOICE: Will.

NINA CULLINAN: Will did? Did he? I didn't—

MARY BOICE: Every other word.

NINA CULLINAN: Well, not around us.

MARY BOICE: And Ima said—she told this. It wasn't any secret. They were going on a train someplace for Christmas, and Will said, "Ima, what do you want me to give you for Christmas?" [00:20:01] She said, "I want you to give me one day without a swear word." He said, "Oh, hell, I'll give you anything you want, but I can't do that." [They laugh.]

NINA CULLINAN: But his bark was worse than his bite. He was a very feeling person, I think. I know, just from

something personal that happened, for some reason—

MARY BOICE: I didn't know him. I just met him, and we sat in his box at the Democratic convention. He had these interesting friends, Cobb—

NINA CULLINAN: Irving Cobb.

MARY BOICE: —and MacIntyre [ph].

NINA CULLINAN: MacIntrye. The ones that—[cross talk]—

MARY BOICE: Will Rogers.

SANDRA CURTIS LEVY: Yeah, I've got that written down already.

MARY BOICE: I was in Ms. Sharp—Ms. Sharp had a dinner for the people here, for the convention, and I didn't know I was supposed to drive. I had a long dress on. We did dress up for the boxes. She said, "Mary, I want you to drive." [Laughs.]

NINA CULLINAN: What was this occasion?

MARY BOICE: It was the kind of driving—you were just jammed, you know. If you had eyelashes sticking out, you were in trouble. Nadine Spunce [ph] was sitting by me. She was one of the first—oh, she wasn't mayor, but chamber of commerce—head of the chamber of commerce in—well, you don't want to know this, except that she said, "Well, hello, Will." There's Will Rogers. "Hello, Will," and shook hands with him. We were that close. We were just awkward—

SANDRA CURTIS LEVY: This is for the Democratic—

MARY BOICE: —and all these men just adored Will Hogg, and they came for his funeral. [00:22:00] It was a very beautiful, dramatic funeral.

SANDRA CURTIS LEVY: You were talking about the—

MARY BOICE: This was the convention I'm talking about, but those same men came for the convention.

SANDRA CURTIS LEVY: Democratic—was it in Houston?

NINA CULLINAN: Nineteen twenty-eight, wasn't it?

MARY BOICE: I don't remember. It was when Al Smith was nominated.

NINA CULLINAN: Nineteen twenty-eight I'm sure. Where was that held? I remember Walter Davis [ph]—

MARY BOICE: Well, they built a convention hall for it, and then it was—I don't know whether they finally tore it down or not, but it was very poor construction, and it was so hot.

NINA CULLINAN: Father took us to that, and I can still see it. There were some people from the East who were down for the convention. Some stayed at our house, and some stayed at my brother Craig's house.

MARY BOICE: The Rice Hotel was so inadequate. The elevator—now, this is the kind of thing that is good for you, rather than our sitting down and reeling it off, if you can cash in on any of it. But the elevator service was so bad, so we had to go just up in the service elevator, and you had to flatten yourself against the wall to pass. And I remember—

NINA CULLINAN: Where?

MARY BOICE: At the Rice Hotel. And somebody had the terrible idea of having a breakfast honoring Mrs. Woodrow Wilson II on the roof of the Rice Hotel. I had Mrs. Lawrence [ph], and she had a broken shoulder, and I had a time with her. When we all got up there, we were mad. It was just such a bore to get up there, and everybody was scratchy, and Will Rogers got up, and in that Methodist minister voice, said, "What this country needs is more elevators." [They laugh.]

NINA CULLINAN: Did he?

MARY BOICE: [Laughs] That kind of broke the ice and made people feel—[00:24:02]

NINA CULLINAN: All was forgiven.

MARY BOICE: Yeah. And the next day, the Sewalls took us to dinner at the Rice Hotel. They said they just wanted to go over there and ride up and down the elevator. [They laugh.]

NINA CULLINAN: You know, the Sewalls are the ones that—you know the—who is the famous Averys [ph] that just moved to that house?

SANDRA CURTIS LEVY: Oh, that's right.

NINA CULLINAN: The Sewall house that was done with the same architect that designed Rice University, William Adams Cram. When he was here for Rice, and she was an alumna of Rice, Mrs.—

MARY BOICE: She's in this. She—

NINA CULLINAN: Anyway, she had the Cram office—Mr. Cram designed her house, and now the Averys—she's on the museum board. They just put it together.

MARY BOICE: The man who—he was a roughneck, but I think he was very important politically, and he was editor of one of the Fort Worth papers. He shot at an elevator to make them stop. [They laugh.]

NINA CULLINAN: Amon Carter? Amon Carter?

MARY BOICE: Amon Carter.

NINA CULLINAN: He might have.

MARY BOICE: Yeah. Cleveland Sewall said, "Now, you don't believe that?" And I said, "Well, I'd have to see it." "Well, we just got off, and I'll show it to you, and put your finger in." [Laughs.]

NINA CULLINAN: And it was true.

MARY BOICE: And it was real. The bullet hole was really at the Rice Hotel.

NINA CULLINAN: Was it at the Rice, he did?

MARY BOICE: Yes.

NINA CULLINAN: From what I've heard, he might very well do it. Again, he was an enormously clever man. He just was a little bit of a ruffian, but very original, I think. What I've heard about Amon Carter, he was enormously colorful. He was a law unto himself. But there again, sentimental. He had a good heart and a good bit of intelligence, so I'm told. Anyway, his daughter has proven well. She's done well by her heritage, what she's done to Fort Worth. [00:26:00]

SANDRA CURTIS LEVY: Is it the daughter that built the Amon Carter Museum?

NINA CULLINAN: Oh, absolutely, yes. I think her brother, Amon Carter Jr., [inaudible] I think, entirely with the idea, but I think it was her promotion that did it.

MARY BOICE: The Carter building was put up by the Carter family. That's quite a different thing from Amon Carter.

NINA CULLINAN: No, no, she's talking about the museum.

SANDRA CURTIS LEVY: The museum in Fort Worth.

NINA CULLINAN: The Fort Worth Art Museum, the Amon Carter Museum.

MARY BOICE: Oh, I see. Oh, yes.

NINA CULLINAN: No, no, the Amon Carters have nothing with Houston.

SANDRA CURTIS LEVY: What about the early days at Rice, then? You mentioned, as far as the art department is concerned, Chillman was there. Was Chillman there when you got there? James Chillman?

NINA CULLINAN: At Rice, at the—she said about the art department at Rice.

MARY BOICE: What did you say about Rice?

SANDRA CURTIS LEVY: Was James Chillman there when you came?

MARY BOICE: Yes. He was the young—

NINA CULLINAN: He was the architecture.

SANDRA CURTIS LEVY: That's right. He was architecture.

MARY BOICE: —he was the young architect. He'd been sent on a scholarship to Rome, and he came back after I had moved here. He was a very gifted man. I was very fond of him later on.

NINA CULLINAN: I was, too. Very, very.

SANDRA CURTIS LEVY: What were the beginnings, then, of the art department at Rice? Do you remember? Because he was architecture. They must have sort of merged the two in the beginning. I wonder if he taught art history?

NINA CULLINAN: I never got any impression at all that there was any nod to the visual arts as such, except through something like architecture. It was some sort of profession. I don't believe there ever was a—that was not the emphasis on the creative, visual arts. That is, painting or sculpture. That came later. It was not part of the beginning at all.

SANDRA CURTIS LEVY: So the museum school probably had the first educational sort of environment for visual arts in Houston?

NINA CULLINAN: Yes. But it didn't have it to any great degree before the [inaudible] was built in 1924, into the '30s, sometime. [00:28:03] Possibly, then, they probably—instruction probably started then. I just don't remember.

SANDRA CURTIS LEVY: Yeah—so I think they had the first Houston artist exhibition in the museum in '37.

NINA CULLINAN: Did they? The Houston artists, yes. That was a milestone for sure. What I think Mary Boice could bring to this discussion is, for people, even of my generation and younger, surely, who lived in Houston all their lives, they have no idea about that little nucleus of somewhat intellectual people, largely inspired by the entry of people come down from early Rice, who met their matches here in certain isolated cases, like Ms. Boice and her friends, her little coterie, who had really—cultivate the things of the mind and the spirit.

SANDRA CURTIS LEVY: And it had a big influence on the city, the culture of the city.

MARY BOICE: Hubert Roussel was a very important person. He was the head of the art and music for the *Houston Post* for 30 years. He was—did you like him?

NINA CULLINAN: Yes, I certainly did.

MARY BOICE: I liked him very much.

NINA CULLINAN: Yes, I certainly did. He was very fearless. He spoke out about everything. Mostly, I think, music was his real forte.

MARY BOICE: I used to write him a love letter every time that Marian Anderson sang, because we both adored her so.

NINA CULLINAN: Well I don't wonder.

MARY BOICE: He would write these lovely accounts of her singing.

NINA CULLINAN: You know, it's a funny thing. I bet maybe she should see—he's still living, isn't he? Hubert Roussel is he still living?

MARY BOICE: Yes, he's been—

NINA CULLINAN: With his wife.

MARY BOICE: —an invalid, but he's very much better now.

NINA CULLINAN: How's his mind?

MARY BOICE: Well, I don't know about that. [00:30:00]

SANDRA CURTIS LEVY: It's worth checking out.

NINA CULLINAN: I think definitely you better check that out.

MARY BOICE: I'm very fond of Dewey.

NINA CULLINAN: Who is it in Houston that apparently is very close to Dewey Roussel? Someone I know you have mentioned every now and then. Who could tell—could put this thing to them, see if he could bring himself to talk. The things she's trying to research, I thought Hubert Roussel would have a lot of good material for Robin—Sandra.

SANDRA CURTIS LEVY: We're just trying to figure out a connection, but I can work on that.

NINA CULLINAN: Who—I was wondering who would be a good friend in Houston of Roussel, Hubert Roussel, and his wife, to make an approach, to say, do you think he's well enough to be interviewed?

MARY BOICE: Oh, I don't know that he is. I don't know about that.

NINA CULLINAN: Who's in Houston?

MARY BOICE: Peter, the son, he would be good, yes.

NINA CULLINAN: Does he live there now?

MARY BOICE: Peter Roussel has a job with the chamber of commerce.

NINA CULLINAN: Does he?

MARY BOICE: He's been in Washington. He would enjoy being interviewed, Peter.

NINA CULLINAN: We don't want Peter, we want Hubert.

MARY BOICE: Well, but he would know all about his father.

NINA CULLINAN: Well, not in the same way, I wouldn't think.

SANDRA CURTIS LEVY: I'll check and see.

MARY BOICE: I don't know, but you could ask whether—I don't—

NINA CULLINAN: Let me tell you, danger is you get the same generation. They romanticize.

SANDRA CURTIS LEVY: Right, about it.

NINA CULLINAN: They don't give it to you the way it is. I want my information—that's why I have to watch myself, and I'm not locking it up by romanticizing.

MARY BOICE: I just don't—I just—messages from him through—you know, just we. I really don't know anything about it. Now, Marian Law [ph] would know more about his mentality than I do.

NINA CULLINAN: She mentioned; he's been so ill for a long time. [00:32:01]

SANDRA CURTIS LEVY: Tell me about Mr. Ford, because he seemed to have had such a marked influence on everyone.

NINA CULLINAN: A.C. Ford.

SANDRA CURTIS LEVY: A.C. Ford.

MARY BOICE: What do you want me to talk about?

SANDRA CURTIS LEVY: We talked about him before, not on the tape. So now I want you to tell me, essentially, the same thing, but so we can get some of it on the tape. Because he seemed to be—

NINA CULLINAN: Just a little bit about his quality. When did you first know him? How did he impress you? What did he do that was interesting to you? Why did you like him? You know.

SANDRA CURTIS LEVY: Why was he sort of—he seems to be sort of a leader of this group of people.

MARY BOICE: Well, I think I've given you all of that.

SANDRA CURTIS LEVY: I know. You did, but you didn't tell me on the tape, and I was wondering if you'd just tell me for the tape.

MARY BOICE: Honey, I don't believe I'm able to that.

SANDRA CURTIS LEVY: Okay.

NINA CULLINAN: I think maybe she is—maybe we've done enough now. I think we've done maybe all we can do.

SANDRA CURTIS LEVY: Okay. Great, and then I'll—

[Audio Break.]

MARY BOICE: —this infectious laugh that we all just loved. But to tell you the dates—

NINA CULLINAN: Oh, no.

SANDRA CURTIS LEVY: No, no, not dates. Just about the man.

NINA CULLINAN: The quality. Quality of—

SANDRA CURTIS LEVY: The quality of the personality.

NINA CULLINAN: —character. The quality of the person.

MARY BOICE: Yes, yes. Well, you see, these early days in Jefferson were quite important. Jefferson had opera, and they were—they dressed for the theater and so forth.

NINA CULLINAN: Jefferson, Texas.

MARY BOICE: It was quite a social place. And then, they didn't want the railroad, because they wanted it to be a freshwater port, and that just killed it.

NINA CULLINAN: Didn't get either, did they?

MARY BOICE: What?

NINA CULLINAN: They didn't get either. They didn't get the railroad, they didn't get the port.

MARY BOICE: No. But Mr. Ford—well, he was just a darling person. Women liked him very much. I don't mean a flirtatious way, but he could—[phone rings]. Would you answer—[00:34:00]

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[END OF INTERVIEW.]