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Oral history interview with Philip Hofer, 1984
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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with Philip Hofer on April 24, 1984. The interview took place in Boston, Massachusetts, and was conducted by Robert F. Brown 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

PHILIP HOFER: —important.

ROBERT F. BROWN: We want to know.

[Audio Break.]

PHILIP HOFER: My father certainly not. My father hated art, because it cost money and he didn't see what good it did.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Now he was a businessman, was he? A specialist in—

PHILIP HOFER: He did nothing.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Oh.

PHILIP HOFER: He was the son of a father who indulged him too much. Took him to the bank when he was 16 years old, and told the bank his son could sign any check he wanted. He said, "I didn't abuse it." And I think that's true. My father's very honest. But at the age of 16. And what did he do about boarding school? When they wanted to send him off to boarding school—and I believe it was Phillips Exeter—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

PHILIP HOFER: They are certain there's another Hofer there, and I mean, they don't know whether it was Charles Hofer or not. Anyway, he came back in three days. He said he didn't like it. And what did my grandmother say to my grandfather? "Mr. Hofer," because in those days you called your husband "Mr."—"Charlie likes home so much better than school." You can see what a big—good education he got. [Laughter.] He just got through, well, he certainly got through primary and perhaps secondary. But he didn't get up to college level. But he had a perfectly good mind.

ROBERT F. BROWN: He had particular—any particular interest gradually develop, that you recall?

PHILIP HOFER: Very much so. He loved the great outdoors. He was the number one ecologist. He knew trees and loved trees, and land, and all the nice things. And then shot thousands of ducks, for which I could kill him. I thought that was a mistake.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Hmm.

PHILIP HOFER: The Middle West was full of game in those days. I'm talking about, you see, I'm the youngest. And my father was 41 when I was born. So he was born—I was born in [18]'98. He was born in [18]'57.

ROBERT F. BROWN: So these were things he'd be doing in the '80s or so, or even '70s.
[00:02:02]

PHILIP HOFER: Yeah. Oh, '70s.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah.

PHILIP HOFER: Oh, well, he took his gun when he was about eight, I think. He loved to shoot.

ROBERT F. BROWN: This was Cincinnati.

PHILIP HOFER: This is Cincinnati, Ohio. And the passenger pigeons went over my grandfather's place by the millions, and they went [makes shooting sound]. And my grandfather cursed like mad, he was a French Alsatian. He cursed *mon jour* and so forth, worse than that. *Merde* [laughs] which doesn't mean anything very bad in French. Anyway—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Cincinnati was a blooming place, wasn't it?

PHILIP HOFER: The passenger pigeon. The last passenger pigeon died in Cincinnati Zoo in 1911. And I saw it.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Oh, you did?

PHILIP HOFER: Oh, yes. I was 13 years old. Of course I did.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Well, for you, was Cincinnati a pretty interesting place? I know you were in Maine from the beginning.

PHILIP HOFER: Only fair. Only fair. Uh, it was too proud of itself. It thought it was the queen city of the Middle West, and all that. They thought they had the best symphony orchestra, and the best everything. You don't want that.

ROBERT F. BROWN: There's a lot of pomposity?

PHILIP HOFER: There was a certain amount of pomposity. There were very nice people as well. But they—it was a good deal about boom Tacoma. And Cincinnati was, of course—Chicago was a little bit of a dump when Cincinnati was a sizeable city. It was the gateway to the South. the Civil War ruined Cincinnati. The War Between the States.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Because of the markets were driving—

PHILIP HOFER: Yes, exactly.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah.

PHILIP HOFER: And then the stock yards were in Cincinnati before they went to Omaha. And the railroad center was in Cincinnati before it went to Chicago.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

PHILIP HOFER: St. Louis was a big place.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes.

PHILIP HOFER: St. Louis and Cincinnati were the two Western cities. Kansas City, Cleveland, Columbus, Chicago.

ROBERT F. BROWN: All secondary.

PHILIP HOFER: Milwaukee.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Well, I wanted to ask you a bit about schooling out there in Cincinnati. Was that anything remarkable? Or any particular interests you developed early?

PHILIP HOFER: I will give you it. [00:04:01] [Sings.] "Left and right with the red and the white, we were right, we walked in bold array. Da, da, da, da, da, da, da, da, da—this is O. Franklin's Day. Cheer for O. Franklin, Franklin will win. Fight to the thin, he's never gave in. All do your best, boys, we'll do the rest, boys, fight for the victory!" [Pounds table.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: [Laughs.] So that's what a lot of it was about, huh?

PHILIP HOFER: Can you imagine such a song, and having to sing such crap?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm [affirmative].

PHILIP HOFER: That's what I call it. No, I didn't like Cincinnati. I went to Cleveland, liked it much better. It was a younger city, and healthier, and not so arrogant people.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You knew it pretty early on too, did you?

PHILIP HOFER: Oh, my mother's family came from up there.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah? Mm-hmm [affirmative].

PHILIP HOFER: On the other hand, well—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Well now, you mother, as you said earlier, was a trustee at the art museum in Cincinnati.

PHILIP HOFER: Yes she was. Well, that wasn't to—

ROBERT F. BROWN: How did that affect the—

PHILIP HOFER: Well, she had artistic taste.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

PHILIP HOFER: And father didn't. The art—well, I don't know that she did terribly well. There was a wonderful man, Mr. Herbert Greer French, whose collection of Rembrandt prints was great. He would only—he would invite us to dinner, mother and me. My brother who had lived wasn't interested. He insisted we look by candlelight, because he said, "Rembrandt did these by candlelight. And they were meant to be looked at by candlelight."

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did his collection impress you as a young boy?

PHILIP HOFER: Oh yes, it was good, and he was a very fine man. I learned a good deal from a few people. There was Miss Mary Hanna, who also had some fine things. Then there was Mrs. Thomas J. Ebrey. No, Cincinnati had individuals that were splendid. And the Tafts, the Taft collections inside of his now large—the Taft house is a beautiful house, 1802 or something like that, you see. [00:06:03] For Middle West, this is good. You don't have 1802 houses in Chicago.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Hmm. Yeah. [Laughs.]

PHILIP HOFER: No. You do in New Orleans, and more.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But they're easy—

PHILIP HOFER: Well, anyway, the Taft house. And they had beautiful pictures. That was—there was a man named Sinton, who was the first iron king. That was down on the Ohio River. Not up at Pittsburgh and so forth. Well yes, there was Pittsburgh too, but they also had done the Ohio River.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Was he a collector too? Or he was the one—

PHILIP HOFER: Oh, yes. Well no, he wasn't a collector. He collected—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Money. [Laughs.]

PHILIP HOFER: Then the Tafts, who were Sintons, in the Sinton Hotel when I was a boy in Cincinnati was *the* hotel. The Emorys were real estate, and they collected art. Oh, there was some art in Cincinnati. The art was better than the music. Music wasn't all that good. We had Stokowski, and Stokowski thought it was so unmusical, he left [laughs]. Went to Philadelphia. Then Cincinnati went into a rage.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did music mean a bit to you? Were you—

PHILIP HOFER: Yes, except I was taken too much to bad opera.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Oh.

PHILIP HOFER: And Wagner, when I was a kid, was not good. You couldn't—the gentleman and the lady couldn't get their arms around each other, and she [inaudible].

ROBERT F. BROWN: [Laughs.] But you remember as a boy, when you go to see these friends' houses and see their collections, did you thrive on that?

PHILIP HOFER: Oh yes. I was a sickly child, so that was about all I could do. I couldn't play baseball, football, or anything. I didn't go to school until I was 13 and a half, and went to boarding school. I mean, except for just a quarter of a year, a third of a year or something. And cheered for O. Franklin.

ROBERT F. BROWN: [Laughs.] But would you—when you looked at prints, the Rembrandts prints and the like—

PHILIP HOFER: Oh, yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —with the collection with Mr. French?

PHILIP HOFER: Oh, he—

ROBERT F. BROWN: He would let you look at them closely? Would he tell you what—[00:08:01]

PHILIP HOFER: Oh, yes. Oh, yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —talk about connoisseurship?

PHILIP HOFER: Yes, and Mrs. Emory didn't talk very much, but she was nice. Miss Hanna was a great friend of my family's, and she talked a lot. She went in mostly for the Fontainebleau School. You know?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

PHILIP HOFER: Rousseau, Díaz, things of that sort. [Inaudible.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: And so, she explained what she knew of—

PHILIP HOFER: Oh yes, and why she bought them. She was a very intelligent woman.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Were you a fairly quizzical child, and questioning her? Or just sort of listening?

PHILIP HOFER: That was the only thing I was any good at, was asking questions. Then trying to remember them.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

PHILIP HOFER: I couldn't do anything else.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But that was considerably remarkable, wasn't it?

PHILIP HOFER: I couldn't fight, and couldn't play baseball, I couldn't do anything [laughs].

ROBERT F. BROWN: But, I mean, your questioning and your curiosity must have been pleasing [cross talk].

PHILIP HOFER: Why would I be here today, if I hadn't done any questioning. I wouldn't be anywhere.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And it started pretty early, hmm?

PHILIP HOFER: It started early. Yeah. I liked that. And I loved the ecology of Maine. I loved that Penobscot Bay region, and I'm still up there when I can get up there.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Well you were there as early as you can remember, weren't you?

PHILIP HOFER: 1899.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah.

PHILIP HOFER: Earlier than I can remember. I was only year and a third old. My father had good sense about that. He said, first of all, his vote counted more in Maine than it did in Ohio. It was

much more beautiful. He was quite right, even though the Ohio River Valley isn't ugly.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Hmm. Hmm.

PHILIP HOFER: But it wasn't as beautiful as.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What did you particularly love as a child in Maine?

PHILIP HOFER: Oh, the woods, the sea.

ROBERT F. BROWN: The whole—mm-hmm [affirmative].

PHILIP HOFER: Everything. I used to even go in the cold water. Being anemic and so forth, it jazzed me up a little bit.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You said you began collecting, in a manner of speaking, in the water.

PHILIP HOFER: Yes. Yes, I did. I took crabs meals and put them in his family's fingerbowls. [00:10:00] Didn't please him. Wouldn't have pleased yours, either [laughs].

ROBERT F. BROWN: You collected stones and the like, while you were—

PHILIP HOFER: Yes, and put them in the water because if you crack them and break them in two, then you see they all have a certain amount of silica in them, and they shine a little.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

PHILIP HOFER: I call it my "jewelry shop." I'm a little bit of a sissy, to tell you the truth. I got over it, but it wasn't, like, certainly—I can remember not knowing what to do with my fists. And my father was so discouraged at that. He said, "Oh, go away!" You see, he didn't take any trouble. It was too much trouble.

ROBERT F. BROWN: He expected conventional young manliness.

PHILIP HOFER: My next brother in line—his first child died of a —Charles Hofer, III. His life ended in one sense. Then the next one that came along was a good athlete and all that sort of thing. But the trouble with him, he scrapped back at my father. My father said, "If you say another word, I'll knock you into the next week!" Father [laughs] was strong, too. So the family life wasn't very pretty. And I fled under the table.

ROBERT F. BROWN: In your collecting, for example, the pebbles et cetera, would you begin to study about them and read about them, and classify them?

PHILIP HOFER: Oh, soon as I could—I was—not, that's your generation.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Okay.

PHILIP HOFER: We weren't nearly as advanced as your generation.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You were interested in what they looked like, and this—

PHILIP HOFER: That's it. But your generation is much more scientifically inclined.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah.

PHILIP HOFER: And does the right things. No, I was a late developer in every way. And my generation was relatively late. To be sure, when we got married, we didn't sleep with the girls all—for the last four years. But then that's maybe sensible too, I don't know.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Hmm. But when you—your mother also provided you, or your father perhaps helped too, with the library, you had—because you were home a lot. [00:12:05]

PHILIP HOFER: Oh, mother did that very well. She bought a very good reading library, with Chaucer, and everybody else. And I read and read and read and read and read. That was it. That, plus mother's interest in art, helped me very much.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You loved—

PHILIP HOFER: And I loved—I happened to love flowers and the outdoors. So I got the best out of both of my parents that way. I may have gotten the worst in other ways, but I got the best in that way.

ROBERT F. BROWN: In your reading, was it—did your mother direct it a bit? Or did she buy what were considered classics?

PHILIP HOFER: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. She directed it. Gibbon and Herodotus, and whatnot.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And you took to this, did you?

PHILIP HOFER: Yes. Well, she saw what I did, and she gave me music lessons, because I could play the piano a little bit, and that sort of thing. And I took even some singing lessons. But you're not to judge by cheerful O. Franklin, please. [Laughter.] Anyway, father didn't care much about that. He'd go, but symphony orchestra and all that.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah?

PHILIP HOFER: He didn't go—he didn't care very much. But I got from him, you see, the trees and the flowers, and the birds. He allowed me to have chickens and pigeons, and things like that, which were good.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Oh sure, yeah.

PHILIP HOFER: The only trouble was when I asked him about—he said I had to make a budget about chickens, about my chickens, because he wanted to teach me—he didn't want to work, but he wanted me to. And he said, "Now you make a budget out about how many eggs they'll lay, and your mother will pay the retail price. Then you'll have to buy the feed. You've got the chicken coop, so you ought to figure it out." So my budget, he looked at it, and he said, "What's this? You've got three hens and a rooster. Here you have them down for about 40 eggs a month for each he—for each one of them." [00:14:09] And he said, "What is the rooster going to do?" Well, I said, "I don't think he lays as many as the hens, but he might lay every other day." Father said, "Jesus Christ!" [Laughter.] But of course, whose business it was? That's your generation again. Good Lord, did I tell my boy, as soon as he could—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Sure.

PHILIP HOFER: —he said, "My God, I was in my mommy's tummy I must have—" [Phone rings.] I'm sorry.

[Audio Break.]

PHILIP HOFER: —we'll sneak upstairs.

ROBERT F. BROWN: So you were encouraged in various ways, even by your father's interests. You think it was because you were sickly and had a lot of time to do things, they were focused on you? It made a great difference? Because you could very early concentrate on things, and read voraciously?

PHILIP HOFER: I wasn't—they weren't taking—[phone rings]—

[Audio Break.]

PHILIP HOFER: —very nice fellow. And Kathleen's a very smart little girl.

ROBERT F. BROWN: When you went to—then east to boarding school, you said it was Pomfret School, in Connecticut.

PHILIP HOFER: Tough, rough school, and didn't know the facts of life, and weighed 70 pounds, and was anemic, and didn't know the facts of life. Good God! I certainly got a cold bath. It was much colder than the Penobscot Bay. And hazing was rife in that—it was the next to last year of hazing. Hazing was a dreadful thing. They got that from those English public schools. And this was a poor school. Pomfret was not Groton or St. Paul's, or St. Mark's, or Exeter, or whatever. Andover.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. But they had the severe side of the English public school right there. Big time. Yeah.

PHILIP HOFER: It had all—it was a small school, and their chief rivals were Taft and Milton, both of which were bigger schools. So everything had to be—you see, they had to get somewhere. [00:16:00] So this is the only thing is, I could study, you see. I used to lead my class because nobody wanted to. Not because I was brighter, nobody wanted to. Nobody tried. So I could just study and be a little squirt. And they were all tough.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did you get some encouragement from some of the teachers?

PHILIP HOFER: Oh, yes. There were a few that thought I was pathetic [laughs].

ROBERT F. BROWN: You were small, were you, for much of your time—

PHILIP HOFER: I was 70—yes. And my voice didn't change until I was 16 and a half. That happens to people. John Constable, you know who I mean, [inaudible], his voice didn't change until 18 and a half, and he's still got a high voice. Got perfectly good children, and everything else.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm [affirmative].

PHILIP HOFER: But in those days—[high pitched voice] "You want to get good soprano? Get Hofer!" That was at Pomfret School.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Huh. What did you—any additional interests grow there at Pomfret on your own?

PHILIP HOFER: Oh yes. I loved to go out in the hills, it's Western Connecticut. It's beautiful. It's a beautiful place. Father saw that. The people in Ohio didn't know about some of the good eastern schools. My father had gone to Exeter, and he said he didn't like it. So that was that, or whatever it was that he was sent to.

PHILIP HOFER: Well, you did become familiar with additional literature or illustrations at that time. I think you mentioned one teacher, made sure he got to you books with good illustrations.

PHILIP HOFER: No, it was this way. I—They gave prizes, and there was one teacher who bought the prizes, and the prizes were usually, oh, Prescott's *History of the Conquest of Mexico* and Pizarro's Peru and so forth, and they'd have illustrations. And then you see, being interested in art, it began that way. First book I ever collected, I bought it about—I mean, a so-called rare book, I bought it about '18 or '17, or something. I used to get these prizes, and then that, and then mother's nice books at home. [00:18:02] That's how it all started.

ROBERT F. BROWN: So you were—

PHILIP HOFER: Now you've had—

ROBERT F. BROWN: —you were absorbing a little bit of the taste of a connoisseur of quality.

PHILIP HOFER: I got—yes. I got this side, the reason that you're talking to me is, I got this side of things. Mother's taste didn't go—I called her Madame Decorative Arts, eventually, because she was—the house was perfectly lovely inside, and everything else. In fact, the outside was James Gamble Rogers, who built Yale. And that, for Cincinnati, was advanced. But on the other hand, it wasn't—they thought the great artists were Muirhead Bone, and James McVay [ph], and things like that. Whistler was the top. That was the highest I ever went. Never heard of—well, mother knew about Rembrandt. And mother had taste, but she didn't—father wouldn't have allowed her to buy Rembrandt, it was too expensive [laughs].

ROBERT F. BROWN: You save your money for something else, hmm?

PHILIP HOFER: "Save your money and put it in the bank!" [Laughter.] Because he wasn't working.

ROBERT F. BROWN: French prints or drawings of the time, or paintings—no, it wasn't—it's a rather conservative—

PHILIP HOFER: And another thing. My grandfather, in those days, people this—went all around the country. The people who came to this country wanted to be Americans. That's why they came here. They wanted to be Americans. He came to help Mr. Nicholas Longworth—the first Mr. Nicholas Longworth, you see, he was a young Alsatian, knew about wine. And Mr. Nicholas

Longworth wanted a young Alsatian that knew about wine to help him, see if they couldn't grow wine in the Ohio River Valley. Well the soil wasn't right, and the climate wasn't right. But they remained friends. And eventually, we built right next to the Longworths' place when we were able to build.

ROBERT F. BROWN: The grandfather would have wanted to be an American? [00:20:00] The grandfather—

PHILIP HOFER: He wanted to be an American. He never—he was trilingual, of course—English, French and German. But he didn't speak—and my father and his two sisters never spoke a foreign language, except as my first governess said, "Ah, Mr. Hofer, he can say 'goddamned' in every language." Which is perfectly true.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Pretty outspoken man, your father, was he?

PHILIP HOFER: Yes. And so was the governess. She was a bitch. I'm not very cheerful about my early life. Now, my middle life was very good.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What determined you to—or your family, perhaps, for you to go to Harvard?

PHILIP HOFER: Mother. Mother thought that Harvard was probably the best college at that time.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

PHILIP HOFER: Eastern college, in a sense, it was. So I think Amherst and Williams and so forth, are just as good, and maybe would have been better for me. No, they wouldn't. It was good for me to get a good dousing in a big place.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And this was a pretty big place for the time.

PHILIP HOFER: Oh, Harvard was always the biggest, except for the great state universities.

ROBERT F. BROWN: That's true.

PHILIP HOFER: It was the biggest private university.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

PHILIP HOFER: I mean privately financed.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. And in the midst of a large city. Did that count for a good deal with you, too?

PHILIP HOFER: I like Boston. I like Maine. I like New England. I like the South. I like just about everything but the Middle West. Don't like it much. Uh-uh [negative]. Still don't. Chicago, much better city. So is Cleveland. I like Cleveland and Chicago. Very nice city.

ROBERT F. BROWN: When you came to Harvard, did you have any idea what you wanted to pursue?

PHILIP HOFER: I did. I went out to try to make a friend or two. I didn't have any school, because the friends were all athletic. Oh, actually, there was three or four of us, and we were all scared of our lives, because we weren't athletic.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Hmm. But here at Harvard, that was one of the first things you attempted to —

PHILIP HOFER: Yeah. I went out for outside activities, that sort of thing. Worked about an hour a week. [00:22:01] In those days, you could get by at Harvard on an hour a week. I didn't try to excel. I got a cum laude without trying. But it was easier in those days. Mind you, I'm not boasting about this thing. It was easier.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Hmm.

PHILIP HOFER: Easier, mister, over there—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm [affirmative].

PHILIP HOFER: —to get through at Harvard. There were some of the rottenest teachers you can imagine. You could get an A if you took them out to dinner, and a B plus if you took them out to lunch. Shocking!

ROBERT F. BROWN: Hmm.

PHILIP HOFER: Don't ever report that against Harvard. But that was so. It was so in those days. There was a friend named Benjamin Apthorp Gould Fuller. Fuller, the great man with the yachts and all that.

ROBERT F. BROWN: He didn't spend any time studying, huh?

PHILIP HOFER: ROBERT F. BROWN: No. He spent time telling dirty stories.

ROBERT F. BROWN: So you were in clubs? Were you in theatricals?

PHILIP HOFER: I was in a club. Yes, a little bit, but not much. I wasn't very good at that. No.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You spent your time partly learning how to be a young gentleman, is that right?

PHILIP HOFER: I tried to become a little more civilized and a little more perceptive, and that sort of thing. But I also went out to be a manager of something. You see, I couldn't play athletics, so I eventually did happen to end up being the university hockey manager. That was the—that, and then I wrote the—edited the class books, and things like that. I got on the student council. I did well at Harvard. I didn't do well at school. I was nothing at school. I did do well at Harvard. Then I was thrown in the coal business by my father, for no reason at all, except that my brother was in the diplomatic service, and he hated my brother. And got him away as far as he could. He said, "So you work!" And stuck me in the coal business where I made no money at all. [00:24:02] But then that all worked out. I got a tip from a friend and bought Electric Bond and Share, and speculate [ph]. Made some money myself. Then I could tell my father that I'd do what I pleased. And did.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Which sort of bothered him, perhaps? Not really?

PHILIP HOFER: No. He bought some of the same stock.

ROBERT F. BROWN: [Laughs.]

PHILIP HOFER: No, then that all went down the hill, because my mother's two brothers made my father his money. He got the money from his own father, borrowed it, and they invested him in steel. And in the 1890s, that was the time. Father had all the luck. And that—then you see, knowing that he couldn't make money, or didn't want to make money, when there was the Depression or something, he'd immediately say, "We're going to the poor house." I had just gotten my first dog the first time he said it, when the Knickerbocker Trust went flat in 1906. Oh, the Morgans fixed it up the next day or something, but he said we were going to the poor house, and I was going to lose my dog. And I didn't sleep for three nights.

ROBERT F. BROWN: He didn't spare the family, did he? Your dad [laughs]?

PHILIP HOFER: No. Not my mother, either.

ROBERT F. BROWN: No.

PHILIP HOFER: No. But he had his good qualities. He was very honest. Straight from the shoulder. I learned to tell the truth, fast.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did you at Harvard do—you did history and literature, I gather, but did you write extensively? Or was there research involved?

PHILIP HOFER: Well, the only writing I did was class books [ph] and such.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm [affirmative].

PHILIP HOFER: No, I didn't do any.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But in history and literature, were you thinking of going on further, but

studied this?

PHILIP HOFER: Yes, I was. I wanted to teach school, but they wouldn't let me, you see.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah.

PHILIP HOFER: That would have been something I could have done fairly well, I think.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And did you—presumably, throughout your Harvard years, you continued to read voraciously?

PHILIP HOFER: Oh, yeah. Well, when I had time. But I didn't have so much time in college. [00:26:01] Then again, when I did have time, the times—I'd been sick a good deal of my life. That's one reason I'm 86, because I know how to take care of myself.

ROBERT F. BROWN: When you were back in the coal mining business, you mentioned at that time you met, perhaps in Cleveland, a Theodore Sizer. Was he—

PHILIP HOFER: That's right. Tubby Sizer, Theodore Sizer, was just wonderful to me. He inspired me. He said, "You hate the coal business. Whenever you can get free, come and stay at our house. Come to the museum with me," everything. Caroline and I and their three children—they were all daughters in those days. We all loved Ted. And I—oh, it was just great.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Had you met him here?

PHILIP HOFER: I owe him a tremendous lot.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Had you met him here? Or did you happen to meet him in—

PHILIP HOFER: His—he was in my brother's class at Harvard. My brother was not successful at Harvard, I was. My brother tried the wrong way. He tried to be very social, and didn't make it [laughs].

ROBERT F. BROWN: Hmm. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

PHILIP HOFER: I don't know, he loved the diplomatic service, and that. He put on airs, and got kicked in the pants. It was just the right thing.

ROBERT F. BROWN: When you went to—you did eventually take Tubby Sizer up on his invitation, stayed there?

PHILIP HOFER: Oh! Eventually? I think I went the second day.

ROBERT F. BROWN: So you spent a good deal of time there, and less and less in the coal business?

PHILIP HOFER: As much as I could get away. I tried to be fair with my job, of course. But—

ROBERT F. BROWN: What was the Cleve—the Cleveland Museum was quite new, then?

PHILIP HOFER: Very good. But very good. Leonard Hannon and all that. The Cleveland Museum is a much better museum than the Cincinnati one. It's one of the best museums in the country now. Always has been.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Was Sizer a curator?

PHILIP HOFER: Sizer was curator of two department, prints and Oriental. I got an interest in Oriental to begin with, from Sizer. And I am interested in both aspects. I've traveled a hell of a lot.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did you have a chance to talk with him about what, his decisions—

[00:28:00]

PHILIP HOFER: Oh, of course. Of course.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did you meet the director then? I think the first was—Frederic—

PHILIP HOFER: Yes, Milliken.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Milliken was there by then?

PHILIP HOFER: William Milliken was a sissy, but a real sissy.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Hmm.

PHILIP HOFER: But William Milliken was a brilliant art man. They've always had good directors. And Sherman Lee's the last one.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Was Frederic Whiting still there, as director? Or he'd gone by then?

PHILIP HOFER: No, he left. He had just left, I think.

ROBERT F. BROWN: So Milliken is the man in the—

PHILIP HOFER: Milliken was, essentially. Whiting might have been for a month or two, but I can't remember.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm [affirmative].

PHILIP HOFER: But Milliken was, essentially. And I like Milliken, except he used to come and cry to Caroline Sizer. He said that people were mean to him. And said [crying] "And even Theodore was mean to me today." [Laughter.] She said, "Oh, William, be quiet! You idiot."

ROBERT F. BROWN: But he was a very astute builder and buyer, wasn't he?

PHILIP HOFER: Look, many of those people are the most able people I know. I'm in the art world, and I've seen often those very people, because they have extra sensitivity to art and that sort of thing. If you take a look at the people of the art world, more than half of them that were really remarkable were homosexuals. Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo were, in particular.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Well, Cleveland must have been comparable to some of these new museums we hear of today, with a good deal of money and buying the building—

PHILIP HOFER: It was J. Paul—it was the [inaudible] J. Paul Getty. Then came Kansas City after that.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah?

PHILIP HOFER: Then they—now they've gone out to Texas and—

ROBERT F. BROWN: California.

PHILIP HOFER: —especially in California.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah.

PHILIP HOFER: Texas didn't go too hot. Jim Sweeney at Houston did a pretty good job.

ROBERT F. BROWN: So you had a chance there to really see with a lot of resources what could be done, is that right? And you got to see a great variety of things coming in.

PHILIP HOFER: You're saying in Cleveland?

ROBERT F. BROWN: In Cleveland, when you—

PHILIP HOFER: Yes I did. And—Leonard Hanna collected himself.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

PHILIP HOFER: And had rather nice things. [00:30:02] Not too much, but some.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But you got to know him a bit, did you?

PHILIP HOFER: Slightly, yes. He was a much older man, Yale, and I was Harvard and so forth. Yes. He liked me because I liked the things he did. And he cared for the museum. He left his

whole fortune, and he never married. And I don't think he was odd at all. He and a fellow named Harvey Brown were up at—both Yale. Were very good friends. They were a pair of really jolly bachelors, don't you know? They gave big parties about twice a year that *everybody* wanted to be invited to. They were the best. And they were the best. They were the best. So that was—oh, Cleveland was a very, very nice place. I liked it immensely. Healthy. Healthy, good.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Hmm. Hmm.

PHILIP HOFER: Nice, and lots more Anglo Saxons than Cincinnati. Now that sounds rude, but I don't mean it to be rude.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Cincinnati was also heavily German, wasn't it?

PHILIP HOFER: Heavily German. And I always said pretty heavily Jewish. I'm not jumping on Jews, nor on Germans. But Cincinnati was very German, oh boy, yes. But [inaudible] if she had been originally German, and my grandfather—

ROBERT F. BROWN: That's right. Despite what the French may say.

PHILIP HOFER: Yes. My father's older sister married a German Baron, Von Steinver [ph], who—oh, we won't talk about him [laughs].

ROBERT F. BROWN: Well, what—how was the coal business for you? You've mentioned—

PHILIP HOFER: I said I hated it. We couldn't make any money, either.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah.

PHILIP HOFER: My cousin, who was the head of it, that's how I got into it. I don't think otherwise I would have gotten taken. He saw that we weren't making any money. He said, "What? You're starting to make money on this thing called Electric Bond and Share? Hey, let's get going! I'm not making any money, either." So he started a little thing, we called it Philip Hofer and Company. And he was the silent partner in that, and we made some more money. That's where my money comes from. My own money went down the drain in—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Your investments at that time. [00:32:02]

PHILIP HOFER: —1930, the steel business went to hell, along after the coal business went. I had such fun as I have is my own.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm [affirmative].

PHILIP HOFER: In fact, we all lived on what you might say speculation [laughs]. It's time somebody goes into business and worked. I'm not doing it. My son's a doctor. My grand—oldest grandson's going to be a doctor, too. And he's splendid. Out in California.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But you had to take chances and risks, if you wanted to be independent at all.

PHILIP HOFER: Oh, yeah. That's right.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah, yeah.

PHILIP HOFER: The—only speculate once, if you're wise. Father told me that, about a Mr. William Borden in Maine, Chicago Borden, related to the ax, Lizzie. But not directly. He said, "I admire that man enormously." I used to listen to my father on this sort of subject. He said he had a large family, and the money sort of dwindled. He went to his wife one day, and he said, "Here is what we have. I'm leaving it all to you. I'm taking just this much money with me. I'm going out West, and I'll either come home, or I won't. I'll come home with money, or I won't come home." He went out, he came back. I don't know whether he went with the Comstock Lode in Colorado, or what he got. He came back with something. He said, "I speculated once, and I'll never speculate again."

ROBERT F. BROWN: Hmm. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

PHILIP HOFER: My father told me that. That's just exactly what I did with Electric Bond and Share. From that time on, I've never borrowed money. So much so that the banks didn't know

that I was a good risk, because I had never taken out a loan.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm [affirmative].

PHILIP HOFER: Well, you've had enough of me—nice man.

ROBERT F. BROWN: How about going to Harvard? Going back there?

PHILIP HOFER: Oh, I loved that. I've always loved that.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did you think about it?

PHILIP HOFER: I've always wanted to come back.

ROBERT F. BROWN: How did you happen to do that? Did you do this on your own? Or did Sizer, or Milliken or someone encourage you to resume?

PHILIP HOFER: No. I always wanted to. [00:34:01] By that time, it seemed to me, that it was a bigger thing than just being a schoolmaster, you know. This was more exciting.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You thought you were—

PHILIP HOFER: I wanted to get to the bigger time. It's a bigger job. It isn't a better job.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Possibly you wanted to—when you went back in 1927—

PHILIP HOFER: Well, then I thought I could go and take my PhD. And I came back and went to the graduate school, and got mine AM. But then my father died, and I had to go in business again.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah. Yeah. What—you came back here at the beginning with your AM to study in what, any particular area?

PHILIP HOFER: Yes. Art.

ROBERT F. BROWN: In art history?

PHILIP HOFER: You bet. You bet, with Sachs and Forbes over there at the Fogg. Then you see, the trouble was, father died. I had to—

ROBERT F. BROWN: You had to go back.

PHILIP HOFER: —I had to go back into business. The Great Depression. He died in January '29.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Could I ask about Sachs and Forbes were the two big attractions for your coming here, or coming back?

PHILIP HOFER: No—coming back? No. It's just that the Fogg Art Museum at that time was more important than even the Jarvis collection at Yale, which was very good.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

PHILIP HOFER: That had those early pictures, but Forbes had some early pictures, too. The Jarvis was a better collection.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What was Forbes like as a teacher?

PHILIP HOFER: Oh! A dear, fuzzy man, who was very intelligent behind that. Paul Sachs was a dynamo, and the two of them were wonderful. They were just the opposite. You learned one sort of thing from one, and the other from the other. It was like my father and mother being so different. This is a thing I learned early on—get what you can out of—look for the best qualities, or what interests you, is the best way of putting it—and go for that.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And with Forbes, how would you derive the best?

PHILIP HOFER: He was very intelligent. He was so intelligent this way. Forbes, for instance, Byzantine art. He made Byzantine mosaics, and things like that. He collected early primitives, Italian primitives. [00:36:04] Forbes had some money. He's Ralph Waldo Emerson's grandson.

And he collected that way. And Forbes was so intelligent, that Jack Thatcher, a fellow who was there for a while as assistant director, he said to me, "I've learned never to discount Edward Forbes. He sounds funny, he goes, 'Mmm, mmm, mmm, mmm,'" but he said, "We'll start out at the library together, and he'd say, 'Jack, you're the assistant director here, that window way up there in Warburg Hall, way up high there, is that locked?'" Jack said, "I'm sure it's locked, Mr. Forbes." Said Edward Forbes, "I can't see, but hadn't you better go and look? I just wonder." And he said the window would be unlocked." He said he had an inner brain. As for Alec Forbes, his brother, he was an admiral in the Second World War. He was 65, he knew more about the Arctic than any other person. We had him very much and—for our submarine business up north.

ROBERT F. BROWN: So Forbes was brilliant?

PHILIP HOFER: The Forbeses are brilliant in their way. The Sachses were brilliant in another.

ROBERT F. BROWN: How was Sachs as a teacher? I've heard him sit around and—

PHILIP HOFER: Oh, very, very good. Dramatic. Dramatic teacher.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But he was springing things on you that—

PHILIP HOFER: Oh, yes. Yes. He was very inspiring. He was a lot of fun. He was a lot of fun. I didn't always agree with him, but he was a lot of fun.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did he, in some way, sharpen your taste or your way of looking at things?

PHILIP HOFER: Yes. Yes, yes, yes, yes. He was very quick. Very quick-minded man. Just the opposite of Edward. They were the perfect foil for each other. That combination, if it were the head of—we've got a good Fogg Museum right now. But even so, it was terribly good for its own day. [00:38:01] I think that they were better run than the Yale Art Museum at that time. But now, of course, Yale has so many other things, Paul Mellon and the rest of it. And Yale was so wise, while Harvard was trying to get the brightest Hottentot they could find, Yale was getting the son of Andrew Mellon and the son of the Payne Whitney's, and people like that, who would give them lots of money, which was another way of getting money besides trying to raise it out of the ground.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Were you beginning to collect some things for yourself by the time you were back here to do your MA?

PHILIP HOFER: Oh, yes. I was going hard then. Also, the time I was in Cleveland, I was collecting, whenever I had any extra money.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What were you looking for?

PHILIP HOFER: Books. Books, books, books. Illustrated books.

ROBERT F. BROWN: How about drawings? Were you doing—

PHILIP HOFER: Yes, some drawings. But then Paul Sachs had—that was one of his inspirations. He had the great drawing collection.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

PHILIP HOFER: Oh, yes, and then I had a terrible rival in John Nicholas Brown [laughs]—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Oh, really?

PHILIP HOFER: —who was around at that time and had so much more money than I had, it wasn't funny.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But was he collecting in that—

PHILIP HOFER: He was collecting. He bought Leonardo da Vinci, and things like that. Do you know the pathetic part about John Nicholas Brown? Do you know that he died fairly poor?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Hmm. No.

PHILIP HOFER: Oh, indeed, he did. He didn't manage his own money and didn't pay enough

attention to it. He was called the million dollar baby. He was born with over \$30 million, it was posthumous. His father had money, over \$30 million. He was the million dollar baby. His mother also had some money. And John Brown always thought money grew on trees. Bu you see, that's the trouble. Money didn't grow on trees for me. My dog might have to go the next day.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You realized that early on.

PHILIP HOFER: Well, you see, but you always get learned from your mistakes, or where you get cracked. You get a kick in the seat of the pants, you learn faster than if you don't.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Right.

PHILIP HOFER: Is that not correct? [00:40:01]

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes.

PHILIP HOFER: In art and everywhere else. Yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: So Brown was around, beginning to collect at that time, too?

PHILIP HOFER: Oh, yes. Here was an example of that, it was fascinating. Paul Sachs said to me—I went to him and said—he asked me to call him Paul, and Uncle Paul, and that sort of thing, you know. He loved that. Being Jewish, he loved it. You know, they're warm.

ROBERT F. BROWN: An avuncular, yeah.

PHILIP HOFER: They're warm people. And he said, "Call me Uncle Paul." And I said, "All right, I will." I love it. And I said, "Now look, I'm in a terrible position. I want to bid for a Leonardo da Vinci [laughs]. But here was John Nicholas Brown, he'll probably want it, too." He said, "Yes, he does want it." I said, "Yes, well, what chance have I got?" He said, "I'll tell you, I've always said this to my pupils, and I do this with Edward or anything else." He says, "Any question between friends, what you do is, you write on a piece of paper the highest bid that you're willing to make yourself. Then you hand your bid to the other person. Then you read them, and the person with the higher bid is allowed to bid, and you don't bid against it. And don't run him up." Well, I put on my bid, whatever it was, \$5,000 or something like that, or \$10,000 maybe, at the most. I never—I don't think I could have put 10, I don't think I could. Any case, maybe 10. John Brown wrote, "Unlimited." That wasn't quite fair. However, what could he say? He was going to buy it. That was all there was to it. At first I said, "Oh God, John, oh, God." He said, "Look, I have to be honest. I've got lots of money, and I want that picture." And he said, "You'll have other chances." [00:42:01] I said, "Not for a Leonardo." He said, "Oh yes, other things come up. Now come on, don't be discouraged." I said, "No, I'm not. I'm just a little pussy cat, and you're a big one." [Laughs.] He was huge, you know. And his head grew, you know. Well, he had problems. I think that was one of the reasons that—John was not wise. When he died, you know, that's why the John Carter Brown Library had to go out and sell things. They financed that. And Anne Brown was a Kinsolving, she didn't have any money. They aren't literally poor, but they have nothing like what they had. Nothing like. Carter Brown has to work, Nicky Brown has to work.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah. Terrible shame.

PHILIP HOFER: I'm sorry.

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PHILIP HOFER: —you are on that one.

ROBERT F. BROWN: While you were back here to do your AM, and Paul Sachs was—

PHILIP HOFER: AM is right.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —was advising you on collecting, were you at all interested in contemporary work at that—

PHILIP HOFER: Not particularly. Nor was he. I would have been, had he been. That came a little bit later, with Gerry Warburg, Lincoln Kirstein, who else? Well, they were two of them. Jonny Walker—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Right.

PHILIP HOFER: —of the National Gallery. They all came to to—the *Hound & Horn* was very, very—a little magazine run by those people that I'm talking about. They started it, for modern art. This is a good story for you. They went to Paul Sachs later after I was in New York—

ROBERT F. BROWN: This was just a few years after you were there.

PHILIP HOFER: —after I—during The Depression, or something like that. The beginning of the Depression. I was in New York. They went to Paul Sachs and said, "We know you don't care for it, Uncle Paul," or whatever. "But it is of our times. And you have always said yourself that it is important to be of your times." And he said, "Absolutely." He said, "I'm an old hat, that's all. I'm not as old hat as Edward Forbes is, but I'm pretty old." And he said, "I do come down to the Fontainebleau School," [laughs] and so forth. And he said, "I don't know, what do you want me to do?" And he said, "Well, if we get the slides made of things, will you look at the slides and then will you give your opinions?" So Paul Sachs said, "Sure." And he said, "I'll get a—I want a blackboard and I'll draw diagrams. [00:02:04] What I can do is say that I think I see what they're trying to do. The composition is diagonal, or this and that, or I like the color, or I don't like the color," something like that. And three lectures went off perfectly well. And then the fourth [laughs] lecture started with—they really gave him a beauty of abstract. It couldn't have been Pop art, because it was too early for Pop art. But very abstract. Paul took one look, and then he took the piece of chalk, that he was going to make a diagram. And he threw it at the thing. He said, "That's goddamned ugly! Class dismissed!"

ROBERT F. BROWN: Hmm. So that ended Paul Sachs on modern art, huh [laughs]?

PHILIP HOFER: Well, more or less. But it's a good story.

ROBERT F. BROWN: [Laughs.] Yes.

PHILIP HOFER: Let's say it did end him on modern art. No, no, of course he got interested later on. Cezanne—I had a Cezanne that I had bought in Munich for \$2,000, of *Mont Sainte-Victoire*, a watercolor. He said, "You have to let me have it!" And I said, "Paul, why?" He says, "For the Fogg. Everything for the Fogg. You learned at the Fogg. I taught you a whole lot. You were indebted to me on that. It's for the Fogg, you must let me have it." And I did. I said, "Now, Paul, if you ever by any chance don't give to Fogg, and you want to sell it, just let me know." He sold it to Henry McIlhenny, who had millions. I was furious. But he'd forgot. He was an old man by that time. He was in his 80s, just as I am now. I forget. Old men forget. Who said that? Duff Cooper. He wrote a book called *Old Men Forget*.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Hmm. Well, you were—then you had to finish, you had to quit, so to speak, your graduate education at your father's death.

PHILIP HOFER: Yes. [00:04:00]

ROBERT F. BROWN: But you already had a very strong taste for collecting, as we've just been saying.

PHILIP HOFER: Oh, Lord, yes. And then of course—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did you discover you had to—

PHILIP HOFER: —I got—the best education I got from the most disagreeable man that ever lived in the art world, but who was one of the most brilliant, William M. Ivins of the Metropolitan Museum. Ivins taught me more in the few months that he liked me all right, then he disliked me because I got eventually invited to be assistant director at the Morgan Library. And that's just the post he wanted.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But you saw him when you first went. You went to New York, more or less, the following year.

PHILIP HOFER: Oh, yes, went to New York.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Having been here.

PHILIP HOFER: Yes, of course, and I had to be in business part of the time and all that.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

PHILIP HOFER: But I did get a half-time job at New York Public [Library], first keeper of the Spencer collection. Advisor of the Spencer collection. New York Public.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And was the Spencer collection quite well-known at that time, in being—

PHILIP HOFER: No. It was just a piece of the most wonderful, funny, old dot named William Augustus Spencer. Never married, I suppose, same old story. Anyway, he left all his money to buy illustrated books and manuscripts in fine bindings, they had to be in fine bindings. That was a stupid revision—why did they have to be in fine bindings? But that was the provision. And I went there. That's just exactly what interested me, and I got interested in bindings, for that matter. And Kathleen Wick, Peter's wife, makes beautiful bindings.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Sure. Were you—

PHILIP HOFER: Well, anyway, I was there for nearly four years on a half-time job. The rest of the time, I was down on Wall Street working in investment.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. But with the Spencer funds, were you able to buy pretty broadly?

PHILIP HOFER: Ah, they had about \$50,000, \$60,000 a year. During the Depression.

ROBERT F. BROWN: That would go a long ways.

PHILIP HOFER: During the Depression. Oh, I was able to buy things I couldn't touch. Then very nice people were giving—the Percy Strauses, the Strauses—the Macy Strauses were giving—Percy Straus, I went to the Lothian sale [inaudible] was bought there, an East Anglian manuscript for, I don't know, but it was a matter of 40, or 30 or 40 or \$50,000—worth a million today. [00:06:11]

ROBERT F. BROWN: You were buying [inaudible] eliminated manuscripts and all for the Spencer collection as well?

PHILIP HOFER: Yes. Yes. But Mr. Straus was giving it in that case, because we couldn't have paid the whole thing for one management. Mr. Straus, Mr. Percy Straus gave us—there were three brothers, Straus, who ran this.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Were you traveling, as you could in those years, going to England, to Europe?

PHILIP HOFER: Yes. Yes. And when I could. The Spencer collection sent me abroad, because this is—and they gave me travel funds. Not a high salary, but good travel funds. And that was fine. My wife and I would long to travel. That's one of the reasons we married each other. She'd done some archaeology with Sir Arthur Evans in Knossos, in Crete. And so what we wanted to do was travel.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You didn't—you were married about this time? Or maybe—

PHILIP HOFER: I got married late. I married at 32.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. So you would travel. These were times of great sales, were they?

PHILIP HOFER: Ah, but this was the time to buy. Where I was lucky. I was unlucky with bad health. I was very—and unlucky with having certain other things, but very lucky at the time I lived. I lived at the time when [claps hands] it was a collector's market, the buyer's market. It's a seller's market now.

ROBERT F. BROWN: So you would principally go to London, or where else? Munich?

PHILIP HOFER: Everywhere. Yes, Germany, Spain, Portugal—you name it.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

PHILIP HOFER: You name it. Yes, very much so.

ROBERT F. BROWN: A wonderful chance, because you were doing this for the—

PHILIP HOFER: Then later on, though, when I was a junior in college, I went to Japan, because my brother got into the diplomatic service to get away from my father. And he was number four in the lowest thing in the—he had a little house in Japan. And I went to the art shops there, even then. But the worst mistake, I decided no—all Europe, I must concentrate. [00:08:02] Don't spread yourself out too far. Then I didn't go back to Japan again, right after World War II, when I should have gone right away. And oh, the bargains you could get in Japan in 1948, after the war. They were busted. There was some people named Hogay [ph] in Washington now. As John Rosenfield said, who was the professor of Oriental art at the Fogg, except he's acting director at the moment, he said, "What the Hogays bought"—but when I went there in '56, I was sent to a good man. Right away, I got good advice on that. I bought 58 manuscripts in about nine days. They were cheap enough for me, even then.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

PHILIP HOFER: There I didn't go into debt and didn't speculate—well, I speculated. I didn't know, I just bought what I liked. But I had studied some Japanese art by that time.

ROBERT F. BROWN: When you were traveling in the early Depression for the Spencer collection, you had certain assignments? There were certain sales coming up? Was that—

PHILIP HOFER: That's right.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did you also—

PHILIP HOFER: I went to the important auction sales. The [inaudible] sales—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Do you remember some of the big ones?

PHILIP HOFER: Oh, yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Could you mention any of them?

PHILIP HOFER: And I remember the funny things that happened. Seymour de Ricci was the great authority on manuscripts. Oh well, you don't want funny stories.

ROBERT F. BROWN: No, I'd like to hear.

PHILIP HOFER: All right. Well, there was a man named Le Francois, who was the commissar [inaudible]. He was officiating at the auction of the Rahiere [ph]. Rahiere was a dealer. But Rahiere had, like all the French, never is there a French dealer that doesn't have a private collection in the back of his shop, or somewhere. And Rahiere had done just that, then just tucked a whole lot of stuff away. And then after he died, the children needed the money. So they had a sale which, of course, realized much more than Rahiere had ever paid. [00:10:02] Well, at one of the Rahiere sales, the items were listed off, there were lots and lots of things. I can hear Le Francois, the commissar-priseur, "*Numero—numero 453 Hypnerotomachia Poliphili, Venize 1499 avec illustration de Priap intact, mais avec [de la jaunisse?]*." Do you get this? Good man, you speak French! Better than I do. And de Ricci put up his hand at once. Le Francoise looked at him and said, "*Comment, Monsieur de Ricci?*" He said, "*Monsieur Le Francoise, pas surprenant du tout, de son âge!*" Well, you see, that brought down the house. There were women at the auction, Madame Vaig [ph], who is the aunt of the *Compte de Ganay*—the *Marquis de Ganay*. Madame Vaig was one of the great buyers. She, curiously, financed an old [inaudible], very much like the *Comtesse de Vaig*, except not grand, [inaudible]. Madame [inaudible] on the Left Bank. Oh, the things she bought. There was always a special place at the auction for *Madame la Comtesse*. She sat in front there.[SJJ1]

ROBERT F. BROWN: Were you able, were you—

PHILIP HOFER: She was there, and I can see her grinning, too. You know, the French women love a good deal of a little bit of applesauce.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Were you able to buy pretty much the things you had in mind all the time?

PHILIP HOFER: I never went in for the—I very carefully—where it was Spencer, I would buy for Spencer. [00:12:02] I would buy the more expensive things. I thought it was very foolish for me to try to buy in the 15th century. I bought the 16th century French.

ROBERT F. BROWN: For the Spencer?

PHILIP HOFER: No, for myself.

ROBERT F. BROWN: No, for yourself, yeah.

PHILIP HOFER: I bought 15th century for Spencer. They said no, we want to get incunabula while we can get them. I said, "Give me my walking directions. I'd like to collect, too. And I'll offer you everything that I have, it's just up to you." And Lydenberg [ph] and Metcalf, and there was a— what was his name? Oh, well, the fellow in manuscripts know. I always showed them anything that I thought was at all important. And once or twice, they said, "No, I think you should offer that to Spencer." Then I had even better luck when I was at the Morgan Library, because Belle Greene decided very quickly that she didn't want me at all, because I knew too much. Not too much about books. I knew too much about her. I got to know pretty well about her, and guessed quite a few things about her. And she wanted me out. She didn't want to be succeeded, anyway by an assistant director.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Was she someone you had known about or knew before you went there?

PHILIP HOFER: Oh yes, she's brilliant.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You knew of her, at least, before you—

PHILIP HOFER: Oh, God! And Juliana Force at the Whitney, they were the two women. And they fought each other like cats.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Hmm.

PHILIP HOFER: And Belle Greene—Sydney Cockerell, head of the Fitzwilliam—Sir Sydney later— of the Fitzwilliam Cambridge, much the greatest art museum in England outside of the British Museum, that sort of thing—I mean university museum, the best university museum. He said when I went over for my first year at the Morgan Library and was talking to him, and he said, "Oh, Miss Greene? She knows nothing." I said, "What do you mean, sir?" He said, "You didn't allow me to finish." [00:14:00] Of course, this is typical Cockerell, he's a very smart old coot. "You didn't allow me to finish." I said, "You halted, anyway." "She is the most intelligent woman I ever met." In other words, her facts, and she knew exactly where to go. She got Panofsky, she got—she would go to Hind for this, Panofsky for that. She always knew where to get information, if she didn't have it. She knew some, of course.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Hmm.

PHILIP HOFER: It's silly to say she knew nothing. Of course she knew quite a lot. She bought very well.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Hmm.

PHILIP HOFER: But then she disliked me so much, eventually, that I offered her things—I had to, of course—offer when I saw things. I'd say, "Here, Miss Greene, I've been to such-and-such a place, and this is what I've seen. I have right out there in the stacks right now the only copy of the *Dürer 1498 Apocalypse* in its original state in the United States, the only one." She said, "Take the dirty thing away! It's ugly!"

ROBERT F. BROWN: This was after she was irreconcilable with you?

PHILIP HOFER: Yes. She didn't like me. Besides which, it's colored. But it should be colored. German books are normally colored. This is a very important copy, too, it's a colored copy. And it is now considered possible—but not certain—because it belonged to a man that wrote *Farben in der Kunst*. [SJJ2] Whatever it is, I forget. Anyway, he was—his name was Braun, or something like that. B-R-A-U-N, not your kind.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

PHILIP HOFER: Anyway, this was his copy. It's now considered possible that Dürer sent this copy out to see what the color would be like, decided that he had too many lines on it, and it interfered with the concept. [00:16:01] I could show you the book, and you'd see what I mean. I would rather have another color, so I bought a 1498 uncolored. But it's not in its original condition. It's cut down. You see, that's a book that's been cut to pieces. There are eight or 10 or 15 or 20 copies of the *Dürer Apocalypse* in its original state, but they're all in the great public institutions; Bibliothèque nationale [de France], the British Museum. Then a lot of German

universities, Rheinische Friedrich.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Miss Greene wouldn't even consider it because you—

PHILIP HOFER: Because I had it.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —you had gotten her goat, so—

PHILIP HOFER: Because I had it, yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Huh. Wow.

PHILIP HOFER: I had gotten her goat. And she said, "I don't have to have your advice." You see, she was just trying to put me down, that was all. I was happy enough to [inaudible] so. I said, "Well, all right, Miss Greene." Then she taught me lessons. I've written a whole lot about her, but I'm not publishing it, because that would be a dirty trick.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But you stayed on there for, what, a year—

PHILIP HOFER: I stayed for three and a half years and resigned on purpose. And that made her good and mad. That finished it. Then she told everybody in New York that she'd fired me, which was not true. She did not fire me.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What did you do there? If you couldn't work with her? Did you find a niche—

PHILIP HOFER: Well, I got along. Well, I was very busy. I did what she told me to. I helped catalog the drawing collection upstairs, and they had Rembrandt prints and things like that. I did what she told me to do. Sometimes she told me to go away [laughs].

ROBERT F. BROWN: Were things then—when she came on board, things—there was an awful lot to be done. Was there? Things were—

PHILIP HOFER: No, no, no. She's a terribly abled man. Terribly abled woman. My God, she's a whole—I could talk a year over her.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But she'd done a great deal to get everything in order, hadn't she?

PHILIP HOFER: Oh! She helped the elder Pierpont Morgan buy his manuscripts. That's why it's the greatest manuscript collection in America. [00:18:02] She started it. And well, she didn't—the real person who started it was Mr. Junius Morgan, who is not his father. There was a Junius Morgan who was Pierpont Morgan's father. But this was another Junius Morgan who went to Princeton, and who lived in Paris. And he said to his cousin, Pierpont, he's—old man with the nose, said, "Don't collect art against Fricke and Widener and people who have more money than you have. You're more powerful than they are, but they have more money than you have. You don't want money, you just want power. And you haven't tried to get money. You've not tried to sell U.S. Steel, and that sort of thing. You sold it to the public. You didn't buy it and make money. Why don't you go in for books and manuscripts?" He said, "But I know nothing about it." He said, "There's a young woman at Princeton who's just the one for you." It was Belle da Costa Greene. She was studying under Princeton, it had—well, not Charles Rufus Morey, but whoever was—Frank Jewett Mather, and people like that.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

PHILIP HOFER: Before Morey. And she was studying manuscripts. So she came in knowing what to buy. And if she didn't know what to buy, she knew where to go, as I said. She traveled abroad a good deal herself in the early days. Later on she didn't so much. She got arrogant. People who are very powerful always do, you know, practically. I've always been grateful that I wasn't very powerful. I didn't learn to get arrogant, I don't think. I hope not. It's one thing I'm really scared of. I think it's terrible to get arrogant.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Why would William Ivins have wanted to go to the Morgan, Miss Greene being there? Because he was a pretty strong figure himself, wasn't he? [00:20:00]

PHILIP HOFER: Yes. But he thought he could dominate her. And secondly, he also was interested sexually. And she slept with men quite easily.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mmm. Ivins you got to know earlier, didn't you?

PHILIP HOFER: Really. Yes. And I learned more from him than any other human being, anyone. Tubby Sizer included. But Tubby told me to go to him. Said, "That's the brightest man I've ever met." He was. Nasty and bright. In the end, even his daughter left him. His wife died and his daughter left him. She couldn't stand him. And then he finally insulted Tubby. He said, "Oh, Caroline, you're wife's an old bitch," or something like that. Tubby said, "Billy, must you fight with everybody? Now I can't speak to you again. You called my wife a bitch. Take it back!" He said, "I said what I said." Tubby Sizer said, "We're not speaking. Out!" Out he went. But Russell Allen here in Boston—this is the most extraordinary thing of all. Russell Allen here in Boston said, "You know, I could lick Billy Ivins, physically. When Billy started here, you see, I just looked like this." He says, "I didn't have any money either, any more than Billy Ivins. Billy, one more crack out of you, and I'll knock you into the Charles River!" [00:22:03]

ROBERT F. BROWN: Unless you stood up to him—

PHILIP HOFER: And he said to me one day, "Yes," later on, I said sometime, I said, "Really, it's no use my coming to talk to you anymore." I was still at the Morgan, I think. I said, "You just want to ruin me if you can. You tell me Miss Greene that every show I put on is no good, and things like that." He said, "Sure, you little poop!" I said, "Thank you. I think you're a remarkable man." He said, "Do you? What a big compliment from you." Said, "At least I'm no more than you do." And things like that. You see, he was just as insulting as he could possibly be. Then finally he said, one other day, later, "Why in heavens did you ever talk back to me?" I was fascinated that he said that. I said, "You reminded me too much of my father." He said, "I never had the privilege of knowing the gentleman." But you see, you know, if you respect your father, and even if he goddamned you and everything else. I couldn't. That was the reason I couldn't do it. Besides, I couldn't knock him into the next county [laughs], and didn't—I just played ball that way. I didn't play rough. I wasn't good at it.

ROBERT F. BROWN: So you could listen to him, and there was a great deal to be learned.

PHILIP HOFER: And Hyatt Mayor said to me, "Oh," he said, "Yes, Billy Ivins chose me. And I"—and of course, Hyatt was wonderful. Hyatt Mayor was the right person to succeed Billy Ivins at the Metropolitan—wonderful. Hyatt could have had any job, I think. I think Hyatt was one of the greatest art historians we've ever had in this country. [00:24:03] Up with those people like Panofsky, and so forth. Hyatt Mayor on Rembrandt, the last thing he ever wrote, and *Rembrandt and the Bible*, one of the finest things I ever read. I bought 12 copies from the Metropolitan Museum of the bulletin that came out. Hyatt Mayor said, "Yes, Phil, but you didn't have to live with it." He said, "I said I couldn't. I have a temper." He said, "I have, too." But he said, he said, "I didn't want to lose the job." And he said, "Besides which, you had money. I didn't."

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mmm. Mmm.

PHILIP HOFER: "I couldn't afford to lose the job. You could. You had some money." My wife and I had none. I've had to stick it. I said, "Well, good for you, Hyatt. Bravo. You're a wonderful man." And I consider him so. One of the finest men I've ever known, as well as brilliant as Ivins. Just not as nasty.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Hmm. Hmm.

PHILIP HOFER: Now there's a whole lot of stuff that ought to be archived, but not for publication, Bob Brown, please.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah.

PHILIP HOFER: Because some of this is awfully hot potato, still. Eventually this thing will all be told.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Ivins, though, you had some inkling was someone worth hanging around for a bit in the '30s. So much despite—

PHILIP HOFER: Oh! I would have gone to him—I would have gone to him—I would have gone to him if he'd let me. He finally wouldn't even let me in.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But you had some—a few months before you went to the Morgan where you —

PHILIP HOFER: Oh, yes. And a few months after.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah.

PHILIP HOFER: He didn't do it right away. Well, he'd come to look at a show, Belle Greene would say, "Hey Billy, come here and see what my assistant here has put a show on." Billy would come, and do you know, he'd find the flaw. There's always a fly in every ointment. There's be one book in that show that wasn't as good as it ought to be. And Billy would go right for it, he was that smart. [00:26:01] He would go like this [gestures]. This is Ivins looking at these. And he had this sort of—

ROBERT F. BROWN: [Laughs.] Uh-huh. Then he went over, and then he'd pounce on something?

PHILIP HOFER: Then he'd say, "You said there that that is the first use of that particular wood cut." He said, "It is not." And Greene would say, "Mr. Ivins, are you insulting my assistant director?" This is, of course, played between the two of them. He said, "I'm just telling the truth, Belle. What do you expect me to do?" And I said, "I will look into that. And if I have been wrong, I shall say so." And I was wrong about nine times out of 10, or three out of four, anyway. He knew more than I did. He'd certainly been at it a good deal longer.

ROBERT F. BROWN: He had been, having the—

PHILIP HOFER: Oh, yes. But even then, I don't claim to be to this day to know as much as Ivins. Ivins spoke books and, what is it, books and prints. It's in his fourth and fifth edition, and he wrote it 30 years ago, 40 years ago. Fifty years ago.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You weren't crushed or paralyzed by such criticism?

PHILIP HOFER: I wasn't—I'm not paralyzed, no. My mind isn't paralyzed. Mostly I'm paralyzed—

ROBERT F. BROWN: For a bit you would be afterward, but then you'd pick up the pieces, and so you'd learned something, is that it?

PHILIP HOFER: But of course. I was a little squirt anyway, to begin with. That's the way I always did. Football or anything else. I played football eventually. I wasn't any good, but I got a knee in [ph] in 1915. I played football, and I played hard. But I wasn't any good, that was all. But I did learn that it was important. You had to learn to fight, too. Didn't you think so?

ROBERT F. BROWN: You were collecting, as you said earlier, in the '30s on your own.

PHILIP HOFER: Oh, yes, I was collecting before that, in the '20s. [00:28:01]

ROBERT F. BROWN: Right in New York? Were you browsing—

PHILIP HOFER: I was collecting in Cleveland. I'd been abroad two or three times, and that sort of thing.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Well, I noticed the whole bind—the little drawing of Tantalus you got in—

PHILIP HOFER: Ah, I saw that as early as—I bought that in 1936. I saw that drawing as early—of Hen Op. Mr. Henry Oppenheimer, he lived in the Kensington Palace Garden Road. And I went to see his collection under the suggestion, say, of Theodore Sizer or something, way, way back. In any case, I was fascinated with this little—and you see, what is—I must give you one, by the way—what is it? I must give you a Ruzicka reproduction. What it is that is a collector? He is tantalized, isn't he, because he can never get everything he wants.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes.

PHILIP HOFER: It's quite impossible to get everything he wants. Well, I collected the original of that. By Rudolph Ruzicka. Take it.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Thank you.

PHILIP HOFER: That's a five-color wood cut by Rudolph Ruzicka.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And this is something you'd wanted for some years before—

PHILIP HOFER: No. I'd never seen it before. But the minute I saw the subject and the drawing, it's such an exquisite—it's imaginative. Whole body is wonderful as a portraitist. But when he's

imaginative, he's even more wonderful!

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah. Yeah.

PHILIP HOFER: I think that's even more wonderful than some of his portraits.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm [affirmative].

PHILIP HOFER: And that—look at the size of it. That's a jeweler's drawing perhaps for the back of a watch, or for a tray, or something. [Claps.] All artists had to be anywhere from being a barber to cutting a lawn for their patrons.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Their patrons.

PHILIP HOFER: Sure. Well, Dürer did that as a little job. The museum at Basel has a half a dozen of these. They're not in this country, except that one.

ROBERT F. BROWN: So the opportunity—

PHILIP HOFER: That one belongs now to my son. [00:30:00]

ROBERT F. BROWN: But the opportunity to get that drawing was a high point—

PHILIP HOFER: Ah. He said to me, "My favorite drawing, you won't get that until I'm dead." And I said, "Mr. Oppenheimer, excuse me, I don't want to wish you dead or anything like that." But I said, "You know, a collector is awfully tantalized," and so forth. And he said, "Yes, and I see exactly why you want it." He patted me on the shoulder. And he said, "Look here," he said, "I'll tell you one piece of information. When I die, my collection is to be sold. I haven't any direct heirs, and my collection is to be sold." Well, I was in a hospital in Nymphenburg, my original complaint, anemia, very bad again, but married in 1936 in Nymphenburg, outside of Munich.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

PHILIP HOFER: And I was getting my mail. My wife was taking German lessons, and I got my mail, and one of them was announcement of the Oppenheimer sale. With everybody pursuing me through the corridors, the nurses screaming, *Schwester*, you know, they're always called during business. *Schwester. Ahh, Herr Hofer! Im Bett! Wieder im Bett gehen!* Right away. Well, anyway, I don't know why my German jumps away from me. I could say it—

ROBERT F. BROWN: So did you get off there?

PHILIP HOFER: And I, I—no. I went to the phone and called long distance and put in a bid. And I said—Jim Byam Shaw of Colnaghi. And I said there were several other things. And he—I said, "What do you think that I'd like there?" "Oh," he said, "you mustn't try to bid for the lot. Oh, you mustn't try to bid for the"—something else, and something else, naming drawings. But he said, "That little Holbein is a small thing. I doubt if anybody will see the quality of that. [00:32:02] And I know you love it, because it's one of the things you mentioned." And he said, "I'll bid on that for you." And I gave him my limit. And he went \$1,000 more. And I said, "Jim, you know, it's one of the reasons I think the world of you. You went \$1,000 more, and you also said to me that if I minded, that you'd pay for it, that I'd get it for the 10 instead of the 11," or whatever it was. And I said, "How wonderful of you. No, I will certainly pay it. You're an angel." That's what I still think of him. He's alive today. I've been cataloging the Christ Church College Oxford drawings. He's a wonderful man. There's one of the nicest men, just as bright as Ivins, and not nasty.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Colnaghi, was that one of your frequent dealers?

PHILIP HOFER: Oh, he's the best art dealer in England until recently. And now there's some others, but Colnaghi was *the* firm, with that Italian name, Colnaghi, the original Colnaghi was an Italian, and I think partly Jewish. But you know, the British are not snobs about such things, and quite right.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

PHILIP HOFER: I remember Eurafafalis [ph] lived right next to Singeon [ph] Hornby which is engine's best [ph] on the Kensington Palace Garden roads, and the Greeks and the Hornbys were intimate friends, of course.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

PHILIP HOFER: It's all such nonsense to get ethnic. We used to be too ethnic.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did you collect much in New York? You've mentioned—

PHILIP HOFER: Oh, yes. But there, another thing. Well, William Jackson was a tremendous influence on me. Eight years younger, dead since 1964, William Jackson was self-educated at Williams College, scholarship student. Just had a brilliant mind. He was the first director of this library.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

PHILIP HOFER: He and I came up here together, Keyes Metcalf New York Public [Library] that brought us both up here. [00:34:05] And William Jackson, well, many things he told me, one of it, he said, "Always make friends with the dealers. That's where you get your—if they like you, they'll show you things. If they don't like you, you don't get the best chance." And I—wherever I like a dealer, I certainly make friends with them. Even with that old stinkpot, Krause [ph], he's coming up here shortly. "Krause Louse," we all call him. But he's gotten terribly arrogant and so forth. But he's been a little chastened, recently. Now he's being very polite to us. He's coming up to see some stuff over there that I could part with, it won't hurt me. You see, they've made me raise money for Harvard, because they aren't interested in art. Yale isn't doing that. Princeton isn't doing that. Williams isn't doing that. Amherst isn't doing that.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You've mentioned—you've shown me these Russian children's books that you've—

PHILIP HOFER: Yes, I did.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —acquired in New York in the '30s. That wasn't through a particular dealer, was it?

PHILIP HOFER: Yes, indeed it was.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Oh, it was?

PHILIP HOFER: Mr. Pearlstein. Mr. Pearlstein was a communist at that time. Curious that a Jewish gentleman should be a communist, but he was communist in American terms, but not in Russian terms.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

PHILIP HOFER: And he was in the Amalgamated Bank building in Union Square.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

PHILIP HOFER: In 1932, the banks were shut. The banks were shut. This was the summer of '32.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm [affirmative].

PHILIP HOFER: And I got up there to see him, and he was shouting out the window, "Down with the J. P. Morgan, down with capitalism, down with everything. Labor forever," and so forth. Then he finally noticed me, because I had made a few "uh-hums" or kicked something. He said, "Oh! You're here for the books of the dirty little brats." He said, "They're over there in the corner." [00:36:01] I told you this, didn't I?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes.

PHILIP HOFER: Did I?

ROBERT F. BROWN: You said you had got them, you mentioned it.

PHILIP HOFER: Yeah, and I was allowed just what I had in my pocket. It was \$17. Then when I came back the next day, he decided he'd been foolish to let me buy them at such a silly rate. And I came with 100-odd dollars, even if the banks was closed. I went around to anybody that had \$10 in their pocket, and said, "What have you got that you don't need to pay at the grocery store tomorrow?" And I got about \$100, and he had the door locked.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Hmm.

PHILIP HOFER: But he wasn't going to let me get anymore. Well—

ROBERT F. BROWN: That was a fluke.

PHILIP HOFER: —can't blame him.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah.

PHILIP HOFER: Can't blame him. Can't blame him.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Were you, particularly at that time, among other things, interested in Russian illustrated books?

PHILIP HOFER: Oh, yes. But you see, one of my philosophies—I must give you a little book called *Drawings and Art* or something, a lecture I gave at Andover, Andover School, I believe that the right way to buy—first of all, you should buy nothing by nobody. You should train your eyes—this is one of the things that Billy Ivins' partner told me. He told me this much. He said, "Train your eye first. Then consult books." But train your eye first. And Then look it up and see if you're right, if the other people—Campbell Dodson [ph], all the good art critics think well of this, this, this master. But train your eye. Because if you can't do it with your eye, you're never going to get bargains that are out there in the shop, on the Kay [ph] Of course, there was nothing in the Kay [ph] in Paris by the time I got there. There used to be. The Kay [ph] in Paris are a whole lot of fakes. They're mostly forgeries, if they were any good.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

PHILIP HOFER: But the Left Bank was the place to go, not the Right Bank. All the expensive dealers were on the Right Bank.

ROBERT F. BROWN: First you had to have that eye.

PHILIP HOFER: You have to have your eye. The eye is the key to the whole thing. [00:38:01]

ROBERT F. BROWN: And this meant looking, looking—

PHILIP HOFER: Looking, looking, looking, looking, searching, searching, then reading. Search, read. Search, read. But search first. And I'm still doing it. And I did one this year that turned out very happily. A very nice firm that I've made friends with on Bill Jackson's principle, that you should make friends with dealers, Pruter in Paris. Awfully nice people. Paul Pruter and I used to be very good friends. Anyway, they sent me a catalog, and in it I saw a drawing, a lovely landscape. It was marked Yves Robert. It was 25,000 francs. Well, that's eight—the dollar was three thousand and something, it's not too expensive for Yves Robert, for this sort of a drawing. It was a beautiful drawing. Anyway, I ordered it. And then Pruter—this is where you're so lucky—first of all, he said he had it still. Secondly, he then wrote me and he said, "Somebody has come and questioned that being Yves Robert. Since it's questioned, we're reducing the price. It's 18,500. Do you still want it? We don't know that it's Yves Robert, so we can't say that." At 18,500 francs, why, I said, "Even still more. I like the drawing." I didn't care if it was Yves Robert or not. I got it. I look at the luck. But on the other hand, it's two-thirds luck, but it was one-third eye. The luck was that Agnes Mongen and Eunice Williams says it is not nobody. It is Fragonard, greater than Yves Robert. Voila.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Hmm.

PHILIP HOFER: Now, you see, that's the kind of luck, where your eyes go. [00:40:01] And then a year ago last summer, I went—and you get a *Fingerspitzengefühl*, for German that thing, you know, you have a feeling. I know sometimes when I buy a book—I just sort of smell it. I went over to a place taken by a friend named Roger Wieck, who was here. Assistant of mine, or the partners here. And a nice man named [Bill] Wyre, or something like that, in Williamstown. And he—I just went over and sighed, and he said, "Here is a book sale, around in this section." I sort of grabbed it over there, and there were two volumes like this, with like a kind of a nice period binding, late 19th century. I pulled them out. They were done in Buffalo, New York. They're engravings, and they were in color, in 1889, of Niagara, and everything about Niagara. And they haven't got them in any library around here. And this probably was a dedication copy.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Hmm. Hmm.

PHILIP HOFER: Special copy. Well, you get this—

ROBERT F. BROWN: You get a sense.

PHILIP HOFER: —you get this instinct. You get a presentiment. And Hyatt Mayor had it, too. All the good people do. Don't think that Jim Byam Shaw, or an old buyer of Colnaghi's didn't smell a good thing when they saw it.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

PHILIP HOFER: I'm sure you must be tired—

ROBERT F. BROWN: You have to.

PHILIP HOFER: You have to. You've had—

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[END OF INTERVIEW.]