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Oral history interview with Adele S. Brown
and William H. Calfee, 1995 January 11

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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a tape-recorded interview with Adele Brown and William Calfee on January 11, 1995. The interview took place at Calfee's home in Chevy Chase, Maryland, and was conducted by Liza Kirwin for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. Funding for the transcription of this interview provided by the Smithsonian Institution's Women's Committee.

The reader should bear in mind that he or she is reading a transcript of spoken, rather than written, prose.

Interview

LIZA KIRWIN: I want to begin by saying this is Liza Kirwin, and it's January 11, 1995, and I am talking with William Calfee and Adele Brown about the Phillips Memorial Gallery and the Studio House that was run in connection with the Phillips Memorial Gallery. I do have some questions, but I thought it might be best if I begin with Mr. Calfee to ask him how he first became associated with the Studio House - or even before the Studio House - with the Phillips Memorial Gallery.

WILLIAM CALFEE: Well, when I was in high school, we were taken to the Phillips Gallery, and for us - for me, this was an unusual experience, because I did come from what would be called middle-class Washington, and I had never been in a house that was as marvelously impressive and full of the things that I later grew to love as the Gallery. And at that time you entered a door more in the middle and took an elevator to the second floor. Do you remember that?

ADELE BROWN: Well, I think the Phillips's still lived there for a while, didn't they - while it was -

MR. CALFEE: They did. That's true, yes. So you took an elevator. You didn't go in the front door. And you went up to the gallery, which was on the second floor, but that was the way I first became acquainted with it. And afterward that was the place that I would say I was attracted to.

MS. BROWN: Did you go to the school there, or just later teach?

MR. CALFEE: No, I received more from Law Watkins than I realized. I had looked at some of the files and realized that probably what I taught later had its basis in a great deal that I received from him, because I used to assist him by going - he had a number of locations around the city, like Hood College in Frederick, Maryland.

MS. BROWN: That's right.

MR. CALFEE: And when he couldn't go, he would send me. So I had his papers or his outlines, you see. And then when Karl Knaths came - do you remember that?

MS. BROWN: Yes, indeed.

MR. CALFEE: I used to go there. Well, and then - Shall I keep on going?

MS. KIRWIN: What was C. Law Watkins' connection with Duncan Phillips? Was that a connection that was through Yale University? They were both -

MS. BROWN: They began as friends at Yale, and then I believe that Law worked for Duncan Phillips. They were connected with some big iron or steel business in Pennsylvania, I think. Now, this isn't accurate. Do you have any more information?

MR. CALFEE: I know nothing about that.

MS. BROWN: I feel as though Law worked for him, but how he got down to this, or what his background was before that - before he became executive director of the Phillips, I don't know. He was superb, but I don't know what his background was.

MR. CALFEE: Well, do you remember that he was related to the Seymour family?

MS. BROWN: Oh, yes.

MR. CALFEE: See, I don't know much about them.

MS. BROWN: He had met Mrs. Seymour. President Seymour's wife was Law's sister.

MR. CALFEE: That was of Yale, the president of Yale, yeah. And then Charles Seymour came to the National Gallery.

MS. BROWN: Yes, and that was their son.

MR. CALFEE: So that was part of the family, the Seymour family.

MS. BROWN: Well, did you not study with Law, or - I mean, formally study with him?

MR. CALFEE: See, I don't think that was so. I think that what I did was to go there with one other person. Actually, it was a girl named Olga Helm. We would go at night, and we had a studio on the north side - a smaller studio on the north of the third floor.

MS. KIRWIN: Is this at the Phillips Gallery?

MR. CALFEE: At the Phillips Gallery, yeah. And we painted there.

MS. KIRWIN: What were those galleries? Were those Marjorie Phillips' galleries or -

MR. CALFEE: You mean her working space?

MS. KIRWIN: Yes.

MR. CALFEE: I don't feel that. I never saw any evidence of such a thing.

MS. BROWN: I think she must have worked at home.

MR. CALFEE: That's what I would say.

MS. BROWN: I don't remember it ever being around there. These were just sort of attic rooms up on top, weren't they?

MR. CALFEE: Well, they were good studio space to us.

MS. BROWN: They were up at top.

MR. CALFEE: They had no beds or anything like that in them. They were just really studio space. And so we went at least two nights a week. And then in the bigger studio, there would be people who painted -- like Bernice Cross, for instance. And we crossed paths, but we didn't have any student connection.

MS. KIRWIN: I had read in one of the brochures that Watkins was teaching for free; no tuition, from 1929 to 1932, in the studios of the Phillips Gallery before the Studio House formally opened.

MR. CALFEE: That sounds right.

MS. KIRWIN: Was that the period that you were there?

MR. CALFEE: Yes. Because, you see, I realized that I graduated from high school probably in '27. I would have been 18. So then I would have gone those nights to the gallery to paint.

MS. KIRWIN: And was Mr. Watkins there and giving you guidance?

MR. CALFEE: No, he was not there regularly. That's what I'm trying to say: That for several years I just went there at night and painted, and was part of a small group that were in -- some were in contact with him during the daytime. And then when Karl Knaths would come, I would go to work with him. So I remember the idea of using two colors and black and white, which is what he started off with. But during those times - you see, too, I have some data here. All of this is not absolutely clear to me, but I went to - because I was trying to be practical, I went to a school to learn typing and shorthand, and then I got a job as a stenographer, which lasted nine months. And I made \$30 a week. That was in the government. So that was those years between, say, '27, '29 and '32.

MS. KIRWIN: Did it occur to you at that time to go to the Corcoran rather than the Phillips, or did you make a conscious decision that the Phillips was where you wanted to be rather than -

MR. CALFEE: Well, that's a little complex, because when you speak of this - I did go to the Corcoran and worked at sculpture with someone who came from Baltimore, but I found that it was by no means comparable to what I received at the Phillips Gallery. And later I saw that the - I was rather disdainful of the Corcoran, because I felt the quality of it was not high enough; their teachers were not good enough. Meaning by that, that I again felt

that Watkins had something that I didn't receive anywhere else. So, see, I think it was the first year that the Studio House opened that I went to school in Paris. And, I say I made \$900, and that's what I lived off of one winter in Paris. And I went to the Beaux-Arts.

MS. BROWN: Oh, I didn't know that.

MR. CALFEE: Yeah. Well, that's, I believe, probably '32 when you say Studio House opened.

MS. BROWN: I think it was '33 according to what I looked up.

MS. KIRWIN: '33. In 1932 it closed for a year -

MR. CALFEE: I see.

MS. KIRWIN: -- according to the literature at the school, because of the Depression.

MR. CALFEE: Oh, I see.

MS. BROWN: The school closed?

MS. KIRWIN: Well, what was the school. It was not the Studio House. It was what Watkins was doing at the Phillips Memorial Gallery -

MR. CALFEE: Yeah, it was still in the gallery.

MS. KIRWIN: -- ceased from 1932, and in 1933 the Studio House as a separate -

MS. BROWN: Well, that puzzles me a little, because my introduction to Law Watkins and the school was I graduated from college at Stanford in '31, and I don't think it was that winter that I - I'm not sure - that I went to a commercial art class. I always wanted to go into art. I didn't know what I was going to do. And somebody there told me about the Phillips Gallery. And I know I went and took classes with Law, but I would have guessed that that was '33 - but I may be wrong.

MS. KIRWIN: No, that would be right.

MS. BROWN: That would be right?

MS. KIRWIN: I brought some of these little - some of these have some good - Oh, here's this little forward in the catalog for the Gallery School of Art, Studio House, from 1936, '37. So it's from '29 to '32 the Phillips Memorial Gallery opened its studios to painters and students of painting to work without tuition. It was under the direction of C. Law Watkins.

MR. CALFEE: That sounds right, yeah.

MS. KIRWIN: Classes grew from a handful in 1929 to an enrollment of 124 in 1932. In 1932, the reduced budget of the gallery caused the abandonment of the free school. And then -

MS. BROWN: Well, did they have - indicate that you then paid there, or did it close and wait until-

MS. KIRWIN: It closed and opened its doors again in October 1933 as Studio House.

MS. BROWN: Oh, okay. I didn't realize that.

MS. KIRWIN: And Mr. Watkins rented a building near the gallery for this purpose.

MS. BROWN: That's interesting.

MS. KIRWIN: So that was one of the little brochures, because I was unclear about that, and so then-

MR. CALFEE: It reopened in '33, you say?

MS. KIRWIN: Yes, according to these catalogs.

MR. CALFEE: Yeah, good.

MS. KIRWIN: So '33 would have been the year that you began there, Mrs. Brown?

MS. BROWN: No, because I didn't ever study at Studio House. I studied under at the Phillips Gallery. That's why I

was surprised. I would have thought there was a year, but maybe I started earlier than I realized.

MS. KIRWIN: Well, they did continue to use the studios in the Phillips Memorial Gallery as well as that separate building, so -

MS. BROWN: But the opening of Studio - I always connected from the beginning the opening of Studio House, just because he had gotten to know me through studying with him. And I really am quite vague as to just when it was or how long, but I remember working upstairs in the Phillips Gallery classes, but I have no details.

MS. KIRWIN: What kind of instruction did you receive that really connects you with Watkins?

MS. BROWN: Well, at that time I was painting. And again, the same thing happens. You get to know Law Watkins. He just is an inspiration of, you know, you think and feel and understand.

MR. CALFEE: Yeah.

MS. BROWN: And it was purely fortuitous that - I had no training in museum work at that time, but he got this idea of a gallery, and just put it together with Bob. I guess he was the associate director.

MR. CALFEE: Who, Bob Gates?

MS. BROWN: Yeah, and then Margaret was the executive director. I don't know. And I was the manager, with absolutely no experience. It was just, you know, Law just laid this in front of us. And it was just - I thought it just terribly exciting. I mean, I went on doing that sort of thing afterwards.

MR. CALFEE: The main thing he had was what I would consider still fundamentals, which you don't receive many places.

MS. BROWN: I wish I knew -

MS. KIRWIN: Can you describe, or in some way explain what you mean by what he meant by fundamentals or what you received from him as fundamental education?

MR. CALFEE: Well, yes. Suppose I say - I've tried to make diagrams of this numbers of times. Suppose you say that you have a canvas that is this shape, say. Vertically, it's taller. If you turn it this way, then the height is less, of course. So in one, the vertical dominates; and in the other, the horizontal dominates, yes? But your main job from the beginning is to place whatever goes on that in relation to this vertical and this horizontal. So that's what - whatever it is that you put on it. If you put a round ball in the center, you have exactly the opposite of the square that it's on, or the rectangle that it's on. So you need to make a transition between this round thing, meaning shapes that get bigger, and finally end up with the rectangle. Or you could start with the rectangle and move in towards shapes that move toward the round. Now, this is epitomized, I think, in Cézanne. As you look at the Cézanne, you'll see that. That's what I call a fundamental.

MS. KIRWIN: And did he use works in the gallery to illustrate some of these ways of -

MR. CALFEE: I would feel that, yes, very much.

MS. BROWN: That was what was so wonderful about working there. You had so much to go look at.

MR. CALFEE: Yeah. Well, you see -

MS. BROWN: Well, he wrote that book, Fundamentals of Design. I was looking all over for it. I had it somewhere.

MR. CALFEE: I may have that, but I'm not sure where it is. I have upstairs - I intended to bring it down - a folder that says "Law Watkins' papers," so I may go get that now. But you see, what I said about the color was fundamental, this was what came to Karl Knaths. Instead of just taking any colors and trying to imitate whatever it is that you see, he asked that you take two colors and black and white in the beginning. So that means that if you chose red and blue, it would be very different from red and yellow, because if you mix yellow with black, you come out with a green, yes? Excuse me, I'll just - it was the way things should be, I would feel, that someone gave what I call fundamentals, not a style. And it might even be that I - I think I would dare to say that Law wasn't a very good painter. I think I would dare that. But he was able to analyze and understand.

MS. BROWN: This was a point of frustration to him. I have a letter here in which he has taken time off to paint, because he feels ashamed that, as a teacher, he himself has never produced anything that satisfied him.

MR. CALFEE: Yeah.

MS. BROWN: And he thought he had to do it. Actually, I don't think he did. He was such a superb teacher.

MR. CALFEE: Yeah.

MS. BROWN: But from his point of view, the fact that he himself had not done something that satisfied him made him feel, how could he be a fine teacher.

MR. CALFEE: Well, he was.

MS. BROWN: He was. Just superb.

MR. CALFEE: See, I remember, too, standing with him in front of a painting in a show that he had at the gallery. And it was a painting of a person, and it was comparatively dark. But the main thing that he saw when the painting was on the wall was that the background moved forward of the figure. Even though it was dark, the figure was sort of - okay, the background was forward. He said the background - there's a plane in the back of the painting which, instead of being there, was sort of here. And he took that painting down, I'm almost sure. But you see, that's another thing that I would say is a fundamental, because if you put this brush stroke - now, this is the way the background was - if you put this brush stroke here and you develop this form it'll come out in front of that. And then you have to build this back so that it comes up on the surface of the canvas with the object. Is that right? And this is what Cézanne did. So that he - the tone will change - move the objects this way. And there was a space that created depth, if you wish. It was not space like perspective or something like that. But it was an indication of depth and volume with the tone of changes moving this way. That's what I would call a fundamental. And I never heard such a thing at the Corcoran. Never.

MS. KIRWIN: There also seemed to be in the literature a strong emphasis on the individual and trying to find the right - or trying to allow the individual to develop their own expression.

MR. CALFEE: That's quite right.

MS. BROWN: He had great empathy and understanding of people.

MR. CALFEE: Yeah, quite right.

MS. BROWN: And that came out in this.

MR. CALFEE: Yeah.

MS. BROWN: He used to come down sometimes with students and bring their work down to the gallery.

MR. CALFEE: Mm-hmm [Affirmative], in the studio.

MS. BROWN: And he'd crouch down on the floor in there and discuss the painting. It was just fascinating to hear him. I mean, he was just, you just got an understanding as they talked. I know particularly he was going through a period where he did a lot of glazing in the old-fashioned sense of layers of glazing, and he was having the students do that. And to hear him discuss the stages just - he just - his empathy with the person with whom he was dealing was so obvious.

MS. KIRWIN: Was anyone teaching sculpture or did he teach sculpture?

MR. CALFEE: No.

MS. KIRWIN: And when you were working in the studio then, were you doing sculpture or painting?

MR. CALFEE: In the studio at Phillips? There was no sculpture done there in my memory. No, I was painting.

MS. BROWN: I don't remember showing sculpture at Studio House or where we would have had a place.

MR. CALFEE: Well, I think probably in those early years, I probably didn't do any sculpture. See, sculpture requires a great deal of technical knowledge, again. And I know that I went to Corcoran to several classes in Corcoran that were sculpture, but there was nothing done except a nude figure with a model, and what you were doing was what I would call an imitation, or an attempt at anatomical imitation of the figure. But as far as art goes, never any mention of it. It was just an imitation of whatever it was that was there. And then, if I said that - '32, I'm sure I went to Paris, to the Beaux-Arts. That was maybe the first year that you were at Studio House. And there - what I found out later was - at the Beaux-Arts, I received nothing except exactly what I've said, an imitation of what the figure might be. Occasionally there was a sketch, a composition asked for, maybe once every three weeks or something. So it was only in the States that I found what I'm talking about.

MS. KIRWIN: Did you seek Watkins' advice about going to the Beaux-Arts?

MR. CALFEE: No. I don't know, I think I did that because I wanted to go to Europe, that's all, and I made this \$900. You'd spend 16 cents on dinner.

MS. BROWN: Well, that was the period when going to Paris was the only -that was the [inaudible] of all art.

MR. CALFEE: Yeah, but as a young person I wanted to go, and I did go. And I didn't come home until I'd spent every single penny. I'm trying not to go beyond you now, so I'll let you ask the questions. Those are the papers of Watkins over here?

MS. KIRWIN: Yes.

MR. CALFEE: Can I just look at them a minute?

MS. KIRWIN: Then Adele, let me ask you about the beginning of the gallery at Studio House. You've mentioned a little bit about how you got pulled into it when Watkins decided that this was going to be a component of the Studio House. What relation - if any - was there, and what was the relation - if any - between the gallery and the Studio House and the gallery - and the Phillips Memorial Gallery?

MS. BROWN: It's hard to describe, and some of this I have to relate to hindsight. When we came together it was just a very pleasant association of people who, whom, Law Watkins with the Phillips Gallery, and there was this sense of some relation between the two.

MR. CALFEE: You understood each other. I think that's -

MS. BROWN: But actually, it was not part of the Phillips Gallery except that their executive director was the director of Studio House, and it was his own concept. As I stated, years later Bob Gates told me that Marjorie Phillips had always been strongly against the Studio House because of its - she felt that anything connected with sales should not be related to the Phillips Gallery. And though it was not their project it still, because of Law and the fact that it was next door, they were thought of as being related. So it's a little nebulous. And the main thing was Law, Dr. Phillips was very supportive and had a special student fund.

MR. CALFEE: I would say you'd have to come to financial matters now, too.

MS. BROWN: Yes. I don't know. I actually don't know how Law financed this.

MR. CALFEE: Law didn't have any money.

MS. BROWN: No, he was - no. So how he financed the gallery itself, Margaret Gates in one of her letters refers something to - that Law had gone to Europe and said maybe this meant less money for Studio House staff the next year, or something like that. I have - so that gave me the feeling, well, some of it must be his money. But I had no idea. I mean, I just didn't have any curiosity about the financial background. It was his idea and his project. The school, I guess, would have the Phillips Gallery money, wouldn't you think, since it was moved over from the Gallery?

MR. CALFEE: I know nothing about the money.

MS. KIRWIN: Unless it's self-sustaining -

MS. BROWN: Oh, I'm sure.

MS. KIRWIN: -- through the tuition.

MS. BROWN: Well, that, I know nothing about, because I know nothing about the finances. It certainly wasn't self-supporting as far as sales were concerned.

MS. KIRWIN: Were you on salary there?

MS. BROWN: Yes, a small salary. And to tell you the truth, I can't remember what it was. But they were very small salaries.

MR. CALFEE: Well, you see, I think when you keep talking this way, I realize that those were the - that was the period of the Depression.

MS. BROWN: Yes.

MR. CALFEE: And all of us younger people were not in any way bothered by this. I would say I almost didn't

realize there was such a thing, because this is what I was living in, and in a way what I was brought up in. So money was not something that we were concerned with.

MS. BROWN: Well, I was mentioning to her that I was amused at recollecting that artists in those days were usually very poorly dressed and -

MR. CALFEE: Well, I don't know that.

MS. BROWN: Well, you know, they did not have the - they were like many other people in the country at that time with very little money, so they were apt to look a little more run down, contrary to artists today. Even though they're not doing very well, there isn't the same sense of really living on very close to the line.

MR. CALFEE: I think it depends upon what is important in your life, because if it is not important to you to be stylish, then you just wear clothes. And I think people are still this way. If the department stores had to depend upon me, they would go out of business.

MS. BROWN: That's true of [inaudible].

MR. CALFEE: This was true then.

MS. BROWN: Well, that's true of my son, whose [inaudible] you have here today.

MS. KIRWIN: Could you describe the gallery space? Because the Phillips Gallery, of course, everyone has a very immediate reaction to it, because it was a home and it was very warm.

MS. BROWN: Very. It was much smaller. It was just the main house. And very informal. I think all of us of the old guard miss that. You could come in and there were big sofas, and you could sit down there and read all day if you wanted to, and look at the pictures and read some more. It was just like visiting somebody's home and curling up on the couch and enjoying the pictures. Which, of course, in the current world no longer is. So that was just that main house. Then the Studio House had a hallway which - entrance hall which had prints and things on the wall, and then it had one main room where the paintings would be.

MR. CALFEE: Well, there's some houses still there that are similar to it.

MS. BROWN: Yes.

MR. CALFEE: Because it was a row house.

MS. KIRWIN: Is it no longer standing?

MS. BROWN: No. No, I guess it's probably caught up in that new wing.

MR. CALFEE: That's quite right. There are several houses that were torn down to be replaced by the new wing.

MS. KIRWIN: Is that where it was situated?

MS. BROWN: Yes.

MR. CALFEE: Just across the alley.

MS. BROWN: Then the back room at Studio House was given over to color reproductions, and those were fairly new in that day. All the excitement about the [inaudible] prints and so on. And young people furnishing their college or [inaudible] would get reproductions.

MR. CALFEE: And then Gates did frames.

MS. BROWN: And then I would say Bob Gates did beautiful frames downstairs, and then later Paul Arlehide [phonetic] followed him. So that it was a fairly thriving business. And then the school was upstairs.

MS. KIRWIN: So the gallery itself was just one of these rooms?

MS. BROWN: Yes, the gallery was a hallway and one of the rooms.

MR. CALFEE: It was probably the living room and dining room.

MS. BROWN: Probably, yes. That's what -

MR. CALFEE: On the first floor.

MS. BROWN: What was the office would have been the kitchen.

MR. CALFEE: Of a row house, you see.

MS. KIRWIN: But it wasn't decorated. It wasn't presented to the public as a living space in the same way that the Phillips was? You didn't have a sofa in there or did you?

MS. BROWN: Well, yes, we did.

MS. KIRWIN: Oh, you did?

MS. BROWN: Again, we were very comfortable. A sofa and big chairs, it seems to me, at the end of the room. And again, young people would come in there and sit and talk and look at pictures. It was a very - the whole thing was a very informal, not just coming in and standing up and going around and looking.

MR. CALFEE: But you try to find a word for the young people, and you say young people coming in - because it was a kind of devotion, I think. It was to me like not going to a chapel, but going to a place where I felt sort of totally a part of what was going on, which didn't seem to exist anywhere else. There was no National Gallery, for instance.

MS. BROWN: As I was telling her coming over, try to picture this city that had nothing, and even the Smithsonian's were old and musty. There were fascinating things there, but they weren't - This world of display - of museum display -- simply hadn't started. And there was nothing but the Corcoran and the Phillips Gallery that I can remember at that time. And I think the reason Studio House and Phillips Gallery, of course, always, were such a drawing card is what you say, that the young artists - any artist coming from out of town - would always drop by. And everybody who lived - the artists in the vicinity, it was sort of a focal point where they found kindred spirits and could talk about the things that were important to them. And so to me, at that moment, it was a very important little center.

MR. CALFEE: I think it would be interesting now too to mention Catherine Frost. Do you remember her?

MS. BROWN: Yes.

MR. CALFEE: And this was a woman who was a very fine teacher of piano. And I believe that she and Law - or Law was trying with her to work out something related to painting that would be similar to musical construction. See, you have a lot of theoretical possibilities with music, don't you, the relationship of the notes, the scale, the place where the notes become either sharp or flat. And I don't think this succeeded, but he tried to work something out. And this is what I would call part of the club, the intimate, marvelous things that were going on.

MS. KIRWIN: That's interesting, because it's part of the tradition that continues today at the Phillips with their music studios.

MS. BROWN: Yes, that's -

MR. CALFEE: Yeah.

MS. KIRWIN: And how much of a presence were the Phillips's at Studio House?

MS. BROWN: Well, I would say that they would be in and out, and Duncan was always interested - would always come to a show or to see. But it was not anything close to them, you know. This was just quite extraneous, and they may not have - Duncan might have had a question about, you know, the properness of having that there with Marjorie. She felt it was a great mistake to have anything connected with sales connected to the Phillips Gallery. So they would be in and out, but it wasn't any close personal -

MR. CALFEE: They were not part of the idea, perhaps.

MS. BROWN: No, no. But very supportive, I think, and certainly financially for the artists. But it wasn't their idea or their project.

MR. CALFEE: Well, the thought comes to me, too. Duncan Phillips - you say profitable for the artists, you said? Did you say that?

MS. BROWN: Did what?

MR. CALFEE: Profitable for the artists, did you say?

MS. BROWN: No, well, he was supportive in that he would come and buy things from the shows.

MR. CALFEE: Yeah.

MS. BROWN: I suppose supportive to Law in that sense, too.

MR. CALFEE: Yeah. Well, I'll tell you, when you say that, then I realize that there were many people who probably could stay in the area of painting because Duncan would occasionally buy a painting. Now, that means you couldn't possibly have lived off of it if you sold even one painting a year. So it was not that kind of support.

MS. BROWN: Oh, no. No.

MR. CALFEE: It was an encouragement.

MS. BROWN: You're right.

MR. CALFEE: And maybe it would have been better if he hadn't, because there would be some people who would just not have had that encouragement, and would have stopped it.

MS. BROWN: I think, however, among artists in general, I guess there were some artists - national artists, or people who we did support. I don't know - you know, a stipend that goes on. I'm not sure about that.

MR. CALFEE: I don't know that.

MS. BROWN: Some of the artists he was particularly interested in.

MR. CALFEE: Wouldn't it have been later, then, that the projects like the murals and so forth in Washington began?

MS. BROWN: Yeah. Well, I was connected with that, because I worked with the Section of Fine Arts at that time.

MR. CALFEE: Okay, you did? I didn't know.

MS. BROWN: That was quite a bit later. I think that was after all that had closed.

MR. CALFEE: That would have been in the '40s, perhaps.

MS. BROWN: Well, I think -

MR. CALFEE: No, it would have been the late '30s.

MS. BROWN: See, I relate to this one. I got married in '39, and I think I went to the Section of Fine Arts the year after that, probably.

MR. CALFEE: Well, you see, the War occurred - began in '41, so that demolished the Section of Fine Arts, too.

MS. BROWN: Well, I -

MR. CALFEE: I did - yes?

MS. BROWN: That mural project went on longer than that, and then after the War started, we had art competitions and circulated exhibitions to Army camps and hospitals and so on. But I don't know when it closed.

MR. CALFEE: Well, it would have been the late '30s, though, that the Section of Fine Arts was there.

MS. BROWN: It was still going. I relate these to personal things. I had my first child in '42, and they were still - I left the Section at that time, and they were still operating.

MS. KIRWIN: Yeah, they were going into the '40s. What were your duties as gallery manager? I was really - I guess I saw a couple of - I have with me a couple of the exhibition programs, and at least from these it appears that you did a show a month, which is quite a lot of work.

MS. BROWN: I'm not sure they were that close.

MS. KIRWIN: For instance, there's one and -

MS. BROWN: That was one of our very first ones, actually, Robert Gates and Alice Acheson.

MR. CALFEE: Where did you get those?

MS. KIRWIN: These are from - I borrowed from the vertical file of the library. And just recently we received the

papers of Margaret Casey Gates, which had some material about the Studio House. And here's another. But I just wanted you to comment briefly about the exhibition, how frequently you organized exhibitions, and what your duties were there managing the gallery.

MS. BROWN: I was telling Liza I gave all - a lot of material that I gave the Phillips Gallery a couple of years ago, this type of thing. Now, I don't -

MS. KIRWIN: This was the [inaudible] I was mentioning to you about under the auspices of the Museum of Modern Art. It has penciled in 1936.

MS. BROWN: I don't remember that. I left, you know, the spring of '36. I'm not sure about that. And also tied in with the Junior League. That, I don't remember. So that could be memory, and it could be that I had left by that time. Well, my duties - many of our duties blended in the fact that we organized exhibitions together. Law and I would go up to New York just to visit galleries or talk to people about pictures. And Margaret and Bob would have their input. So it seems to me that we sort of worked together organizing. We then had the fun of hanging the shows. And I was responsible for, as I remember, in planning the shipping, and that part of it. Sometimes I get mixed up in what I did for the Museum of Modern Art. I designed the announcements and the catalogs, and just did correspondence - but then, so did Margaret. I mean, it's hard to segregate what our particular jobs were, really. But I was mainly responsible for keeping the gallery moving and announcements getting out, and shows taken care of. And as to how often we changed them, that would be hard for me to say. I have one letter in here that has to do - again, from Law to me, and I guess suggested the show which we did have on satire in art. I think that may have been prints that he mentions he thinks that's a good idea and to go ahead with it, that sort of thing. But I do not have any memory whether we changed, you know, automatically every month. I can't believe that we did, but I have no way now of remembering that. And I gave you that list of as much as I can remember of all the artists, the exhibitions shown, and who was included in our roster of artists. But I would no longer know what sequence - except I think that Alice Acheson show was probably Gates [inaudible] one of the very early ones. And he talks in this letter about a regional show. We were just always searching out ideas or artists. We had certain artists that I suppose really got through the Phillips Gallery. We got into the Karl Knaths, who both taught at the school, and John Marin we would always show, and George Groves, and various other people who would be in and out of the gallery. Harold West was one we saw a lot of in the shows. But as to the length of the exhibitions - And there were occasional lectures - I know that's somewhere here, I think one of these -- there were occasional lectures given by Law Watkins in conjunction with the openings of new exhibitions, and the openings were fairly festive. And I have some of the news clips from that. It's very amusing to read news clips of that period. They were full of telling what everybody wore. It's absolutely appalling. But anyhow, they drew a lot of interesting people.

MS. KIRWIN: Who was your audience for the exhibitions, do you think? In Washington, who came to those openings?

MS. BROWN: Well, there were various - there were sort of two. There were a lot of people who were rich in the arts and were socially prominent. But to my memory, it's largely young people in Washington who were interested in the arts, and this was the one place to come. And young people starting out and buying prints for their - reproductions, because they couldn't afford anything original - for their homes, and then coming and sitting and talking and looking and be interested in a particular artist, and come and see that person's work even though they couldn't afford to buy the originals. Do you have that feeling?

MR. CALFEE: I did. I'd say it was really, I don't like to use the word "club," but it was a place where people who were interested in - I would say the same thing, but something above the ordinary - above the everyday events - were attracted to it.

MS. BROWN: I notice some of the people I remember that are named that amuse me to remember is Alexander Woolcott coming with Alice Longworth.

MS. KIRWIN: Oh, really?

MS. BROWN: And he was a fat little man, and she was tall and dominant, and he would sort of pad around behind her. I have this picture of the two of them. And Mrs. Roosevelt would drop in. And in those days, compared with what goes on now, she would just appear. No Secret Service. She drove around town by herself, nobody following her. Just would drop in and look at the show and talk a bit and go off again. And Adelyn Breeskin, do you remember her? Was later director of the Baltimore Museum?

MR. CALFEE: Right.

MS. BROWN: And then also of your museum. And she was a very good friend of Law's and came in a lot.

MR. CALFEE: I never remember Adelyn Breeskin there.

MS. BROWN: But John Marin and Walt Kuhn and Clifford Beal and Ben Shaw and Carl Milles and Ken Noland artists that came in. And the Bliss's would come in, Robert Bliss of Dumbarton Oaks.

MR. CALFEE: Ken Noland is much younger than I, for instance.

MS. BROWN: Hmm?

MR. CALFEE: Ken Noland is much younger than I.

MS. BROWN: Yes. I didn't know him. I just remember him coming in and out, but I didn't know him at all. He would be going up to the school to see Law, so I associate him with that more than the gallery.

MS. KIRWIN: Can I get a copy of that list sometime?

MS. BROWN: Sure. I think - I know I gave you this list before.

MS. KIRWIN: I have this list, right, but I didn't get this page from you.

MS. BROWN: I'll get a copy of it. I'm trying to think, but that -

MR. CALFEE: Do you remember the King-Smith School?

MS. BROWN: Yes.

MR. CALFEE: Well, was that at about the same time?

MS. BROWN: Yes, because I remember going over and giving them a lecture at some time. It rather horrifies me. I don't think I really knew enough to give a lecture.

MR. CALFEE: I'm thinking of Ken Noland, because there was a man named Robin Bond who taught at the Phillips at the King-Smith School, and he was like a father to Ken Noland. Yeah, he protected him, you might say. So the King-Smith School was another that was related later, then, to the development of the art department at AU [American University, Washington, D.C.].

MS. KIRWIN: Really?

MS. BROWN: I didn't realize that.

MR. CALFEE: Well, I have to be rather careful here, because didn't the students of painting go to the Phillips Gallery from the King-Smith School?

MS. BROWN: I think they probably did.

MR. CALFEE: See, I think this is possible, because some of them came to me. I had a studio in the alley near 14th and U Street, and I had students from the King-Smith School whom I think started sculpture with me, and this would have been around '36. And some of them went to Phillips to study painting, I think.

MS. KIRWIN: Somewhere around that time, Robert Richman came to the King-Smith School and transformed it into the Institute of Contemporary Arts.

MR. CALFEE: Okay, that's right.

MS. KIRWIN: The King-Smith School was the foundation, really, for the Institute of Contemporary Arts.

MR. CALFEE: Okay.

MS. KIRWIN: And for a time they had a school, but I believe it was after the -

MR. CALFEE: You mean Robert Richman?

MS. KIRWIN: Right. They had a school for a couple of years, about four years, and in two different locations.

MR. CALFEE: One was in an old stable, wasn't it?

MS. KIRWIN: It was, yeah, it was -

MR. CALFEE: The theater was in a stable.

MS. KIRWIN: It was the early '40s, and I believe it was - it's after, or maybe it picks up right where Studio House

ends and AU begins, but that same period Institute of Contemporary Arts had a school, too.

MS. BROWN: Did Law go to AU right as soon as Studio House closed?

MR. CALFEE: No.

MS. BROWN: It may have been -

MR. CALFEE: This is the thing that needs to be clarified, because the thing at AU started after Law's death, whether that was in '45 or -

MS. BROWN: He died in '45.

MR. CALFEE: He died in '45? Well, I have a person whom I still correspond with who came to AU his first year - he transferred from Corcoran - and he claims that it was '45. But I don't think that - see, this is something that we have to try to clarify. Let me see if I can say this correctly. After Law died there was no communication between Phillips and those who had worked with Law. To me, I had no - nothing from the Phillips, I would say, as to what they were going to do, what would happen.

[END TAPE 1 SIDE A]

MR. CALFEE: So I would say five or six students came from AU - this is what I'm trying to say - to the Phillips Gallery. And after Law died, maybe six months or nine months afterward - this I know - the president of the university came to me at my studio because I had assisted Law and asked if I thought that AU could have its own art department. And he asked me to be chairman. So that would have had to have been '45, at least. And the students then who had been going in to Phillips worked with the new staff, who were given space at AU.

MS. BROWN: Now, Robert Gates taught there at some period.

MR. CALFEE: That's right. A bit later.

MS. KIRWIN: He didn't begin at AU with you?

MR. CALFEE: I'm trying not to impose or give too much about the AU thing, because I'm dating this at least '45 when Law died. What happened afterward, that's what I'm trying to speak of - but I don't want to overdo it.

MS. KIRWIN: How did he die?

MR. CALFEE: This, I'm not sure.

MS. BROWN: I don't remember what they called it.

MS. KIRWIN: It was an untimely death, though?

MR. CALFEE: It was.

MS. BROWN: He was in his early fifties.

MS. KIRWIN: It was an untimely death.

MR. CALFEE: Yeah.

MS. BROWN: Yeah.

MS. KIRWIN: It was unexpected?

MS. BROWN: Yeah, as far as I know. A very charming tale about him that has nothing to do with teaching is that he came from a fairly wealthy family in New York, I think, and he went - it was in World War I. And while he was over there he fell in love with a -

MR. CALFEE: Marie was her name.

MS. BROWN: -- girl, Marie, and brought her back to the States with him. And I've always loved her tale that when they drove up to - she didn't know what kind of home he had. When they drove up to his estate and he said this was their property and she noticed there was a stream and she thought, "Oh, what a lovely place for me to wash my clothes." I've always remembered that.

MS. KIRWIN: I had some brochures from Studio House that would speak to this issue about AU, because in some

of them there was an insert that said for credit at AU you can take courses at the Studio House. This was 1943 or 1944. Let me just find that because I'd like to show that to you.

MR. CALFEE: It's interesting how you can't figure out certain aspects of your early life, don't you think?

MS. BROWN: Very hard to remember. Well, then that - then he had a relationship with AU before Studio House closed. I mean, this would all indicate -

MR. CALFEE: The students came from AU down to him.

MS. KIRWIN: Yes, here it is. This, for instance, is in the catalog for '43-'44, which shows that they offered this kind of instruction. And here's -

MR. CALFEE: This is Dr. Paul Douglas. See, he's the one who asked me to take Law's place after he died with a limited number of students and create a [inaudible].

MS. KIRWIN: And here again, in 1944-45, is a - right in the program, combined courses with American University. So there was -

MR. CALFEE: What is the date?

MS. KIRWIN: This one is dated '44-'45. What you have is dated '43-'44. So this subsequent catalog, it was part of the text within the catalog.

MR. CALFEE: Yeah, I've seen these.

MS. KIRWIN: So that this relationship existed at least back in 1943.

MR. CALFEE: Yeah. Well, I think that we would find that Law worked this out with AU. And the important thing was - this is what we tried to continue after Law died. The important thing was that art could become a major for a college degree, and that instead of taking all the courses morning, early afternoon, and sticking to painting as the secondary activity, the emphasis was in allowing - this was new - allowing the student to work at least three hours in the morning and take additional courses. This was new. It's not new now. So I think that's - What that's bringing out there is a major in painting.

MS. KIRWIN: Who were your students at Studio House?

MR. CALFEE: See, I can hardly answer that question because I really did not teach - I'm almost sure - at Studio House. I taught - assisted Law mainly by going to places like Hood College. And then I went to Europe in '32. You said something about '32 is an important date. I did not go to Studio House to teach with Law before '32.

MS. BROWN: Well, I don't think - Well, my dates, I thought it started in '33 but I -

MR. CALFEE: I don't know.

MS. BROWN: That's what I think.

MR. CALFEE: What I'm trying to say is that I learned a great deal from him and I assisted him. And it was not until he died that I was asked to become the chairman of the department, so I was really an assistant.

MS. BROWN: I don't know much about the students either, except there was a very interesting group, or two or three very interesting Georgetown matrons, really. I think - I don't know, my young age, they probably looked older than they were. But terribly interesting women who came over and worked very diligently there, as well as the younger group of students that came in and out.

MR. CALFEE: Well, yeah, that's the thing that we need to remember, in my own experience, that there were many wives of what you would call important government men who were interested in the arts.

MS. BROWN: Very definitely.

MR. CALFEE: Yeah. Now -

MS. BROWN: This, again, was a center for them.

MR. CALFEE: Yeah, that's right. People from other cities who had come here with their husbands who did government positions and were interested in painting.

MS. KIRWIN: I saw some of those names. Especially one of the brochures includes the names of the students,

particularly the art appreciation course that Watkins taught, and there were a lot of prominent women who were there.

MR. CALFEE: Yeah.

MS. BROWN: And, of course, the person who was very much interested in the Studio House was Alice Acheson.

MR. CALFEE: Right.

MS. BROWN: Being Dean Acheson's wife. Both as an artist and because she was - she's still alive and I see her and talk with her. She must be nearly 100.

MR. CALFEE: She was a very humble person.

MS. BROWN: An absolutely marvelous woman. But she had very warm feelings as well for Studio House.

MR. CALFEE: Yeah. I would feel that it wouldn't be bad to say that there were numbers of us who lived, or were able to live through teaching. Many of the women - like Felix Frankfurter, his sister, I believe it was - Estelle Frankfurter, was a student of mine. Now, she didn't go to Phillips Gallery, but a number of relatives of important government people studied art in Washington.

MS. BROWN: This brings back lots of names - that I've forgotten, yes.

MS. KIRWIN: Who in particular?

MS. BROWN: Well, Mrs. Charles Acker and Mrs. Boris Kaycridge [phonetic].

MS. KIRWIN: Yes, that was the name of -

MS. BROWN: She's a story in herself. Oh, my. This is Theodore Dominick and Eustice and -

MR. CALFEE: I [inaudible] too much with names.

MS. KIRWIN: Well, I'm just interested in who the students were, because later on, with someplace like the Washington Workshop Center for the Arts, at least the printed material about the school said that it really existed for Washington war workers, that it was almost the level of a hobbyist in some respects.

MR. CALFEE: It was diagonally across from the Phillips on Massachusetts Avenue, in the old house.

MS. KIRWIN: Yes, for a time. Yeah.

MS. BROWN: I remember taking a class there briefly one time, yeah.

MS. KIRWIN: But it does seem from what I've been reading about the Studio House that it appealed to someone with a little bit more serious intent.

MR. CALFEE: I would say that it was simpler and not ostentatious in any way, not attempting through any sensationalism to attract people. I think Ken Noland went to the Washington Studio School. I think so.

MS. KIRWIN: Workshop? The Washington Workshop?

MR. CALFEE: That's right. I think -

MS. KIRWIN: And for a time he taught there, too.

MR. CALFEE: I see.

MS. KIRWIN: He taught there, and Morris Lewis taught there later on. It was Leon and Ida Berkowitz' project.

MR. CALFEE: Yeah, okay, that's right. But you see, in my estimation even at that time that was what I would call a mannerism.

MS. BROWN: It sort of stood for just one type of -

MR. CALFEE: That was not fundamentals, I'm really trying to say.

MS. BROWN: Yeah.

MR. CALFEE: Because even Ken Noland, if you trace his work - Let's see, he taught later at Catholic University,

and he still is a very well-known painter. But he in a way was one who sort of began to work with what became the Washington Color School. Now, I don't think I can clarify this, but you had abstract expressionism and the Washington Color School, but when we taught at the Studio House or at AU, we were not teaching a mannerism.

MS. BROWN: I think that's -

MR. CALFEE: We were teaching fundamentals. So you didn't tell them how to paint with a big brush and smack it on here and there, or to make divisions of rectangles or anything. You were trying to find the fundamentals and let them evolve their own way. That's quite different.

MS. BROWN: I see two names or a name here that reminds - Speaking of people who came to the gallery. It's Mr. Albert Smoot. I think he's the one. They were a young couple who actually did buy original paintings, a young couple who bought some original paintings from Phillips Gallery - or at least that's the way I remember them.

MS. KIRWIN: You say you didn't have many sales?

MS. BROWN: Certainly not of original work. I couldn't give you any idea what proportion. But just I couldn't remember at all at this point. He certainly sold a number of pictures, but certainly not anything to support the gallery at all. I think commission in those days was always 33 and a third percent everywhere.

MS. KIRWIN: I wanted to ask about Karl Knaths, because he does figure in as one of the prominent instructors of Studio House. And in Margaret Casey Gates' notes she just wrote a few notes about Knaths, and I wanted to just mention those. They're more about his - well, and very cryptic. And I was wondering if you could fill in. She wrote - all she wrote next to his name was, "Beret, navy pea jacket, warm, decisive." And then she wrote, "Folklore, history, metaphysics. He connected directly with his art." Does this ring true, or does this mean anything to you in your experience with Karl Knaths?

MS. BROWN: Well, I had no experience with him as a teacher, so it would be just, again, coming into the gallery and talking with him. So I couldn't answer that at all.

MS. KIRWIN: Did he always wear a beret?

MS. BROWN: Yes - I guess I wouldn't have remembered just how he looked.

MR. CALFEE: I don't have too much data. I know he came from Minnesota, didn't he?

MS. BROWN: I know we sort of - people sort of at the school sort of looked forward to his coming.

MR. CALFEE: Yeah.

MS. KIRWIN: He came annually for one session?

MR. CALFEE: Yes, right. Six weeks usually, yeah. But I just remember his quality and the sort of truth of what he taught. I don't know much about him personally.

MS. KIRWIN: What were his teaching methods?

MR. CALFEE: Well, I told you. I gave you one example. It fitted exactly with Law. It had to do with fundamentals.

MS. KIRWIN: Most of his papers in the archives concerning his color theories - constantly working on color relationships.

MR. CALFEE: That sounds right to me. That's where I feel I learned what I would call fundamentals. I'm not talking about style. See, if you -- yes, if you use the two colors black and white. Now, I still go back to how interesting this is, what two colors you choose. But then after the painting had been evolved to a certain point, maybe most of the shapes were supposed to be rectangular in the beginning, and then at the end you chose an accenting color and a curved shape, which was the accent in the painting. This was the kind of fundamental I'm speaking of.

MS. BROWN: Well, I think you certainly found anything - that there was no mode. It was - Each person was given and they went their own way, as you say, contrary to the other school, where everybody was -

MR. CALFEE: Yeah.

MS. BROWN: A lot of fine paintings, but it was everybody was doing, working in the same manner.

MR. CALFEE: Yeah, an imitation of the instructor's style.

MS. BROWN: Some very fine and others -

MS. KIRWIN: Copying from casts and things like that?

MR. CALFEE: No, I don't mean that.

MS. BROWN: No, no.

MR. CALFEE: I mean working as an abstract expressionist or as a color school painter. So the style, not coming from casts at all.

MS. KIRWIN: But wasn't that the sort of instruction someone would get at the Corcoran if they were at the time, or am I -

MR. CALFEE: Well, I don't know enough about that. I never did anything with painting at the Corcoran.

MS. BROWN: I can speak to that as typical of the period. When I was about 12 years old, I went to the California School of Fine Arts, and they - it was the tendency to start with casts and so on. Fortunately, the head of the school came along and found me having to do that and took me up to the life class, and I got to be doing something real. But that was the way. You just stuck people in front of casts.

MS. KIRWIN: When did Robert Gates come to AU?

MR. CALFEE: Well, you're moving away from Studio House now. Suppose you say that when - Now, when Law died, I always refer to this - because I'm trying to take this back - as the reason for the beginning of the AU art department. As it grew, they furnished a space. There were two studios downtown on F Street in the Washington College of Law, which we had at least for one year. And I had three people. There were two others beside myself who began as instructors. And one was Sara Vauger [phonetic], whom I think we should mention, the other was Pietro Lazzari, and I know exactly why I chose those two. Pietro was radical, was far out, not disciplined. Sara was very traditional and very, yes, very much a lady. So Pietro, I'm sorry to say, seemed to me to counterbalance my own conservatism, if you wish. And it didn't work very well. And Gates came. I got Gates after Pietro either left, or - he wasn't fired. He may have - He in some way left. He might have lasted two years. And then Bob came. Bob did not come in the beginning. But the thing that was interesting was that due to the wartime, those two studios in the Washington College of Law - which is something like F Street, maybe on 22nd - were absolutely jammed with students from the beginning. And Joe Summerford came. He was in the Navy. He came to one of those studios. So there were so many students that they gave us further space at AU on the campus on Nebraska Avenue. So we had a dilapidated old building that was part of something like maybe the Navy during the first World War. A lot of very ramshackle studios. And Bob came there. And I suppose the important thing that I should mention is that one day Margaret and I - she came as my second secretary, and she had largely to do with exhibitions. And one day Margaret and I were talking and we said, "We should do something in the memory of Law Watkins," so we volunteered, each of us, we would give a painting, and we would form the Watkins collection. So we asked a number of other people to give, and that was the beginning of the Watkins collection.

MS. BROWN: The gallery developed from that. I mean, the -

MR. CALFEE: Actually, no question about it. The gallery was at first a little C-shaped building - a square C-shaped building on a hill. It's now been torn down. And we had two sections of that building for the gallery and for the art department office. And we gave a number of good shows. We're getting far away from Studio House if that's where you wanted -

MS. KIRWIN: Well, I'm just interested in, you know, the transition from Studio House to AU and the people who were there.

MR. CALFEE: Well, as I said, Margaret was my secretary, and we formed the Watkins collection. And Bob was the teacher of painting for quite a few years after that, but not in the beginning. And one of the important people that I should mention - I remember trying to find someone who would equal Karl Knaths in quality, and going to New York and sort of talking to various artists. Let me see. It's funny how much you forget. Boris Margo is a person whose name I don't think exists now, but he was the first visiting instructor at AU in an attempt to equal Karl Knaths. And Boris brought a great deal, but he was not of the quality of Jack Tworokov, who came later - T-w-o-r-k-o-v - was a splendid painter and a very wonderful teacher. So that was the early days. And the studios were very full. We had Andrew Katz as the art historian, and Andy brought his own slides. I remember he had a box that was about that big in which he had the slides filed. They were his, not bought by AU. So it started in a very simple way.

MS. BROWN: I noticed the Phillips Gallery had a retrospective show of Law Watkins in '45, May '45.

MR. CALFEE: I don't see how that could have been.

MS. BROWN: Well, he must have died early in '45. We said he died in '45, which I'm sure I saw somewhere.

MR. CALFEE: Then something's wrong.

MS. BROWN: But this says May 6, '45.

MR. CALFEE: See, Summerford has corrected me, or another person who became director of the Honolulu Art Academy corrected me on the dates of the beginning. So it can't be - it can't be '45. It has to be earlier.

MS. BROWN: You mean his death?

MR. CALFEE: Yeah.

MS. BROWN: I had it from something, but I'll have to look through it and -

MR. CALFEE: Well, if you check that and find it -

MS. BROWN: I will. I don't know what I -

MR. CALFEE: It would be different. Could you let me know?

MS. BROWN: Yeah, sure. I don't know where I -

MS. KIRWIN: I have the - from other articles I have that he died in '45.

MR. CALFEE: You have it as he died in '45? That's what -

MS. BROWN: Well, if he died in early '45, you know, maybe, say, January, this May 6th retrospective wouldn't be out of the question at the Phillips Gallery.

MR. CALFEE: Yeah. I don't remember that at all.

MS. BROWN: I don't have any other -

MS. KIRWIN: Adele, when were you working, were you working for both the Phillips Gallery and the -

MS. BROWN: No, I never worked with -

MS. KIRWIN: I mean, not the Phillips Gallery. Excuse me, The Studio House and the Museum of Modern Art.

MS. BROWN: Well, I left the Studio House to go to the Museum of Modern Art.

MR. CALFEE: It didn't last long here, did it?

MS. BROWN: It lasted two years, I think, as I was telling the - it was sponsored or started by a couple of socialites of Washington.

MR. CALFEE: Who were they?

MS. BROWN: Pauline Davis and - oh, my goodness. She had been Pauline Sabin Davis and then Pauline Sabin, who is, I think, well-known.

MR. CALFEE: I never heard of that name.

MS. BROWN: Pauline [inaudible] sort of before that was the thing to do, I guess. I have to think back about that. But then she married Dwight Davis, who was Secretary of War. And the other woman - my old age, I forget the name - I certainly remember well. I'll think of it in a minute. And they both had friends at the museum, and I guess worked up this idea of having a branch here that was not absolutely directly the Museum of Modern Art, where they could create their own shows, but they could also draw on the museum for whatever they wanted. And it did last two years and then war became imminent, and they then drifted off. You know, it wasn't financially -

MR. CALFEE: Well, we went into the War in '41, so we have Law Watkins dying in '45.

MS. KIRWIN: Who took over the gallery at Studio House - or did it continue after you left?

MS. BROWN: Well, you know, I was surprised. I wondered to myself why I don't remember going back to Studio

House more often after I left, but I think it closed the next year -

MR. CALFEE: Probably, yeah.

MS. BROWN: -- which I was surprised. So I must have left a year, but I didn't sense then it was going to close. It was, I mean, it was a rather sudden decision. I don't know.

MR. CALFEE: See, I don't either, because I feel that at that time my mind was very involved with AU and the new department there, you see, so I wouldn't have been as connected with the Phillips.

MS. BROWN: And I was completely absorbed by what I was doing so I just, was just -

MR. CALFEE: Yeah.

MS. BROWN: It wasn't, as I say, until years later that Bob Gates made this comment to me about why it had been closed.

MS. KIRWIN: Did they come to you and ask you if you'd be interested in running this or involved with the Museum of Modern Art?

MS. BROWN: I don't remember. I think I probably applied, but I don't remember. And I look back in embarrassment at my files of how many, how [inaudible] Duncan Phillips was simply lovely to me and sending very fine letters about my [inaudible] both there to them, and to the California Museum of Art, which offered me a job, but I decided to get married instead - and also the Museum of Modern Art - and I don't remember ever thanking him. You know, it's one of those awful things you look back and wonder. At least I don't remember doing it. It's perfectly appalling when I look at these letters. But I think he probably, you know, gave me a letter of recommendation to the museum. It's just my guess.

MR. CALFEE: Was it true that Phillips - Duncan Phillips - was to buy the Washington Redskins? Do you ever remember a story like that?

MS. BROWN: I don't, but it certainly - no, I couldn't answer accurately.

MR. CALFEE: I just heard that -

MS. BROWN: It's a possibility.

MR. CALFEE: -- that when he came to Washington, that's what he wanted to do. This may be absolutely untrue. And, of course, he couldn't do it. I think that's a story better let go.

MS. KIRWIN: In something that I read, one of the articles in Museum and the Arts, that magazine that's no longer being published, it talked about the group that came from the Phillips to AU. It mentioned Sara Vauger as being part of the Phillips group. From what you've told me - Was she part of the Phillips group or was she -

MR. CALFEE: Well, what do you mean by the Phillips group?

MS. KIRWIN: Well, I read that as that she had taught, or had some close association with the Studio House.

MS. BROWN: She was certainly around there a lot. I mean, she was very familiar.

MR. CALFEE: Do you know why? She lived on Hillyer Place. That's half a block away.

MS. KIRWIN: Maybe that -

MS. BROWN: I would have guessed that she was associated with the school, and I do remember her at AU.

MR. CALFEE: Yeah. I must have known her well, or I wouldn't have chosen her. I don't remember her around Studio House.

MS. BROWN: I couldn't say whether she was associated with the school, but she certainly was there, very much a part of the -

MR. CALFEE: She was a splendid teacher, a splendid teacher.

MS. BROWN: A wonderful person.

MR. CALFEE: Yeah.

MS. KIRWIN: Talk a little bit about the Corcoran Gallery Art School at the time in relation to Studio House. Do you have any recollections of Howard University, which was the other place where you could go to study at the time? Do you have any knowledge of teaching methods there, and how they might compare?

MR. CALFEE: No, I don't know much about that.

MS. BROWN: There was a man named Mr. Aden.

MR. CALFEE: That's right, and I thought he had a -

MS. BROWN: Was he the head of the gallery?

MR. CALFEE: I think he had a gallery there. Aden, yeah.

MS. BROWN: It seems to me that's the communications that I had with him, but I wouldn't know anything about the school.

MS. KIRWIN: The Barnett-Aden Gallery, which was -

MR. CALFEE: Yeah, right. And that has now ended up somewhere in Florida, that collection.

MS. BROWN: One awful thing, speaking of that, though, I remember with chills, at Studio House of a young student calling up, and Margaret Gates answering the phone, and she wanted to come to Studio House and she said, "But I think you should know I'm black." And Margaret said to her, "We don't take black students." That was Washington, D.C. at that time. They didn't have any privileges at all. And this is something that gives me chills now in retrospect, but that was the way things were.

MR. CALFEE: Yeah, it's amazing to think of that.

MS. BROWN: Just appalling.

MR. CALFEE: I could say in relation to that, that I had this studio. I won one of those Section of Fine Arts murals which was 20 feet long - this must have been in about '36 - and 20 feet long. I had to find a place to do it. And I finally found a space over a garage in the rear of 1420 U. Now, 14th and U was the center of the black commercial part of the city. And I paid \$30 a month for this, and I lived in it. I'm trying to say that I had students who came there at night. There was never one single, ever, any thought of any difficulty.

MS. BROWN: I don't remember.

MR. CALFEE: The studio was in the alley in the back of 1420 U, and women used to walk in through those alleys to the studio. Never any difficulty.

MS. BROWN: As a girl of 16, I used to drive all of Washington at night, and I never had any problem.

MR. CALFEE: Never any problem.

MS. BROWN: Any problem, I don't think.

MR. CALFEE: Never.

MS. BROWN: It's hard to look back on some of those attitudes.

MS. KIRWIN: I think that's all the questions that I had. I guess G Place Gallery was later on.

MR. CALFEE: That was Alice Denny, wasn't it?

MS. BROWN: Oh, was that hers?

MS. KIRWIN: Crosby.

MR. CALFEE: Oh, Caresse Crosby.

MS. KIRWIN: Caresse Crosby.

MS. BROWN: Oh, I'd forgotten that name.

MR. CALFEE: Oh, yeah. Well, that was right. No, Caresse Crosby was a wonderful person. She came here during the war. This may have been - yeah, she came from Europe, I know. Maybe from France. And that was another

thing that we shouldn't forget in relation to Washington, because the G Place Gallery was later. At first she was at -- what's - Phillips Gallery is at 21st and what?

MS. BROWN: Q.

MR. CALFEE: Q. Okay, she had a house between Q and one block above it. Hillyer Place, on 20th Street. She had a house on Q Street right in there near Dupont Circle. And she brought a lot here, a lot of European famous poets and artists. We're moving away from Studio House.

MS. KIRWIN: Well, did she bring people to the gallery?

MR. CALFEE: What?

MS. KIRWIN: Did Caresse Crosby bring any of these other literary figures to the Phillips, or was there any sort of relation to -

MR. CALFEE: I couldn't say that. I don't think there was much connection. So I just think it's quite - I don't seem to remember this. I remember that she - you could make quite a list of the people who came to see her, like Max Ernst, and - yeah, I went to her house a number of times and there were poets there. She added a great deal to the sort of cultural life of the city in a very different way. It might have been considered much more far out. It was good. I have a hard time with names now.

MS. BROWN: Most people at that time, they would probably get to the Phillips Gallery. I mean, it sort of was a focal point.

MR. CALFEE: Oh, it was, absolutely.

MS. BROWN: The one thing that people of that type would go and find anyhow.

MR. CALFEE: Absolutely. Absolutely.

MS. BROWN: And they had fine - also, the Phillips had very fine lectures from time to time.

MR. CALFEE: Yeah. Yeah.

MS. BROWN: Interesting people, as well as Gertrude Stein, I remember.

MR. CALFEE: Well, Caresse Crosby lived not more than a block from the Phillips, and that area was a very interesting and nice area then. And the White Gallery was a book store on Connecticut Avenue in the first block above Dupont Circle.

MS. BROWN: Above Dupont Circle? I remember it being way downtown.

MR. CALFEE: No, it began in the first block above Dupont Circle.

MS. BROWN: I don't seem to remember.

MR. CALFEE: Yeah. Yeah, no question.

MS. KIRWIN: I admit this is sort of out of sequence, but I noticed in the brochure that Prentiss Taylor taught lithography at Studio House. Did they have facilities for printing?

MR. CALFEE: I don't remember that at all.

MS. BROWN: He certainly was associated with - also around a lot, because I know he worked through the prints, and selling them and so on. But I couldn't tell you whether he taught at Studio House.

MR. CALFEE: I couldn't either.

MS. BROWN: But this was a brochure?

MS. KIRWIN: Yeah. I mean, a course was listed, and he was listed as the instructor for lithography, which I found interesting that the school was -

MS. BROWN: He certainly was around there a great deal.

MR. CALFEE: Well, I was thinking of James McLaughlin, who later married Bernice. And you mentioned Paul Ault, and now you're speaking of Prentiss Taylor. So this is the nucleus of those who were there as artists. There was a

woman named - a tall woman who was a very good painter, painted large paintings. Can you remember her name?

MS. BROWN: I don't remember. If there were some -

MR. CALFEE: Julia Eckel was another one. Do you remember Julia Eckel?

MS. BROWN: No, I don't remember her.

MR. CALFEE: She was sort of a friend of Bernice.

MS. BROWN: We [inaudible] have the list of people that [inaudible] Studio House. I'm thinking of one woman who was a Washington - more of a social person, but also a very good painter, and I think of her when he mentioned the large, rather imposing person. But I'm not - it would be on that list, but I'm not sure the name would come back to me.

MR. CALFEE: What is that list?

MS. BROWN: It's somewhere -

MS. KIRWIN: It's a list of some students.

MS. BROWN: Oh, people that come to art appreciation course and students.

MS. KIRWIN: Yes.

MS. BROWN: Bring back a lot of memories.

MR. CALFEE: These were people, art appreciation -

MS. KIRWIN: Students. It's the only list.

MR. CALFEE: I remember Mrs. Charles Acker. I think the Ackers were related to the Phillip's, weren't they?

MS. BROWN: Well, Mrs. Phillips' sister was an Acker.

MR. CALFEE: Okay, yeah. Jesse Baker, I know. That's a name that sounds familiar. And Mary Bradley is the person that later married -

MS. BROWN: Married Law.

MR. CALFEE: Married Law, yeah. Yeah. There's a lot of these names that I don't - can't remember much about.

MS. BROWN: You just had this whole sense of the warmth and welcoming quality of Studio House. I don't know how to express it, but it just was. They made an exceptionally -

MR. CALFEE: Well, it's a good memories.

MS. BROWN: -- happy place. I'm sure there must have been some - I mean, to us. I'm sure somewhere there must have been some difficulties for Law, being under Duncan and indebted to him.

MR. CALFEE: Yeah.

MS. BROWN: I mean, looking back as a mature person now, I realize there must have been some difficulties. Some of these letters would indicate a little bit of where he had to travel to Europe with Duncan, and was a little glad to get free. But things - but as far as the Studio House group, I can't imagine a more congenial group of people. They didn't have any hang-ups. I don't know at all about what other - but then again, the door was always open in those days. You didn't have locked doors, so people - artists were in and out all the time.

MR. CALFEE: See, we didn't mention John Grinnand [phonetic].

MS. BROWN: Yes. Of course, he was -

MR. CALFEE: And there is the name here of Julia Eckel. That's someone that was part of the group. And she was a very good painter. Do you remember Julia Eckel?

MS. BROWN: No, I don't, for some reason.

MR. CALFEE: Yeah. Yeah, she was one of them. And John Grinnand is among the students. Well, I think -

MS. KIRWIN: Well, I think that's all the questions that I -

MR. CALFEE: We've done it now.

MS. BROWN: That [inaudible] series at the Phillips Gallery I think was started by - what was that secretary's name? Was it - not Mrs. Byer, Ms. Byer, it will come back to me in a minute again - who was Duncan's secretary for years.

MR. CALFEE: Oh, Bier. Bier was her name.

MS. BROWN: Bier, that's right.

MR. CALFEE: Bier.

MS. BROWN: And I'm quite sure she's the one that started to develop that music series. It was her baby.

MR. CALFEE: I had some funny things about that, because I remember sort of laughing. One day I came down the stairs from the third floor, and Ms. Bier's office was on the second floor. And as I came down those stairs she said, "Mr. Calfee, straighten your tie." And I thought, "You're trying to make me proper for the gallery or something," you know.

MS. BROWN: Oh, she was very conventional.

MR. CALFEE: And imagine telling me to straighten my tie. Elmira Bier.

MS. BROWN: Yes, Elmira Bier. She was quite a force.

MR. CALFEE: Yeah. Well, anyway, it was a wonderful experience.

MS. KIRWIN: Those are all the questions that I had. I'd like to thank you for -

MR. CALFEE: Well, good. I went to Cranbrook. Now, I would say that - after I came back from Europe, maybe the next year I went to Cranbrook, and I'm saying this largely because, to me, I found in this country much more than I found in Europe - Now, this is largely because I was naive, I guess. I didn't seek out any famous person in Paris. There were certainly people there, but the traditional Beaux-Arts didn't give me what I was seeking and the -

MS. BROWN: That's interesting. Well, those were the fine days of Cranbrook, weren't they, when you were there?

MR. CALFEE: I think I had a scholarship. I must have had, because I didn't have any money. But the first question - this was the way this experience went. I had been to see Frank Lloyd Wright in Wisconsin, and I came back through Cranbrook, and they accepted me. And I remember going there and being taken to a very enormous room. It was certainly 80 feet long - a studio, with lights all along, windows all along the north side. And they opened the door and said, "This is where you'll work." And there wasn't a thing in the room. So I had to get the clay. I had to make myself a stand. And about six weeks later, Mr. Carl Milles came to see what I had done. And the first question he asked me was one I had never heard before: "What material is this in?" That was an incredible question to me.

MS. BROWN: He asked you what material?

MR. CALFEE: "What material are you going to do this in?" Well, what he really meant was, is it going to be in stone, or is it going to be in bronze or metal. So, as I said, I'd been in Europe for a year in school at the Beaux-Arts. Never was this question put -

MS. BROWN: Well -

MR. CALFEE: Do you understand what I'm saying? I showed a thing about this big, a series of sketches. This had several figures around it, and they were very skinny, made in clay. So if this was going to be in metal, and I made it bigger, I had to figure out how I was going to make it stand up, but if it was going to be in stone, it would have to be a concept entirely different, even though it involved three figures. So that was a wonderful question.

MS. BROWN: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm. [Affirmative]

MR. CALFEE: But that's the kind of thing I received here.

MS. BROWN: Carl Milles was quite a character. I had dealings with him both at the museum and the Center of Fine Arts, and he was a character.

MR. CALFEE: I didn't realize that.

MS. BROWN: Yeah.

MR. CALFEE: Well, wonderful days.

MS. BROWN: Well, we've probably taken much of your time.

MS. KIRWIN: I had just read about an exhibition of Carl Milles' sculpture at the Baltimore Museum, because we got a section of papers about Leslie Cheek, who was the director from 1938 to 19 - until he went into the service in 1942. He went into the military. But I was reading about this really extraordinary installation that he did with Milles' sculpture in the Baltimore Museum, where he had sheets of gauze suspended from the ceiling, and then these very dramatic blue and green lights to give this atmosphere and environment for your experience with the sculpture, to be like underwater light. I was wondering if you had seen it by any chance.

MS. BROWN: No.

MR. CALFEE: I hadn't seen it.

MS. KIRWIN: That was in 1940.

MS. BROWN: Do you remember that there used to be - and I can't imagine why it wouldn't still be there, but I've never heard it mentioned - out in Virginia, there was a memorial garden.

MR. CALFEE: That's right.

MS. BROWN: And then there was a great pool, and it was full of Milles' sculptures.

MR. CALFEE: I don't think I've ever seen it.

MS. BROWN: And I went out there, but I've never heard it whispered about or mentioned by anybody - and yet, you couldn't have moved all those tons. I mean, nobody would have moved that. I was thinking of that, because it was an interesting experience to go out there. I have no idea where it was.

MR. CALFEE: I can remember hearing about it, but I never saw it.

MS. BROWN: It may involve as many as ten of his sculptures in the pool and standing around.

[END OF INTERVIEW.]

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