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Oral history interview with S. Morton Vose, 1986 July 24-1987 April 28

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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a tape-recorded interview with S. Morton Vose on July 24, 1986-April 28, 1987. The interview took place at his home in Brookline, Massachusetts and was conducted by Robert F. Brown for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

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

Interview

[Tape 1 of 4]

ROBERT BROWN: This is an interview with S. Morton Vose at his home in Brookline, Massachusetts. This is July 24, 1986 and I am Robert Brown, the interviewer. Perhaps we can begin at your beginning or at least your recollections of your early years, your immediate family. I guess we are going to concentrate on your career in art, your grandfather and his business. What about your - where was childhood, primarily. You were born here in Brookline weren't you?

S. MORTON VOSE: I was born here in Brookline, yes. I'm a stick in the mud. Both my wife and I were born here, she in this house, so we haven't moved far as my siblings have. What would you like to hear about - how early?

MR. BROWN: I would like to hear what was it like. What were early memories? What kind of a place did you grow up in?

MR. VOSE: We grew up across Beacon Street, starting at Kilsyth Road and then Salisbury Road, but finally and for many, many years, on Gardner Road in Brookline. I know you are more interested in what has to do with the galleries, so I might mention that during those years my father was almost always - it seemed to us as kids - traveling around the country on business. I remember table conversations of all sorts of intriguing far away places that sounded romantic, like St. Louis, even Duluth, where I haven't been yet. Very often, he was away three or four months at one time - I remember even the months over Christmas which were not happy for the kids, but he felt that this was necessary. Of course, in those days there was no plane travel. It was necessary to conserve your time, travel time. He was in California a great deal and he didn't get back in a day after a trip to California, as we do now. Once in awhile he would bring customers with him to dinner. I remember one gentleman who came. I don't remember now whether he was from St. Louis or possibly Detroit. Father had been mentioning that Mr. Ballard was a live wire or so called it. At the dinner table, I looked at him, stood there for awhile and finally said, "Is this the live wire?" which I think probably pleased him.

MR. BROWN: Was your mother involved in the business at all? What was her background?

MR. VOSE: No, she was not involved in the business except in a very supportive way. She had a family of five children to bring up and a house to maintain. She came - both my father and mother came from Providence. There - as you know, I think - our gallery was originally founded by my great grandfather in 1841. Mother was the daughter of a Brown University professor, Alonso Williams, a professor of languages. My parents met because he occasionally invited students of whom my father was one, to the house. The gallery, of course, move to Boston - as I think Bob will have explained - when my father got through college, took a trip to Europe - he finished college in 1896 and two years later, he opened in Boston, under his own name, although it was the same firm.

MR. BROWN: Was your grandfather in Boston occasionally too or did he mainly stay in Providence?

MR. VOSE: He was very definitely up in Boston occasionally. I don't know whether Bob has gone into this but he had a - during the 1880s and '90s he had - instead of galleries, what were called rooms because it was simply a couple of rooms on Bromfield Street at one time and then I think on School Street, where he would come a couple of times a week. He had very good business in Boston with the prominent collectors of those days such a as Messrs. Wigglesworth and Higginson and others. It might be interesting, if not significant, to mention the sort of traveling he did in those days which involved horse and buggy and train. They lived - the family lived on a farm in North Attleboro, Massachusetts - a regular working farm, which I remember as a child. It is gone now. According to my father's recollection, as he grew up there as a child, his father would have the horse and buggy hitched up in the morning. This was perhaps twice a week. He would trot into Pawtucket and put the horse in a livery stable, take the train to Providence - which of course was only a hop, skip, and jump - open up the

galleries, give instructions for the day, take the train to Boston. He would perhaps arrive there by 10:30 or so and open up his rooms and perhaps put in three or four hours there, reverse the process, and get home for dinner perhaps seven or eight o'clock. That's an awful lot of motion in a day and I must say it must have taken energy. He was successful. Naturally, it wasn't every day. I well remember, myself, the farm, where my aunts - my father's sister and uncle lived. There were all sorts of regular goings on, chickens, cattle, horses, and so forth. There was another farm in Jamestown, Rhode Island, which we enjoyed as kids. It was a summer place, and which is the base where we used to mount exhibitions in Newport, at the art association. It is just a matter of crossing the ferry. We enjoyed that very much. I, to this day, do enjoy visiting there, doing research and so forth, and maintain my membership in the Redwood Library and Atheneum and the Art Association, which are interesting organizations which I support. That is, perhaps, off the track.

MR. BROWN: Did your mother follow or inherit somewhat from her father, the intellectual interests? Was she rather studious?

MR. VOSE: Yes, she had such a large family to take care of that she didn't have very much spare time. She loved gardening. She was at one time president of the Jamestown, Rhode Island garden club and so forth. During her childhood, her father as I said, was a professor of languages at Brown University. Of course, he would have sabbaticals at appropriate intervals, so that mother studied in Germany on two different occasions for the year, seven years apart. She spoke German well and enjoyed German literature. Her mother had written *A Life of Goethe*, but she was also a scholar. She died in Germany and was buried there as a matter of fact. Mother was very busy with household affairs, I'm afraid.

MR. BROWN: Were her interests and her influence upon you, were they fairly strong?

MR. VOSE: Oh yes, very much so, yes. She was an extraordinary mother and an extraordinary person.

MR. BROWN: What sort of temperament did she have?

MR. VOSE: I would say that it was even, but fairly firm. In later years she enjoyed - when we were all grown and flown, you might say - she enjoyed doing civic work and that kind of thing and finally, taking care of my father when he was quite crippled. Although, he still went to the office every day.

MR. BROWN: Your father, what was his relation with you as small children? He was gone a bit, but when he was there.

MR. VOSE: He was gone and he was - I don't know what to say about that. He was very, very stern, extremely stern and didn't brook any nonsense whatever. When we were in Jamestown, in the summertime at the farm, he made very sure that we were not sitting around and fooling. We were weeding, mowing - mowing the grass - doing things that we should be doing to keep the place looking nice. It was a nice place. We rebelled to the extent of insisting that we wanted to swim when the tide was high. It didn't happen at the same time every day, which annoyed father no end. He felt we should stick to a regular schedule. I think that you might say that he had two great relaxations. One of them was digging rocks out of the field in Jamestown, of which there were more than you needed at all. He would even engage the old oxen, for tractors more or less - a yoke of oxen from down the road and a team of chaps who would dig around great rocks. Then, there was a wonderful machine. I think they were called gallamanders in quarry work. The oxen would move with this machine which had a great arch over it with a derrick and chain around the rock. It was cranked up by two men and carried down to the shore to build the sea wall. That, he enjoyed no end. Weekends - he didn't stay there at all over a week. He never would leave the office that long, but he would come down on Friday night, even staying sometimes until Monday night. The other was fishing off Beaver Tail Point. He loved to fish.

MR. BROWN: The southern tip of the island?

MR. VOSE: Yes. It was a great disappointment to him that I didn't like to eat fish, so I was conscience stricken about catching them. That disappointed father very much. Those two things were his great relaxations. He also was interested in genealogy, researching on genealogy.

MR. BROWN: Was that something you think common in this generation in New England, interest in genealogy?

MR. VOSE: Yes, I think it is something that has a resurgence today, don't you?

MR. BROWN: Yes.

MR. VOSE: I really do. It is a puzzle, rather fascinating if you have the time, to dig into your past. He had assembled a tremendous amount - all the publications of the New England Historic Genealogical Society during his lifetime. He had them bound and Bob has them now. That is getting away a little bit from the subject of our business.

MR. BROWN: He had been helping his father in the business since he was a young man?

MR. VOSE: Oh yes, yes. He thoroughly idolized his father. He was always holding him up to us.

MR. BROWN: You didn't meet your grandfather did you? No?

MR. VOSE: Yes, I did, but I don't remember it. - I did. I was two years old or a year and a half when he died. Having been told that I sat in his lap and pulled his beard, I used to believe that I remembered that, but I think that is fancy - fantasy. I didn't meet him, no.

MR. BROWN: Your father, did he ever discuss the nature of his father and the way his father ran the business? Did he describe him?

MR. VOSE: Yes, he did. He had some very hard times as we later did in the Depression ourselves. He was often urged during those times to go into bankruptcy. He was adamant that he would never do any such thing. He would always pay off what he owed, eventually, somehow and he always did, which was a subject of admiration for his son. He was very strong minded. My father had a number of stories about his father - he used to say, "Of course father was the gentlest man imaginable." I think that may have been slightly overstated. When he felt that someone had done wrong, he let them know it in no uncertain terms. There are a number of anecdotes which I think support that.

MR. BROWN: What kind of training did your father ever indicate that he received from his father? I guess it was implied that you father would go into the business once he was through college.

MR. VOSE: There was no question about it as there was no question that his sons would also. There was no questions whatever about that. It made it very easy. You didn't have to struggle choosing a career. He simply followed his father. He used to go inn after school, which apparently was nearby in Providence. He stayed there in the gallery to see what was going on and of course, later, to assist his father. His father had very strong ideas about what he believed in the way of art, always quite conservative.

MR. BROWN: What were some of those that you recall that your grandfather held - some of his ideas?

MR. VOSE: He was very conservative, but - he was before his time in appreciating the Barbizon school of French painting. I'm sure Bob has mentioned this.

MR. BROWN: He was truly one of the greater dealers in American in the Barbizon school.

MR. VOSE: Yes, oh yes, he was. Many of the Barbizon school paintings in the museums especially Corot and Millet and other Barbizon painters Daubigny, Diaz - would have come from him, through his Boston connections, with his rooms in Boston and his friendship with William Morris Hunt. They were great friends. Hunt, of course was the - as you know - the person to introduce appreciation of French Barbizon painting to Boston. There were a number of stories. I'm sure Bob told you the story about their first meeting.

MR. BROWN: No.

MR. VOSE: I wish that there had been recording television at that time, so one could see this episode. According to father - this was before his birth actually - for some extraordinary reason, my grandfather purchased - didn't take on consignment or memo, but purchased about ten Corots. I hope I have the number right. I think that's it. I'm not sure. He was exhibiting them in his gallery in Providence - the Westminster Art Gallery, he called it. People were staying away in droves. They never heard of this wild Frenchman and didn't care for his work. My grandfather was quite depressed. On one occasion, he was sitting at his desk near the door, when a gentleman walked in, a stranger. He was bearded, as my grandfather was, which was the customary fashion in that day. He just said, "May I look around?" He said, "Certainly." If I understand it correctly, there were two galleries, one beyond the other and it was in the further one that the Corots were exhibited. This man poked around the first gallery and finally went to the second one, and came galloping out in high excitement. He seized my grandfather, by both shoulders and tried to kiss him on both cheeks in the manner that was customary in France. You can imagine an old Yankee being a little bit put off. This was William Morris Hunt. He had not realized that anybody, any dealer, in the United States knew anything about Corot or Barbizon paintings. He said, "Where did you get them? I didn't know anyone had them." It was the start of a friendship that lasted until his death.

MR. BROWN: Do you know how your grandfather had gotten them?

MR. VOSE: I haven't the slightest idea and I never heard any explanation on how he happened to do this. Excepting - well, of course there is the probability that the painter Thomas Robinson, who later on became his agent, may have influenced him. - I suppose it is the only possible explanation - may have talked to him about

Corot because they knew each other and later on worked together.

MR. BROWN: Robinson had been in Europe.

MR. VOSE: Robinson had trained in Europe. Of course today, he is more or less forgotten, as being one of the typical late nineteenth century painters of cows and fields and so forth. He was a darn good painter. He started really as an animal painter, but then went on to landscape, using the cattle as was so customary then. I think it was a very amusing story at least. I'm sure it was the truth.

MR. BROWN: It is a fact that Robinson did become an agent to France for your grandfather.

MR. VOSE: He did. That's true.

MR. BROWN: That went sour in the end as I understand.

MR. VOSE: It sadly did, yes. Robinson made an extraordinary number of trips abroad for my grandfather. I think there is mention of an astronomical number like 29 or something like that. Grandfather would advance him money to purchase for him on a share basis and so forth. I think one of the unfortunate things was that various customers of my father's finally heard about Robinson and persuaded him to accept money from them to purchase. Although he had a contract, a very distinct contract, that he was to purchase only for my grandfather in return for what he was getting. They persuaded him to do the same for them. That was one of the things that caused a rift.

MR. BROWN: At this time there was sort of a precautionary lesson to be learned which I suppose your father imbibed from his father. You have to be careful about business associates, taking things on trust.

MR. VOSE: Indeed yes. My grandfather had several partners which my father never did. The firm was - Vose and Gillespie - Gillespie and Vose and it was Vose and Huxford as the last one. I, myself, remember meeting Mr. Huxford many years after my grandfather died, in Providence when I was a young boy. He reminded me of Santa Clause at that time.

MR. BROWN: He, apparently did a lot of the framing and the practical sort of thing.

MR. VOSE: Yes, he was really a woodworking specialist. I think when he left - when they parted company, his main business then was making shutters, blinds, window frames, that kind of thing. I saw the machine shop that he still kept - he was 98, I think, when I saw him. He had not used it in many years, but it was still there. He took my father and me - I was just accompanying him as a child - to see it, to see if father wanted to buy any of the woodworking equipment, which he didn't as I remember. But, I recall that Mr. Huxford turned on the power and the thing hadn't been used for a long time. Dust flew everywhere. Sparks flew out of things. Frayed belts snapped. My father kept shouting, "Turn off the power." I recall that as a child.

MR. BROWN: That was quite an experience.

MR. VOSE: Again, I think we are getting off the track.

MR. BROWN: No, this is absolutely good to hear. Your childhood was mainly spent out of Jamestown or in Brookline? You mentioned that you did have - I think it was your grandfather and then your father's bookkeeper - Sibbie Marsh?

MR. VOSE: Sibbie Horn Marsh was just simply a member of the family as Elsie is today, perhaps.

MR. BROWN: Elsie Oliver at the gallery?

MR. VOSE: Yes. Although, Sibbie actually lived with us at certain times. She wasn't married. - She came to my grandfather's family as a seamstress to sew as was the custom then, wedding clothes for my aunt, my eldest aunt, father's oldest sister, and then stayed on as bookkeeper and really was with the firm for fifty - oh, it must have been more than fifty years - it must have been sixty years. She was still coming to the gallery when my brothers and I were first there. Eventually, of course, of usefulness, she really was beyond the age, but you didn't discharge somebody like that. She was not about to retire so she would often come sit and go to sleep, when she was over eighty, at the desk, but she was welcome to come. She was really an influence on us.

MR. BROWN: Why would you say?

MR. VOSE: She had high standards which she would always inculcate. She even took three of my father's children, namely my two brothers and me, three years in succession on vacations with her and her school teacher sister, to an island off the coast of Maine. I don't know how that could be arranged, but she must be wearing a halo now, I think. I can't imagine taking your boss's kids on your vacation.

MR. BROWN: How many of you would be going on that?

MR. VOSE: I first went alone, the first year. Bob and I the second and then Herbert, and Bob, and I.

MR. BROWN: Did your sisters ever go?

MR. VOSE: No, they were much, much younger.

MR. BROWN: Were there any incidents up in Maine that you can recall or that stands out?

MR. VOSE: Yes, they do indeed.

MR. BROWN: That's good. I'd like to know.

MR. VOSE: I recall - something did happen later, which was surprising. Years and years later, I was approached by somebody who wanted to sell a collection of paintings which were, as they said, in a farm house on an island off the coast of Maine. They asked if I would go and look at them. It sounded interesting. I had business in Rockland and stayed overnight with my friends the Wendell Hadlocks. He was director of the Farnsworth Museum and a great friend both of Ruth's and mine. When he heard what I was going to do the next day, he said he was not about to let anything slip through his fingers which had to do with paintings and in his bailiwick. He said, "Hey, I'll go with you." Well, I was very glad to have him. It turned out this was the same island. By now, it was connected with a bridge. It hadn't been before. I began to recognize, dimly, landmarks of twenty or thirty years ago. Finally, following directions which they gave me, I said, "Wendell, this should be the place. There is a house down by the water, but this is not the house. I don't understand this. I just am certain that this was where the first house we stayed in was and this is an old house. Something is wrong, but never mind." We went down and went to work. These paintings were stored in the basement. It was a dirt cellar. Can you imagine? They had been there, thank goodness, only one winter, but that was long enough. Wendell and I stationed ourselves at the entrance and the family had a bucket brigade going. They would bring a painting out and we would either put our thumbs up or down and put them in different stacks. In the middle of things, we were invited to stop and join the family for lunch. I still couldn't understand this business of location and the different house. We were sitting at the table and the elderly grandmother was present. She hadn't heard any of the conversation. She was very deaf. Finally, she reached down to her purse on the floor by her side and pulled out a photograph and said, "Perhaps Mr. Vose would like to see a picture of this house when my husband and I first bought it." There was the house that I remembered! It had been changed all around. The porch that I remembered had been taken off and a few shrubs and things changed. There was only one trouble. It was not the same house inside either. Then, she went on to say, "Of course we removed partitions inside and enlarged rooms." The mystery was solved. It was the same house, which I thought was an amusing coincidence. The experience was interesting, too. It was one of those things that happen that turn out interestingly in our business. There were all sorts of paintings - American, foreign, all periods. It was just an extraordinary mishmash, and a few very good ones. It ended up that I bought quite a number. I left the house very delighted with several China trade port pictures. Two of them were signed by Sung Qua which was a rarity and a delight to me. I suggested the others be sent to auction and arranged with Louis Joseph, in those days head of an auction gallery on Commonwealth Avenue. He stipulated that no junk be sent. I told them that and left it to them. Awhile later I got a missive on Louis Joseph stationary. All that appeared on the paper was a rough sketch of a devil, flames coming out of his mouth and his initials underneath. Apparently they had dumped everything on poor Louis. The episode was interesting and it was an example of how you run into things unexpectedly.

MR. BROWN: It sounds like that was a rather idyllic place for you as children, when you went with Sibbie Marsh.

MR. VOSE: Oh, it was, very much so.

MR. BROWN: You said she inculcated standards.

MR. VOSE: Oh, yes.

MR. BROWN: Was she rather strict in your daily routine?

MR. VOSE: She was a very sweet lady, but she saw that standards were maintained and didn't let anybody get away too far with things.

MR. BROWN: Were your brothers apt to be rather rambunctious I suppose?

MR. VOSE: I suppose so. - I suppose that Herbert was the most rambunctious. He had the most vim and vigor, maybe and I have probably the least, but we enjoyed it.

MR. BROWN: As a young man - coming into say teenage - were you quite bookish or did you read a lot?

MR. VOSE: Oh yes, I did. I suppose I am one of the bookish types. I enjoyed reading, yes, surely.

MR. BROWN: You began school here in Brookline, I suppose.

MR. VOSE: Yes, right here in public school in Brookline, the Runkle School and then one year at the high school here. After that, three years at the Newton Country Day School before going to Harvard.

MR. BROWN: Did you concentrate in any particular thing in high school?

MR. VOSE: No, in those days, you didn't concentrate very much. Now, you can. In those days it was just the regular curriculum. Of course, I was expected to go on to college and concentrate on fine arts, but my father was thoroughly disgusted because the Fogg Museum had no interest in American painting at all. I'm kind of glad because I never would have had much contact with seventeenth century Dutch painting, renaissance Italian, if I had not concentrated in fine arts at Harvard. I was fortunate in having some very interesting lecturers.

MR. BROWN: Who were some of them? Can you describe some of them?

MR. VOSE: Oh surely. One that I remember particularly well because I knew him later in different guise was George Harold Edgehill. I'm not sure you know him. He really was a professor of architecture at Harvard, but he also lectured in fine arts and perfectly charmingly. He was a rapid speaker, but a very distinct and very charming one. I'm told that he lectured in Italian and French equally well and had perfect diction and accent. Of course later on he directed the Museum of Fine Arts here in Boston and I did business with him there, very pleasantly indeed. Another interesting lecturer there, was professor Chandler R. Post, who had the overwhelming title of Professor of Greek and the Fine Arts. He was just simply the epitome of a scholar. He had interesting theories on lecturing and teaching. I thought about it afterwards, I think he made a point of sounding outrageous sometimes, which sticks in your memory. Sometimes his questions on examinations were most unusual. He would force you to prove that you had paid attention, although the particular incident that he might require was very unimportant, such as, "What renaissance Italian Florentine painter was captured by Barbary pirates while fishing off the coast of Sicily," or something like that, which you could perhaps not connect very much with his painting career. But did you pay attention to it and had you read the biography and so forth?

MR. BROWN: He was a fairly stern teacher, was he?

MR. VOSE: Oh, indeed he was. I came to like him very much and we got along well.

MR. BROWN: At that point did you think you might want to go on in a scholarly career?

MR. VOSE: Well, it never occurred to me because I knew perfectly well I wasn't going to. I might just go on a little bit with Professor Post as an example. This happened, I understand, every year, but of course it always seemed new to the successive classes. On one occasion he finished a lecture and he would say, "And that concludes my remarks for today, Gentlemen. On Monday, I shall commence my annual vituperation of Leonardo da Vinci." On Monday, he would start off, "Leonardo da Vinci was a bastard." He meant that literally, which he was. "And like all illegitimate children, he had a nasty disposition." Then he would go on - [missing dialogue] - about the life of da Vinci. I understand this happened every year, the same comment.

MR. BROWN: This is pretty strong stuff. It is a pretty vivid presentation for you as a young student, wasn't it?

MR. VOSE: Very much so.

MR. BROWN: They were mostly lectures then, were they not?

MR. VOSE: Oh, no you had - well, examinations and lectures. You have probably heard of Professor Arthur Pope, who was a painter and who taught the preliminary course in fine arts. You had to take that. You had to do some painting; I was persuaded that I was not a painter by that course. But Professor Post -

MR. BROWN: Pope or Post?

MR. VOSE: No, I'm thinking back to Post - was not to be fooled with at all. Professor Pope was a very gentle person. I recall the difference between him and, for instance, Professor Merriman, who was a famous history teacher. He used to stand and lecture on a platform. If anyone came in with his hat on in the winter, he would knock it off with his pointer. I remember Professor Pope having to deal with a very stupid, hopeless student, who would always arrive later, and instead of entering from the rear as he could have done, would enter from the front. Pope would be lecturing, standing by the door and this student would open the door and squash him against the wall, then amble to his seat and sit down. Pope never said a word.

MR. BROWN: He was a gentle soul.

MR. VOSE: Which is more effective, I thought. That's an interesting thought.

MR. BROWN: Pope's course, what did you derive from that?

MR. VOSE: It was theoretical in the sense that he spoke a great deal about color relations. He was an authority on that sort of thing. He had devised a color cone and so forth and so on, which I must say, I didn't find very interesting. I had to pass it, but this was intended for people who were going to be much more technical than I intended to be. I liked him very much.

MR. BROWN: But was the theoretical course or content of this, not particularly appealing to you?

MR. VOSE: Simply that I was just glad to get through with it. I was more interested in the history of painting and also in the paintings themselves.

MR. BROWN: Did his introductory course also include lectures on the old history of painting?

MR. VOSE: Yes, but it was skimpy. He hadn't time.

MR. BROWN: Once over lightly?

MR. VOSE: Yes, that's right, exactly. Fine Arts 1A, it was the first thing you have to take.

MR. BROWN: Did you also work with the museum where they had courses where people made frescos and that sort of thing or was that for more advanced students?

MR. VOSE: That would be for more advanced students, although as a senior, you know, you had a tutor, but it didn't necessarily mean you were dumb. It just meant that - you were always assigned a tutor as a senior, who would supervise what you were doing in preparation for getting a degree. He would often assign you something, some object or some painting in the museum to write about.

MR. BROWN: Who did you have as a tutor?

MR. VOSE: I had two. It's getting so far back, I'm almost forgetting.

MR. BROWN: One of your tutors was Charles Kuhn?

MR. VOSE: Yes, he - for some reason I didn't relate quite as well with him as I did with another, A. K. McComb, who helped me a great deal. He afterwards retired from the Fogg and became a dealer. He used to come in and borrow things from me occasionally. But in the beginning there, I found him very helpful.

MR. BROWN: Would you meet almost weekly with this person?

MR. VOSE: No, it probably was monthly. It didn't seem to be as many as that as I recall now.

MR. BROWN: You would write an essay for them or something of that sort?

MR. VOSE: Yes, that's right. I remember being scandalized. Kuhn asked me to examine a figure, a Hellenistic head, which was - a sculpted head which was there - and write something about its origins and so forth, where it came out. I could find absolutely nothing about it. I went to him and confessed. I said, "Well, what is the story?" He said, "I don't know." Which was perfectly alright, but at the moment it just scandalized me that he would ask me to do something that he did not know. I have never gone into that area at all anyway. I didn't do that well in that particular case.

MR. BROWN: What about other well known professors at the time that you had contact with? Have you met Kingsley Porter, for example?

MR. VOSE: Kingsley Porter, I never studied with him. I used to see him. I knew him a little bit. He was very ethereal sort of man. As I remember he had a strange mysterious end. He was drowned off the coast of Ireland, sailing. There were strange rumors that he wanted to get away from it all and staged the thing, and that he was somewhere else. I don't know about that. Then there was Professor Chase, whom I liked very much. He was described as "the great little man." He was a very nice lecturer and a very understanding teacher.

MR. BROWN: What did he teach you? What were your classes with him?

MR. VOSE: I forget exactly what the courses were I took with him. It was 56 years ago. But I remember that they were meaningful and I enjoyed them. I enjoyed him very much.

MR. BROWN: Would you have worked at all with Edward Forbes or Paul Sacks?

MR. VOSE: Yes. I am perhaps a renegade, but I disliked Paul Sacks intensely, personally, and I liked Edward Forbes very much indeed. Sacks, to my mind, was overbearing and top lofty. I thought then, he used to treat the employees who worked the slide machines and so forth, in a very unpleasant and disagreeable manner. I did not like him. He certainly was a scholar and I probably missed something by disliking him. But, I thought Edward Forbes was a loveable person, quite delightful. I didn't have any courses with him, but I knew him quite well. I was invited to his house a couple of times and so forth.

MR. BROWN: You were fairly - it was a fairly small group so you would get to know, to a degree, even people with whom you did not have courses.

MR. VOSE: That's true, yes.

MR. BROWN: The matter of inviting students to their houses was fairly common wasn't it?

MR. VOSE: Yes, I wouldn't say extremely common, but once in a while, yes. That's right. Those were interesting experiences for me. I didn't do very much in the way of extracurricular things there because I was so busy trying to run the Boy Scout troop at the First Parish Church over here and so forth. I made that my extracurricular activity.

MR. BROWN: While you were in college?

MR. VOSE: Yes. Then, I came to the gallery with father in '31.

MR. BROWN: Were there classmates in the fine arts that you were close to and some that went on to careers in the arts?

MR. VOSE: Yes, there were. There were three museum directors who came out of our class. One of them is still living, Lesley Cheek. The Cheek career was at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts in Richmond, although, he had been at Baltimore before that. Lesley has been living in retirement. He sent me an extraordinary book, which somebody put together on his career, illustrated, just because of our 55th anniversary reunion which took place this year. There was also Hermann Warner Williams - Bill, we called him - who was the director of the Corcoran Gallery for many years, who was a very good friend of mine. Frederick Robinson, Frederick Bruce Robinson, who was the director of the Springfield, Massachusetts, museum for most of his career and he was a very good friend of mine too. I saw more of them than I did of Lesley. I keep in touch with Lesley now. We correspond and so forth. There was at least one other art dealer. I can't think of his name. He only just recently died. He hasn't been in Boston for many years, but he did take over the Grace Horn Gallery in Boston. Oh, Richard Rideout, his name was. He ran the Grace Horn Gallery.

MR. BROWN: Were these - as young men, did you have many discussions of art or things of that sort?

MR. VOSE: No.

MR. BROWN: It wasn't taken so seriously.

MR. VOSE: I don't think we did really.

MR. BROWN: You were just general chums of that time.

MR. VOSE: That's right. Of course, a good many of my friends there were not in the art field at all so it doesn't perhaps relate.

MR. BROWN: You lived at home, didn't you?

MR. VOSE: No, I didn't.

MR. BROWN: You lived at Harvard?

MR. VOSE: My parents thought that it would be better for future relationships if I lived there. I could have lived at home -. No, I lived all four years at Harvard, starting with the freshman dorms, which were very nice. They are on the river. Those buildings are all now part of the house plan, which only came in in my last year. I didn't get into that and I'm glad really because I lived three years in the Yard, I lived in Stoughton Hall my senior year.

MR. BROWN: Your last year, you lived…

MR. VOSE: My last year was in Stoughton, which is one of the very old buildings in the Yard. I was very glad for that experience.

MR. BROWN: Was that because you were more in the center of things?

MR. VOSE: Yes. It was more traditional. That was what college was in the old days. The two previous years I had lived in Weld.

MR. BROWN: What other kinds of studies did you undertake besides fine arts?

MR. VOSE: I was...

MR. BROWN: Was there anything else on which you spent some time?

MR. VOSE: I was much interested in languages and I did take the French, German, Spanish literature courses and so forth and enjoyed those very much. You have to diversify. I took one course in philosophy in which I didn't do very well. Probably because of that - the professor committed suicide towards the end of the course.

[END OF TAPE ONE SIDE A]

MR. BROWN: You had graduated then from Harvard.

MR. VOSE: In '31.

MR. BROWN: In '31. Did you then take a little time off?

MR. VOSE: No, my father would not have been interested in that one little bit.

MR. BROWN: He had been given a year of travel after graduating.

MR. VOSE: He had, but he wanted help right away. In fact, as you probably know, my cousin, Charles Thompson, had been with the firm quite awhile before that. He was a much older first cousin.

MR. BROWN: He was your aunt's - your father's older sister's child.

MR. VOSE: One of his older sisters. My grandfather's children came over a span of 23 years. The eldest, in other words, was 23 years older than my uncle, my father's younger brother. The boys were the two last to arrive. It was my - Hattie Thompson - who was Charlie's mother. She grew up on the farm there in North Attleboro where my father had grown up.

MR. BROWN: Thompson was - when you graduated from Harvard, then you were going to say something about Charles Thompson.

MR. VOSE: Simply that he had been there, with the firm, for quite a long - quite a number of years before we came along because he was quite a lot older than my brothers and I. For instance, my father's brother Nat, had also been with the firm. It was R.C. and N.M. Vose for a number of years, until 1923, when they separated and the new gallery in Copley Square was built for father.

MR. BROWN: You had gone in during summers while you were at college and helped in some way?

MR. VOSE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: What sort of things would you do in those days, I guess about 1927, you said?

MR. VOSE: Yes, all sorts of things that had to be done in a place like that, running errands to begin with, manning the gallery. It was a very large third floor gallery. In fact, it was one large gallery and two smaller ones. It was the largest exhibition gallery in Boston outside of the Museum in those days.

MR. BROWN: Perhaps you can describe the Copley Square building, the facilities there?

MR. VOSE: Yes, it was quite interesting. It was built to father's specifications. He was very friendly with an art dealer in Minneapolis by the name of Beard. Mr. Beard helped him design the gallery. It was a four story building, but the top story was only on the front part so as to leave skylight space for the big gallery at the rear. The first floor was always rented out. - Actually, father did not own it.

MR. BROWN: He rented it as well?

MR. VOSE: It was built to his specifications by a landlord. He didn't want the first floor, which I think may have been a mistake. He felt that you get continual coming and going if people are just curious. It may be true, but I think that perhaps it was unwise because the necessity of going up an elevator or stairs, sometimes is annoying to people. The gallery space was on the second, third, and fourth floors. On the second floor, which you came to

first, was the office space in front, two offices in front. Then, there was a long corridor toward the back, paralleled by stockrooms, which were where paintings were stored in racks. That opened out into a private gallery, a private showroom, where customers could be brought down to look at things in private, which was very convenient. Although, perhaps as an after thought, one might say it would have been better to have the gallery in front and the office behind, especially from the point of view of light. Then, on the third floor, was the main exhibition gallery. At the rear, the whole rear half of the building, was a very large modern gallery, which at the time was the most modern in Boston. When the new Fogg Museum was built, architects came over to look at that.

MR. BROWN: How was it? What made it so modern?

MR. VOSE: It had all sorts of controls for light and ventilation, which were considered quite modern at that time. The skylight, of course, provided daylight, but sometimes we didn't' want bright sun and so forth. There were louvers which could be controlled at each corner of the gallery by opening a little door. It was like a closet door and there was a great big crank to crank the louvers up and down to control the light. Also, there were huge shades, like window shades, only horizontal, which could be drawn across - horizontally, across the ceiling, if you wanted to, across the glass. This really worked very well. Then, the elevator opened into the center, where there was a big reception area, a fireplace and so forth, and then, two smaller galleries, one much smaller than the other, opening out above the street on the third floor. - It had French windows. One was called the etching room. In those days we did carry prints, which we haven't for many years now. My cousin, Charles Thompson, was the print man. When he died, my brothers and I felt that that really was a specialty and that it was a little late for us to go into it. We discontinued the prints. The fourth floor was the studio, which again had a skylight, north light. It was intended for visiting artists. There also was a work room. There was room for that.

MR. BROWN: Visiting artist, by that you mean, excuse me, people who wished to work there?

MR. VOSE: The portrait painters. We were continually being asked to commission portraits by an artist whom we had recommended. Very often the portrait would be done right there. As a result, a great many very interesting people came through the doors. Many of the governors of Massachusetts - the State Capital, the State House, has a collection of portraits of governors. Many of these were done through us - painted upstairs there and done through our gallery. There were interesting commissions such as the one for Mr. DiFerarri, who at the time, was rather celebrated as being the son of an Italian street vendor, who started out that way with a push cart and ended up being a millionaire. He gave a huge sum to the Boston Public Library. They say he had never been to school, but he educated himself at the Boston Public Library. He was a character. Even at that time, it was said that he never slept in the same place twice. He had various beds in basements, and so forth, all around Boston. Leopold Seyffert was an artist we used a great deal. He was an excellent portrait painter. Seyffert started painting him in a rather majestic pose, seated in a big arm chair, with his arms on the sides of the chair, looking rather grand. He got about halfway through and DiFerarri suddenly jumped up and shouted, "This is no good. People will think I'm a feeble old man and can't stand up. Destroy that and paint me standing up," which he did. It's over at the library now. This sort of thing, of course, is just amusing.

MR. BROWN: Did you meet these people and these artists as a young man before you came on with the firm?

MR. VOSE: Well, this was during the time I was with the firm. This is what went on. I remember that very well.

MR. BROWN: Seyffert then was quite a character.

MR. VOSE: He was.

MR. BROWN: He was strong with the bottle. What about the incident when Curley came around, James Michael Curley?

MR. VOSE: James Michael Curley, himself, was a character of course. I remember a number of things about him that were amusing. He was a great speaker, though, no question about it. I heard him speak at the dedication of the DiFerarri portraits at the Boston Public Library, which Seyffert had painted. There were also the president of Boston University and the Episcopal Bishop of Massachusetts and the director of the library. They spoke and then Curley spoke. He put them all to shame. It was extraordinary, the way he out did them in his speaking.

MR. BROWN: He was very eloquent?

MR. VOSE: Eloquent, yes. He was one of those who was painted by Seyffert, in our studio upstairs on the top floor. Mr. Seyffert did like the bottle quite well. On one occasion, Curley arrived and Mr. Seyffert was not in a condition to paint him. This amused Mr. Curley. It didn't annoy him at all. He went back and said he would come tomorrow.

MR. BROWN: Curley is someone who you got to know off and on or see off and on over the years?

MR. VOSE: In that connection and in other places, such as that dedication and so forth, I used to see him. Yes, he came there one time and it was some - I guess, perhaps Seyffert hadn't been able to come or something, and he thought he would like to speak with my father, but Dad was busy. He sat down and told me a story, which he apparently expected me to believe. It was the most outrageous thing I had ever heard about how President Conant of Harvard tried to bribe him by subtle means to make the - how did that go. I've got to have it straight. Yes, he said he wanted Curley to appoint a young nephew of Conant's who had just finished medical school, to be director of the Boston City Hospital. In return, Harvard Medical School would use the Boston City Hospital. It was sort of a bribe situation and he invited Curley to lunch, at his home in Cambridge to make this proposal. According to Curley, he said, "Why Mr. Conant, I couldn't possibly do that. We already have a properly qualified director," and so forth and so on. According to him the President said, "What? You won't do it," and he threw down his napkin and jumped up and left the room. Curley said, "I simply finished my first course. I was brought dessert. Then, I said to the butler, 'And now my good man, you may bring me coffee and a good cigar.'" This was told seriously as though I was supposed to believe it, but this was Mr. Curley all over.

MR. BROWN: He would perhaps embroider or fashion out of whole cloth to make certain points?

MR. VOSE: I just don't know how he would have expected anyone to believe that, but he delivered it in great detail.

MR. BROWN: You had returned to Jamestown - into the '30s you had the farm.

MR. VOSE: Yes, actually into the early '40s.

MR. BROWN: You mentioned that down there there was another artist, a woman, Catherine Morris Wright.

MR. VOSE: Catherine Morris Wright, yes. ANA - she was an associate of the National Academy. She was - is an extraordinary woman. She was a Quaker. In fact, she rescued the huge old Quaker meeting house in Newport from destruction and presented it to the Newport Historical Society, which keeps it open to visitors. She also supported the little one in Jamestown which is still there. The incident I think I may have mentioned was that she and her husband were between my parents and us children, - and friendly to both. They appeared with their children at Casacet as our farm was called, one Sunday afternoon to visit. We were all - the kids were all dressed in our Sunday afternoon togs and sitting well behaved on the porch. Her twin sons, who were very young, got into a squabble out on the lawn. Remember that she was a Quaker. She called out, "Ellicot, Ellicot, what ails thee? Has thee no guts," which I always remembered as a wonderful nonresistant Quaker remark. That was typical of Kit. She was a very good painter and is represented in museums. She is still living at the present time, but as I say, extremely elderly, not well.

MR. BROWN: What were your duties when you came in full time? Your father knew you had the fine arts background. You still handled a lot of European work didn't you?

MR. VOSE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: Did he expect you, perhaps, to show some expertise or develop some in that?

MR. VOSE: He expected us to develop some, yes. He was not thoroughly thrilled with the curriculum at Harvard because he thought that it didn't give nearly enough attention to American painting and also to more contemporary things. Not contemporary in the way of modern, which he loathed, but...

MR. BROWN: At least of this century.

MR. VOSE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: By the way, did he have a great interest in American art by the '20s?

MR. VOSE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: Were they selling a good deal? American art was by then, quite a prominent part of the inventory wasn't it?

MR. VOSE: It was, yes - actually, eighteenth century American art. He didn't care much of what was being done. Although, up until the New York school became prominent, he handled living American artists very prominently and knew many of them, too. People who were working in New York at that time and around the country.

MR. BROWN: But he felt that your Harvard education hadn't equipped you for what he wanted you to develop.

MR. VOSE: I think he felt that I hadn't developed very well in that respect. We simply went into everything that had to be done there, from as I say, running errands to manning the gallery upstairs, taking care of people who

come in. Hopefully, making sales.

MR. BROWN: Did your father school you in how to approach people?

MR. VOSE: Oh, yes.

MR. BROWN: Can you describe what his suggestions were?

MR. VOSE: He had criticism quite often as to how we had done things. He would sometimes criticize - "You shouldn't have said that. That's not the way to approach a customer," and so forth and so on, this kind of thing.

MR. BROWN: Did you ever see him in action? You must have.

MR. VOSE: Continually.

MR. BROWN: What was his approach? How would he persuade someone, even someone fairly reluctant?

MR. VOSE: He had a great facility for talking somebody down. I remember particularly, many years after the period we are talking about, I had sold a magnificent Albert Bierstadt painting to a collector here in the Boston area. The next day, after I had hung it, and they had agreed to purchase it, they called up and said it was overpowering and they were afraid they were going to have to cancel the sale. Awhile later, my father said to me, "I hope you don't mind, but I called them up and persuaded them differently." I said, "How did you do that?" He said, "I told them how disappointed I was and how thrilled I had been that this painting was going to stay in Boston and be part of such a prominent collection and so forth and how disappointed I was." It ended up that they decided to keep it. It was something that I probably would not have been able to do. I'm not sure that I would not be able to now.

MR. BROWN: He could be quite eloquent.

MR. VOSE: Oh yes, yes indeed. I remember in that same vein, in those days the city of Boston quite often would send around a tax expert who would usually - we didn't think always on the up and up - try to persuade the city that you owed a great deal more on the taxes on your inventory, then you thought you did. I recall a man coming one time and father explained to him the difficulties which, as he claimed, a really serious art dealer had these days. He had a whole pile of catalogues which he kept ready - sales catalogues. These were all New York school paintings. There would be abstractions, nonobjective things, and so forth. Then, he would start showing these things and go on showing. This fellow would get more, and more exhausted, "Yes, I understand, Mr. Vose." "But look, but look." This went on until the poor fellow was completely exhausted and would leave. I used to watch this with mouth open, but it really succeeded.

MR. BROWN: He also knew how to - had wonderful stalling tactics.

MR. VOSE: Oh yes, he did.

MR. BROWN: His office, and I suppose yours, were on the second floor. Is that right?

MR. VOSE: The second floor.

MR. BROWN: Near that was the smaller gallery? Was that the one -?

MR. VOSE: That was way at the back.

MR. BROWN: That was one that he used to present paintings to special customers?

MR. VOSE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: Who was taken there, important customers?

MR. VOSE: Customers who wanted to discuss something privately. There was no reason to do that openly with a lot of other people around.

MR. BROWN: How was that set up?

MR. VOSE: It had hangings, of course, around the walls, with paintings behind the hangings. You could part them. But, it also had a number of easels, free standing easels, with paintings covered with a drape that you could simply flip it over the back to reveal the painting, with a cluster light in the ceiling, which I now have upstairs. It was very ancient then. It was moved from the gallery at 398 Boylston in 1923, when that was demolished. People would be taken down there, down the corridor from the elevator. You could part the

curtains, go in, and close them again and be completely private. There were a number of other amusing incidents that happened in that connection, but - if you want me to speak of those.

MR. BROWN: Yes.

MR. VOSE: Karolik was later, of course.

MR. BROWN: Give some of those incidents.

MR. VOSE: Later on, after I had been there for a number of years, one of the most interesting customers that I ever had put in an appearance. That was Maxim Karolik. Anybody who is interested in the Museum in Boston knows about him. He was a character of the first order of course, a Russian musician, a Russian singer, who had come penniless to this country and had the good fortune to marry a very wealthy Boston and Newport lady, who financed him from then on in his collecting. There was some little talk about her reason for doing this. Perhaps to guide him away from certain other interests he might have had, but he went into it with enthusiasm. Dealing with him was certainly the most interesting experience I have ever had in my dealing career, but it was not the easiest by any means. It was sort of a regular routine that he went through. If he was somewhat interested in the painting he would say, "Ha! Now how much costs such a painting?" I would perhaps say, "Well, Mr. Karolik, we have to ask so much for it." "Aha, so that is your price? Now, commences the beating down." I would say, "Mr. Karolik, the beating down always has taken place beforehand. I told you the price. We quote you lowest we can." Well, that didn't go over. This would go on for a long time. Finally, he would perhaps agree. "Ha, that's lovely. Now, you give me the measurement." It took me a long time to realize that in his vocabulary the measurement was the literal ruler, not the dimension. He insisted on measuring it himself. He would say, "Now, you hold it so." He would measure it. "Now, you hold it so." He turned it over. He would, in the meantime, be holding forth his sometimes slightly off color comments, such as his reason for doing it himself: "As one lady said to me. I believe you, but I don't trust you." This kind of thing was part of his repertoire. Of course, he was thinking of the Museum of Fine Arts and the eventual destination of this painting.

MR. BROWN: Why did he have to measure each one? For his own -

MR. VOSE: He insisted and he never had a notebook. He kept old envelopes in his pocket. He would write on the back of the envelope. I never knew why it was necessary to measure it then, but it seemed to be. Perhaps, because he wanted to report to the Museum. The Mooseum, he would call it. Sometimes, he had to consult the Museum. Mr. W.E. Constable, the curator of paintings was his guide in this case. On one occasion or on some occasions, he would say, "Ha, lovely. Now, you bring it to the Museum. You bring it at eleven o'clock, to the painting department." Then if - by that time, I was saying goodbye to him on the sidewalk, and there was a good enough audience around, he would turn and say, "You bring it in the name of Karolik," in loud tones so that people knew who he was and what he was doing. I would get to the Museum at eleven o'clock, take the picture to the painting department, and he would be there with Mr. Constable. He would say, "Ha, that's lovely. Go and observe the collections. It will improve your mind," thus dismissing me. This is what I had to put up with for years. It paid and the whole thing was rather interesting.

MR. BROWN: These would begin in that private viewing room.

MR. VOSE: Oh, yes.

MR. BROWN: You had the lighting, the cluster lighting and drapery and all. Was this to dramatize the presentation?

MR. VOSE: It was really to make it look - well, to see the pictures better.

MR. BROWN: It was very intense light, wasn't it?

MR. VOSE: Yes, it was quite intense. We speak about the gallery on the second floor being private and it mostly was, but on one occasion a rather comical episode took place. There was a rather gushy lady who wanted to see my father. She said she had heard so much about Mr. Vose. She was looking forward to seeing him. I escorted her back there. At that time, my father was quite crippled and he preferred to wait until people were seated and the curtains were drawn, so he wouldn't have to be seen hobbling down the long corridor on his crutches. Just after I got her seated, I said, "I'll go and get my father." At that point, Maxim Karolik came out of the elevator. There was no "by your leave," in his case. He came striding down the corridor. I started to say, "Mr. Karolik, there is someone there." But it didn't make any difference at all. He barged through the curtain. This lady, mistaking him for my father, said, "Oh, what a handsome man and young too," having been told that he was quite old, you see. Mr. Karolik said, "Madame, you are a woman of discernment." "Oh," she said, "I thought that was your father," to me. "No," says Karolik, "He is illegitimate." This was the kind of thing he delighted in saying. It seems a little silly, but it was his trademark. In general, this system worked very well, this private gallery.

MR. BROWN: When you were starting there was it your father who did the presentations and then you would assist?

MR. VOSE: Yes, usually in bringing out paintings from the stockroom and back again. When father got really going, he wasn't satisfied with one person bringing him paintings. It would first be two and then three. All three of us boys would be rushing around, bringing paintings out, getting them from the top floor or wherever they were.

MR. BROWN: He liked assistants, didn't he?

MR. VOSE: He would sit and talk about the paintings.

MR. BROWN: But he liked to have things done for him.

MR. VOSE: Oh yes, he did indeed. He was very energetic himself, but I guess he felt it went better if things were brought in. He could sit there and talk about them. If not, he would do it himself, but there usually was someone there. On the road traveling, of course, he did a great deal himself. When he had one of us with him, there were often as many as 50 or 60 pictures to be unpacked and packed and so forth. We would be doing that. I spent an awful lot of time in the basement of the Statler in Detroit, un-boxing paintings and boxing them again. The same with Atlanta and Savannah.

MR. BROWN: These exhibitions, these traveling exhibitions were standard work - part of the procedure for your father for many years.

MR. VOSE: Yes, indeed they were.

MR. BROWN: They were held in hotels and rooms and also, I think, weren't they in museums?

MR. VOSE: Yes, in those days, a small museum would often welcome - if the standard was high, it would welcome a collection of paintings from an art dealer and would allow them to be hung for sale in the gallery, with a commission to the museum on any sale that was made. This happened, for instance, in Atlanta. I think the first trip I took with my father was to Atlanta, to the High Museum. That went on to the Telfair Academy Museum in Savannah. - I got very ill and stayed in the hospital there. My brother Herbert had to come and take over and go on with Father to Milwaukee and other places.

MR. BROWN: You would travel. You were constantly with your father then on these tours at this time.

MR. VOSE: Yes, but we would take turns. My brother Bob or Herbert would alternate with me. Then, eventually, of course, each one of us would be on our own. I went a great deal to Atlanta, Savannah, to Charlotte, to Memphis, Tennessee.

MR. BROWN: You would have formal openings then, would you?

MR. VOSE: Yes, that's right. The first I recall - one of things, to go back just a moment - perhaps one of the weaknesses in the design of that gallery in Copley Square was, as I look back on it, the entrance and the elevator that one had to take to the second floor. It was too small for one thing. Very often, it would blow a fuse with a load of people aboard. Then, you would have to get ladders and lower them. It just didn't please people very much. I remember a young man - a young artist who had been in Boston and been present when that happened once, and had moved to Savannah. On the first occasion that I went there with my father, they had a grand opening at the Telfair Academy Museum. In the middle of the thing the lights all went out. This fellow called out, "I didn't do it." He remembered the same thing happening in Boston. The fuses sometimes blew. It was very embarrassing.

MR. BROWN: But you had formal openings in Boston, too.

MR. VOSE: Oh, very much so. Yes, we did. They were quite some occasions.

MR. BROWN: Can you recall some of those in your early years there?

MR. VOSE: They went on for a great many years, yes. Father had several very important exhibitions very early, a couple before I came with him. One was the Spanish painter, Ignacio Zuloaga, which made a great splash in Boston. Then, there were several British painters. Sir John Lavery was one exhibition which resulted in a lot of portraits painted here in Boston.

MR. BROWN: Was this before you came?

MR. VOSE: Yes. Of course, I saw them, but before I came there.

MR. BROWN: Did you get to meet him at all, Lavery?

MR. VOSE: I don't recall that I did. I think I would have, but I don't recall that I did. I don't recall meeting Zuloaga either. I met many of the others of course, later on, who came there.

MR. BROWN: How were the openings arranged? What took place? What was your role and your brothers'?

MR. VOSE: There would be a table set up in the reception area of the third floor. Of course, tea, coffee - never until very late did my father have anything to do with any alcoholic beverages. Finally, he agreed to have sherry, but that was later. There were sandwiches that my mother often provided. That was one of the few things she did do with the gallery. - My father was always anxious to have young ladies from the Junior League [missing dialogue]. This was pleasant. We got to meet very interesting people. Then, the exhibition would be in the very large gallery. It was a big one which could accommodate a large number of people. We had a regular role or list of folks who always came. Whether or not they were interested in buying paintings, they enjoyed the festivity and seeing things in the way of paintings. They were pleasant occasions and sometimes they were worthwhile, not always.

MR. BROWN: Yes, I've heard that they weren't always - the receptionists themselves, weren't really your prime means of selling paintings.

MR. VOSE: No, actually of course by that time - the time we are speaking of, the Depression had set in very seriously. I happened to be in the gallery for the summer in 1929. I was still in college. I recall very well standing with my cousin, Charles Thompson, at the window - at the front gallery window on the third floor and the big French windows were open because it was warm - the hearing newsboys shouting, "Bank holiday!" Roosevelt had closed the banks. I remember that very well. Sort of a panic had set in as a result. From then on, of course, sales were very, very tenuous.

MR. BROWN: But they had been. - Into the early '30s, the sales had been quite good.

MR. VOSE: '32 was about the last of the good ones. For some reason, there seemed to be a lag, a lag in recovery too, at the other end. All through the years from then on until the early '40s, it was very difficult. It amazes me today, to go into the galleries and see what my nephews are doing. Terry mentioned to me yesterday that they had sold 44 paintings in June. If we had sold that many in a year in those days, we would have been quite astonished. I remember having very important paintings still in stock several years after we had purchased them. This doesn't happen today. It's difficult to find paintings now.

MR. BROWN: In the '30s can you recall what did sell? What was desired?

MR. VOSE: It is difficult to say. It was pretty general, but very sparse. As to what we handled, at first when I came to the gallery, there was quite a good deal of importation of English portraits of the great school, Gainsborough, Reynolds, Romney, Lawrence, others. One of the first things we were supposed to learn was to distinguish those artists. Dad used to point out that hair, the treatment of hair, was one way in which you could often distinguish Gainsborough. Of course you can, Gainsborough and Reynolds, Romney, and Raeburn. Then, as far as landscape went, we carried the important ones until a little later on and then, you couldn't afford to buy them and you couldn't sell them. We imported a great many of the later nineteenth century English landscape school which were very pleasant and decorative to live with and more affordable, such as William Shayer and Sydney Percy, the Meadows family, the Williamses. I don't know how many of them. Year after year we would import a number of those. These sold fairly well, slowly. Later on, much later on we were much interested in marine paintings, ship portraits and so forth, which perhaps is not as much a fine art thing as an historical thing, but there is quite a market for such things today and has been for years.

MR. BROWN: In the '30s did the Barbizon school people still maintain some fashion?

MR. VOSE: Yes, you could usually sell something like that, but you also would have a hard time buying it in those days.

MR. BROWN: It was hard to find them in Europe or here?

MR. VOSE: Yes, it was hard to buy them - they were not affordable. Then, of course, we were also selling American paintings of the nineteenth century. When possible colonial portraits too, we did a lot of that. Museums were always a large percentage of our customers. Now, I would say we are perhaps more evenly divided.

MR. BROWN: But then it was heavily institutions.

MR. VOSE: Yes, quite a lot.

MR. BROWN: Were people like Ryder or Blakelock and so forth, were they still being sold in the '30s?

MR. VOSE: Oh, they were indeed, yes, much more than now. Ryder still is. Blakelock seems to be out of fashion. I don't know why.

MR. BROWN: With each of them there were problems of fakes and forgeries and the like, weren't there?

MR. VOSE: With both of those and with George Inness also.

MR. BROWN: Inness continued to be a steady seller.

MR. VOSE: Absolutely. My father was enthusiastic, as I have been, always with Inness. But, well, Inness actually is so faked that you have to be tremendously careful. I think it is easier to fake a Ryder than anything else, probably. It is fairly difficult to tell a good fake Ryder from a genuine one. Blakelock, as you say, was much faked. Even, sorry to say, by one of his children. Marian of course, was a painter herself.

MR. BROWN: His wife?

MR. VOSE: No, his daughter.

MR. BROWN: His daughter, Marian?

MR. VOSE: Yes. I believe that I have heard that one of his sons sometimes faked Marian's - obliterated Marian's signature and added Ralph's signature to them. They were very similar.

MR. BROWN: Would you in those days, find experts? Did you have experts you could call on who would look things over that you were considering purchasing?

MR. VOSE: Yes, but one had to rely pretty well on one's own judgment.

MR. BROWN: But there were some people, some experts?

MR. VOSE: In the case of Ryder there was - oh, a gentleman still living.

MR. BROWN: Lloyd Goodrich?

MR. VOSE: Yes, Lloyd Goodrich. He was a very well considered expert of Ryder. For Blakelock, my father, I think really was the top expert. Now, of course, Norman Geskey in Nebraska has done a great deal. I see that other people are writing on Blakelock. Although, as far as sales go, Blakelock does not seem to be talked about now as he was. Father sold a great many of them.

MR. BROWN: What about the French Impressionists? Were they ever handled by your father?

MR. VOSE: Father's idea of modernism included the Impressionists. He didn't like them at all. He said - what he used to say was that their method was too obvious. He didn't care for that. It is very interesting to consider that he didn't care for the Impressionists and yet - he liked Benson and Tarbell, Decamp. He didn't care for Paxton at all. He thought he was too slick.

MR. BROWN: These various Americans were somewhat derived from French Impressionism.

MR. VOSE: But now they think that Paxton - you know Impressionism is a term that has been expanded, in my estimation, way beyond what it was originally intended to be. My father would be astounded if anyone referred to Frank Benson as an Impressionist. This was not his idea of Impressionism. Impressionist was a bad word in his vocabulary. I might mention one little anecdote which would seem astonishing today. I happened to be up in the gallery one day, the big gallery, on duty. A lady came in. She said, "I'm Mrs. Paxton." It was Elizabeth Oakie Paxton, the wife of the painter, who was a painter, of course, herself. "I'd like to speak with Mr. Vose." I had heard about her and I was very impressed. I went down to see my father on the next floor. He was busy writing at his desk. I said, "Mrs. Paxton is upstairs to see you." He kept right on writing and wasn't paying much attention. I said, "You know, Mrs. Paxton is waiting for you." He finally put down his pen, sat back and said, "If there is one worse painter in Boston than she, that's her husband." I don't know whether you want to keep that remark or not.

MR. BROWN: He had really little respect for some of these prominent Boston painters.

MR. VOSE: He used to like to quote a derogatory remark that was made especially about Paxton. "A near Vermeer is a mere veneer." Father used to quote that.

[END OF TAPE ONE SIDE B]

[S.M. VOSE, TAPE TWO SIDE A]

MR. BROWN: The inventory then when you came into the firm was still a thorough mix of English, French, and early American, and a few recent, or even contemporary.

MR. VOSE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: Do you recall some of the contemporary artists who came around in the '30s? You've mentioned Seyffert the portrait painter.

MR. VOSE: Yes, indeed. Of course, Alfred Jonniaux was one my father was very enthused about, the Belgian painter.

MR. BROWN: A portrait painter, right?

MR. VOSE: Yes, he did a great many portraits in Boston for us. I think only one governor, but a great many others. We had a number of exhibitions and openings for him. For instance, Paul Sample was one we handled a great deal.

MR. BROWN: And you got to know him in the '30s, as early as the '30s?

MR. VOSE: Yes and then up through - he didn't die until the '60s some time. He was a good friend of mine. John Whorf, for instance, we handled. We were his agents for a number of years.

MR. BROWN: Was he easy to work with?

MR. VOSE: Yes, if you went along with his ideas. John was nobody to be fooled with. Did you know him at all?

MR. BROWN: No. What ideas were there that -

MR. VOSE: No, I'll just give you an anecdote which will give you some idea. Hermann Dudley Murphy was one of my father's great friends, the artist. Of course, he was the founder of the Carrig-Rohane Shop, which we took over afterwards. We used to be the agents for the Boston Society of water color painters for a number of years because we had the biggest available gallery for exhibitions. This meant that it was usually I who had to come in on a Sunday morning and open the place up so that the hanging committee could arrange the exhibition. We had to hang it, but they would arrange it and also decide on the prices and so forth. On a particular occasion, the hanging committee consisted of Hermann Dudley Murphy, who was the chairman and John Whorf and I've forgotten who the others were. They arrived there and then waited. John Whorf did not appear. It got to be half an hour late and finally Mr. Murphy said, "Here, get me Whorf on the phone." I called John Whorf's number and he answered apparently quite sleepily. Mr. Murphy in quite an irate tone said, "We've been kept waiting half an hour already. What time are you going to get here?" Whorf said something, and Murphy exclaimed, "What? - What!" and hung the phone up. Apparently, Mr. Whorf was not about to be told to come and hang the exhibition. He was his own master. He was a very excellent water colorist, but of course, he was also eclectic, shall we say.

MR. BROWN: He is known to have derived or looked at other people, for example - Sargent's work.

MR. VOSE: Yes, and a number of others too, you could almost recognize, but you didn't say that to John.

MR. BROWN: Nevertheless, he was a steady seller wasn't he?

MR. VOSE: Oh yes, right along, steadily. He finally left us for another gallery when they told him they would guarantee him sales which would amount to so much each year. He said, "Well, how about it boys?" to us. We said, "Well, we've done better than that usually, but not always. We can't predict." He said, "Okay, good-bye," and he left us.

MR. BROWN: He was a little prickly to deal with at times.

MR. VOSE: If he didn't have his own way he was angry. There were a number of others of course.

MR. BROWN: What about Murphy? You just mentioned your father's good friend.

MR. VOSE: Oh yes, we saw a great deal of him.

MR. BROWN: He was considerably older.

MR. VOSE: Yes, that's right. He was a fine painter as you probably know. He used to bother me as a small child

very much. I didn't think that it was appropriate that a great Irish giant with a red beard should paint delicate still life paintings, peonies in crystal vases and so forth. It didn't seem appropriate.

MR. BROWN: It seemed very peculiar.

MR. VOSE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: Of course, you would never dare ask him, I guess as a small child.

MR. VOSE: No.

MR. BROWN: Was he fairly brusque and formidable?

MR. VOSE: Yes, he had his own mind, certainly. He was a strong man. His wife was a nice delicate painter too.

MR. BROWN: Would someone like Murphy come to dinner at your house occasionally?

MR. VOSE: He came down to Jamestown, Rhode Island, over a weekend, I recall, with his wife. Yes, they were quite familiar friends. He was, perhaps, my father's closest Boston artist friend. He had many on the west coast, whom I didn't know because it was always my brother Bob who went to California with him.

MR. BROWN: How about Paul Sample. You mentioned him - a pretty good seller?

MR. VOSE: Oh yes, he was. At first my cousin, Charles Thompson, handled his work. After Charlie passed away, I did. I got along very well with Paul and sold a great many things for him. I liked his work.

MR. BROWN: I'd like to get back to when you first came on, the routine of the business day. When did it start? You mentioned the various duties and various things that had to be done. When would you arrive?

MR. VOSE: Well it started - it was a nine to five business day and usually a little extended both ways. Of course, originally we would all four of us take the car and drive to Boston, my father and his three sons. Gradually, we got married and we arrived at work individually. This went on until World War II when my brother Herbert went over seas. Bob and I were mortified being declared 4F's, which I still think was ridiculous, but we were. Herbert decided that he would not return to the art business - he had always been interested in photography. He didn't come back to the gallery. He became a fine-arts photographer. He did all of our gallery work, of course.

MR. BROWN: You mentioned that on the third floor there was a work room. What was that all about?

MR. VOSE: For instance, you might have to set a painting in a frame or perhaps repair damage to frames. That kind of thing was done there.

MR. BROWN: Did you have men who did this?

MR. VOSE: Yes. There was one, a Scotchman, named Huey Cameron, who was with us for many, many years. I don't believe you ever knew him.

MR. BROWN: No, I've heard of him.

MR. VOSE: Later on he and Cliff Speed had a shop together where they did that kind of thing. It was a general work room for taking care of things.

MR. BROWN: Huey Cameron, what was he like, the Scotsman who was with you?

MR. VOSE: Huey Cameron was one of the unforgettable characters of my business career. I'm sure of my brother Bob's, too. Huey was a little Scotsman who had been through a pretty rough experience in World War I with the Argyle and Sutherland Highlanders, in the British Army. Immediately afterwards he came here and after several tries around, ended up with the Vose Gallery. He was a real cog in the operation for a great many years, doing most everything. He would even do minimal cleaning of pictures. He had had some experience with that, relining pictures and that kind of thing. Setting up and doing all sorts of jobs - he could touch up frames. Of course, we had the frame shop which was in an entirely different location.

MR. BROWN: Yes, I want to maybe talk about that separately a little bit.

MR. VOSE: Now and then Huey would go out on picture hanging exhibitions with one or the other of us.

MR. BROWN: Was he rather colorful of speech?

MR. VOSE: He was, he was indeed. He and another chap who really was sort of the building superintendent - we

called him Butch Raymond - they teamed up together. They were really a comical pair. You had them together - I remember one time I was out hanging some paintings for a lady who had bought them, with this Butch Raymond along to assist me. The lady had a little lap dog, which was kind of yappy, that she was continually talking to in a loving way. She went off to get something out of the room. Butch Raymond whacked his thigh with a loud whack and said, "Morton, stop hitting that dog." She comes running back in to defend her dog. It was this kind of thing. It sort of lightened the day, even if it perhaps, interrupted things a bit.

MR. BROWN: But they were very skilled, both men.

MR. VOSE: Oh, indeed.

MR. BROWN: Packing and shipping.

MR. VOSE: Butch was a skilled packer. He did all that sort of thing. We did almost everything there at that time - packing, shipping and with the shop, frame making.

MR. BROWN: Did your father keep close tabs on everything? Would he go down occasionally to see to the job or the workmen?

MR. VOSE: Oh yes.

MR. BROWN: He was sort of a captain on the bridge.

MR. VOSE: Very much so. He was very meticulous about packing. For instance you might have 40 or 50 paintings to be packed. It was a large shipping room downstairs and a big back up of boxes - empty boxes to be used. My father had them all numbered, one, two, three and so forth. There must have been 20 or 30 of them there. Some would have to be built new. He would have a list with the numbers and the sizes for the boxes. During packing of an exhibition like that, it would be quite a wild situation. Father would sometimes say to me, "Don't go out to lunch. Don't have any lunch today. Just keep right on packing."

MR. BROWN: This was when you were going on the road?

MR. VOSE: Yes. He would be sitting at his desk upstairs and continually getting on the intercom and saying, "Don't put this picture in that box. You better take another one." Huey and Butch would go absolutely wild. They had to go through everything and unpack. Then, he would be annoyed because they hadn't got as much done as he expected. I remember one time Huey came up and delivered himself of what he thought was his objection to injustice.

MR. BROWN: To your father?

MR. VOSE: They hadn't really got much work done. He said, "How could we? You kept stopping us and starting us up again."

MR. BROWN: You would assist in some of this?

MR. VOSE: Oh yes.

MR. BROWN: You and your brothers.

MR. VOSE: Yes, I spent a lot of time in the basement packing. The facilities were really quite well planned there for that sort of thing. There was a huge table with an enormous guillotine-like knife, with which you could cut the cardboards that were to fit in the boxes. Then, the back door opened out to the alley where the railway express trucks - which we always used in those days, would come and load them. Since there were some quite steep and short stairs that went up there, there was a big slide, which you could move over - which you could move over the stairs and then block and tackle above with hooks. You simply hooked onto -

MR. BROWN: The crate?

MR. VOSE: The crate, with a sling around it, and then haul and you could take the thing up to the back alley, were the express men would get it. Otherwise, coming down, you had to be careful that the express men wouldn't just leave the crate at the top and shoot it down the slide. You would be there to greet him and hook the sling on and let it down gently. I recall one horrible occasion when we got the box all packed and we couldn't find a hammer that somebody had been using. The next day, the truck arrived and we started to heave this big crate end over end to get it to the slide. There seemed to be a clank, clank inside. We realized where the hammer had gone. This was not what you wanted. Of course, over the years this sort of thing did happen. I recall an occasion on the top floor where we had the little studio and the work room. Between the studio and the work room was a very small stockroom, where we had some paintings and racks. There was a door at each end. You

would come from the work room and go through this little stock room and out another door into the studio. On this occasion, it was perhaps while my brother Herbert was overseas - he hadn't started to photograph then - we had a professional photographer come in. As I recall, it was a Gainsborough portrait and it had glass on it, in the old fashioned way. I happened to go up there and he had set it up on an easel chair, right back to the - in the studio - back up to the door, which opened from the stock room. I ventured to say, "Don't you think we might move it one way or the other a little bit because someone might come through that door." He said, "Am I doing this or are you?" I, stupidly, let it go at that. I was down on the next floor when I heard a great crash. It turned out that he had gone to get a drink of water in the lavatory, which is off the work room and then he came through these two doors and had done exactly what I thought would happen. The glass was smashed. Fortunately, nothing did happen to the painting.

MR. BROWN: Your way of - the firm's way then of doing business - with customers you would spend a good deal of time explaining the merits of something?

MR. VOSE: Yes, and then very often, take the painting to the customer's home and hang it up and then I would be prepared with a light to place over it.

MR. BROWN: Was most of the stock owned by the galleries or was some on consignment?

MR. VOSE: Oh yes, there was always a good deal on consignment as well as a good deal owned. There was quite a mix of things. Usually, the more contemporary pictures were consigned by the artists and we sold them on commission. Older things we usually purchased. Although, very expensive ones, you very often would simply have on consignment, to sell on commission.

MR. BROWN: Was the commission fairly small on consignment? You had the risk of a fairly high ticket item didn't you?

MR. VOSE: Yes, it depended. Twenty-five percent was a fairly standard thing. Although, if it got to be a very large price, then it would go down. You couldn't ask 25 percent of thousands of dollars. It did go down to ten percent, sometimes depending. We had originally been doing business at 20 percent and our auditors told us we were not making any money with the overhead and the taxes and so forth at that rate.

MR. BROWN: Was this back in the '30s that they told you this?

MR. VOSE: Yes, right.

MR. BROWN: Was your father willing to go up or did he realize he had to?

MR. VOSE: Yes, he really had to.

MR. BROWN: What about - apart from consignments from the contemporary artists, who would they come from primarily?

MR. VOSE: From owners very often - even the museums that were de-accessioning would sometimes do this.

MR. BROWN: Did they do that very quietly in those days?

MR. VOSE: Yes, as you well know, there was quite a little feeling about that. You would try to be discreet, shall we say, about that.

MR. BROWN: What about arrangements with other dealers, both in Boston and elsewhere? Can you mention some of those that you recall from the '30s? Were they fairly frequent?

MR. VOSE: You mean to say dealings with other dealers"

MR. BROWN: Other dealers, yes.

MR. VOSE: Yes, oh yes. That was very common as a matter of fact. If you had a customer for something which you didn't have, you might very well have inquired around, both in Boston and New York to see whether someone else had one they were willing to consign. This happened very frequently as a matter of fact. Mostly - I guess I should say that our relations with the dealers in Boston were perfectly friendly in most cases, but there were rivals. Father, in the early days, was convinced that you really should be quite secretive about your business - much more than we feel necessary to do today. I remember that Miss Sibbie Marsh, whom we mentioned earlier, who had been with my grandfather, was serious about it. If she heard any member of the firm mention a customer or a price in someone else's hearing, someone from outside, she would say, "Shhh, you don't do that." Things that we, today, don't feel you have to be secretive about at all.

MR. BROWN: But your father felt that that was a good way to protect the firm.

MR. VOSE: Yes, very much so. Then, in New York - or for instance, in Boston there were, after my father had the Copley Square gallery built, I would say we were the leading firm in Boston for quite a while. There had been, of course, firms earlier in Boston, at least before we had any building there except my grandfather's rather temporary place. There was Williams and Everett, and J. Eastman Chase, and then Doll & Richards had been there for years. Williams and Everett and Chase of course, were gone by the time I came on the scene.

MR. BROWN: They were gone by the time you were there?

MR. VOSE: Yes, they were gone.

MR. BROWN: Doll & Richards, was that something of a rival to Vose?

MR. VOSE: That was something of a rival, but they were older in Boston, not older in history.

MR. BROWN: But in Boston, they had been there longer?

MR. VOSE: They had been much longer. When I was first at the gallery, there was only Dudley Richards, Mr. Doll had died. Dudley Richards I guess was the older man who died soon afterwards. His son, I've forgotten his first name, was a forester. He owned the business, but it was run by others. He used to come in occasionally. I remember, they said - the forester used to come in and throw all the windows open and freeze them all to death.

MR. BROWN: Were they doing - was their stock in trade parallel to your own?

MR. VOSE: Very parallel, yes.

MR. BROWN: European and American.

MR. VOSE: Yes, a good deal - I think more of a percentage of American things. They were always doing good business. Then, very shortly afterwards the Childs Gallery started with Charles Childs himself, Charlie.

MR. BROWN: He was a major salesman wasn't he?

MR. VOSE: He certainly was and he was a very considerable rival. Then, I would say as the Depression deepened, Childs was perhaps equal, certainly equal, to Doll & Richards. For some reason, I suppose it was because of a succession of owners, Doll & Richards finally disappeared. In New York, we had good relations with a number of galleries. Others we didn't care for quite as much.

MR. BROWN: Who were some of the people you dealt with very amicably in New York?

MR. VOSE: Certainly, there was M. Knoedler & Co. it was - pronounced differently, we always called it Nodler. Others use the German Knoedler pronunciation. It is still going, but a very different firm then it was when I knew it and different owners entirely. It was a very, very fine firm. Their gallery, their building was a beautiful place.

MR. BROWN: With whom did you work there in the 1930s?

MR. VOSE: The director there was Mr. Henschel at that time, but there were a number of others - they had quite a large staff of people. I'm trying to think - Bill Davidson was the one whom I saw more than any other, although there were quite a few other people there. There were other dealers. The Milch Gallery was a prominent dealer in American paintings, as was Macbeth. Macbeth is of course famous for being one of the first dealers in purely American art.

MR. BROWN: Did you know the younger Macbeth?

MR. VOSE: No, well, yes. I knew Bob Macbeth. I knew Bob Macbeth and Bob McIntyre who, was his partner, and who succeeded him.

MR. BROWN: What was Bob Macbeth like? Can you describe him?

MR. VOSE: Physically?

MR. BROWN: Temperamentally, personality.

MR. VOSE: He was a fairly short, round faced fellow. That's about all I can tell you because most of my dealing there was with Bob McIntyre because it was just about the end of Bob Macbeth's life that I began to know the place.

MR. BROWN: McIntyre, what was he like?

MR. VOSE: He was somewhat similar. They went well together. He was a fairly crusty guy actually. I did business with him. My father didn't like him as I remember. I think he expressed that fact at one time.

MR. BROWN: Why, because he was too brusque?

MR. VOSE: I think that probably was it. He just expressed the fact that he didn't like him. I got on well with him. It was, I think too bad that that firm was allowed to go under, but it did.

MR. BROWN: Their dealing with your firm were very straight and straight forward?

MR. VOSE: Oh yes, surely.

MR. BROWN: The same applied to Knoedler as well?

MR. VOSE: Knoedler's was just top notch.

MR. BROWN: What was Bill Davidson like? Can you describe him?

MR. VOSE: He was a short guy. He was very, very humorous, a nice fellow. There were others we did some business with.

MR. BROWN: Was Milch a good gallery to work with?

MR. VOSE: Yes, indeed. There were two brothers there. One of them concentrated more on prints. I never can remember - Eddie and Albert - which was which. I knew them both quite well. In later days, the surviving Milch boy - I don't know whether the other one died, but he retired anyway, was like my father. He very much enjoyed sitting and talking about old times. I learned quite a lot by listening to him. He had a most wonderful Brooklyn Hungarian Jewish accent, which made it colorful. I remember his remarking that somebody had suggested that - I've forgotten the exact - I really don't remember the exact story except that a museum committee, after seeing a picture at Milch's gallery, later went directly to the artist to buy it, avoiding Milch's commission. - He said, "I told him, 'Yous is thieves already.'" He really had a wonderful eye for American paintings.

MR. BROWN: Earlier as well as recent?

MR. VOSE: Yes, but he dealt mainly with the living artists. He tried to deal with Winslow Homer. He told me about that, but he said that Homer was stand offish. He said, "When I heard that he was holed up at Prout's Neck, I went up there in the middle of the winter. I got a cab. I went out on Prout's Neck in the cab until the cab was stuck in the snow. Then, I waded through the snow up to my hips. I pounded on the door. 'Who is there?' I said, 'It's Mr. Milch from the Milch Gallery. I want to talk to you, Mr. Homer.' He said, 'Go away.' That was the last I heard of him."

MR. BROWN: Was the New York gallery scene and the kinds of things they delved in, do you think a bit different from Boston? Can you compare the two in the '30s?

MR. VOSE: There were, of course, galleries -

MR. BROWN: Were the tastes different? There were many more in New York.

MR. VOSE: There were many more and they also differed in their specialties. It is so entirely different today that I don't recognize it. I was very familiar with New York in the '30s, and '40s, and '50s. 57th Street, East and West were the places you went for art dealers. Now, of course, it is all way up on 82nd Street and beyond.

MR. BROWN: But then you probably knew or were acquainted with a very high percentage of the galleries.

MR. VOSE: That's true, yes. I didn't mention - I started to say something - I can't.

MR. BROWN: Graham was a gallery that you worked with.

MR. VOSE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: That's been a family firm for some time.

MR. VOSE: Indeed it has. We still see them. I was in there recently. Lesley Larkin of our staff and I went in there last season to talk with Bob Graham. I've written him about things, research and such.

MR. BROWN: Did you in your dealings, way back when you were in the '30s - in the '30s, I assume of course, your

father was initiating a lot of this.

MR. VOSE: Oh yes.

MR. BROWN: Were there a number of dealers that he warned you to stay shy of?

MR. VOSE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: And that he had gotten burned?

MR. VOSE: Oh yes, but I don't know that one should go into that.

MR. BROWN: You can mention a bit about it, I hope. This is mainly where they reneged on arrangements and agreements, I suppose.

MR. VOSE: He had one particular hatred in the art field and that was for - we shouldn't go into these things.

MR. BROWN: This is years later.

MR. VOSE: I could tell you what the thing was. He had consigned a large number of paintings to a New York dealer who - if I can get this straight in my mind - the idea was that anyway, he failed. He went bankrupt. His pictures were all sold off at a bankruptcy sale. Why it wasn't possible to recover those, I don't know. I think, I remember my father saying that I came out under a cloud because the day I was born he read that this man had gone bankrupt and that one of his chief clients had died. He never forgot this.

MR. BROWN: He would throw this back.

MR. VOSE: You could probably cut this out if you want to, but he always blamed a man - I can't think of his name - who purchased a whole lot of those pictures.

MR. BROWN: Including ones that had been consigned by your father?

MR. VOSE: Oh yes, he never forgot that. I was with my father one day in New York to attend an auction. Father was very serious about attending important auctions in New York. Of course, when I first started here it was the American Art Association, then eventually Park Bernett. Both of those gentlemen I knew very well. Then, Sotheby took over. A group of dealers, including father and I, stopped at a little restaurant, to get some supper before we went to the auction.

MR. VOSE: That particular dealer walked in. My father said, "Come on," and we got up and walked out. He would never have anything to do with him at all.

MR. BROWN: It seems that I was right, where somebody had burned him once, there was no telling whether they might not do it again. Is that right?

MR. VOSE: Of course, the thing was that - I'm not so sure because I once heard that dealer defend it, saying that he just went to an auction where pictures were sold and he bought them. He didn't know whose they were or anything. I think that that was a little bit - he should have - on finding out about it, there should have been something done. That was one thing my father would never forgive. He did lose really a large amount of money on that particular bankruptcy.

MR. BROWN: Auctions were something that you would go to with your father fairly early?

MR. VOSE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: What was the reasoning? Why did he go to auctions? Was it simply a chance to find more things?

MR. VOSE: Oh indeed, yes.

MR. BROWN: Good prices, usually?

MR. VOSE: Yes. To give you an idea, he often told me that when his father died, he had to have the funeral in the morning because there was an important auction that night in New York and he knew that his father would have been very distressed if he hadn't attended it. So he did. He felt that to let any important auction go by was a great mistake. - I remember one time that for some reason I was in New York and there was going to be an important auction, but there was another thing. I've forgotten what it was entirely - some business thing that I thought it would be wiser to do. Father was very annoyed. "You should have been at the auction."

MR. BROWN: Was he an aggressive bidder?

MR. VOSE: Oh yes.

MR. BROWN: How does he proceed in an auction?

MR. VOSE: Yes, he was an aggressive bidder.

MR. BROWN: He would have looked very carefully and discussed and thought about it?

MR. VOSE: He would have gone beforehand to the -

MR. BROWN: Viewings.

MR. VOSE: And discussed it. Often, I went with him or my brothers did. He would explain what he felt. It was very embarrassing sometimes to me to go with him to museums because he was very often interested in explaining something. "Do you see this? This has a repainting." He would be waving his hand and pointing. A guard would rush up and say, "Sir, you are not allowed to touch the paintings." Of course, he wasn't, but he was pointing out various aspects of the work.

MR. BROWN: Very close.

MR. VOSE: Yes, that sort of thing. This happened very often. I remember at the Fogg Museum one time, he was doing that and the guard had just rushed up and - I don't know whether it was Forbes. No - it was Mr. Sax who walked in and said, "How do you do, Mr. Vose," and the guard disappeared. He was very, very anxious to have us understand exactly. I remember one of the very early things - and I've used this in lectures sometimes - to indicate the extraordinary advance that has been made in research in American art history since I first went into business there. My father took me to a well known Museum one time, of which I now have been a member for many years. I use this in showing slides. They would have to be, of course, slides of similar paintings of the same artists. These were portraits. My father said, "Now, read the captions on the name plates on the paintings. Almost all of them are John Singleton Copley. John Singleton Copley. John Singleton Copley. Now, go back and walk down and tell me if you think the same artist painted all these." I thought now. He said, "Of course not." Today, that museum is a wonderful repository of scholarship, but it wasn't then. These paintings were done by people like Blackburn and Smibert and even Badger, and so forth. They were all labeled John Singleton Copley. It was the easiest thing to do at that time.

MR. BROWN: I suppose for an institution such as that, in those days, their art holdings were merely ancillary weren't they?

MR. VOSE: I think that is the reason that no attention had been given to them. Today, of course, it is not true. It is a wonderful - their catalogues are -

MR. BROWN: In the '30s, the study of American art was still very limited wasn't it?

MR. VOSE: Absolutely, yes.

MR. BROWN: I asked you about what experts you called upon. There could have been probably very few at that time.

MR. VOSE: Very few. Fred Sweet probably was the first person to put on an exhibition, a scholarly exhibition of - the Hudson River School - at that time.

MR. BROWN: What about for colonial portraits, a then young Louisa Dresser had made some breakthroughs at Worcester.

MR. VOSE: She certainly did.

MR. BROWN: Did you rely on her?

MR. VOSE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: Would you call on her for advice?

MR. VOSE: Yes. At that time, Frank Bailey was very active in Boston.

MR. BROWN: Did you ever meet him?

MR. VOSE: I knew him very well. I remember my father telling me that Bailey had a big reputation - and of course, he had done some interesting work. He made a breakthrough on Joseph Blackburn, the portrait painter.

Nobody knew his first name, J. Blackman. They thought it was John. He had actually discovered in Newburyport the advertisement of a letter in an old newspaper. People would write just to Newburyport and then the paper would advertise that there was a letter waiting. He found one there waiting for Joseph Blackburn the painter and that established his name.

MR. BROWN: So he had done some serious work.

MR. VOSE: Oh yes. My father mentioned that he had been offered a Blackburn by somebody and he consulted him to see if - consulted - whom?

MR. BROWN: Frank Bailey.

MR. VOSE: Frank Bailey, to see if he agreed and he did. He said yes, so my father bought it. Then, he had it hanging in the gallery and Bailey came in. My father said, "It is a fine Blackburn isn't it?" He said, "No." He said, "Why?" "Because Blackburn never saw it." Father said, "I didn't say anything to Bailey." You had to watch out for some people, unfortunately.

MR. BROWN: Bailey would attribute something and then he would forget what he had said.

MR. VOSE: He must have forgotten, but - his expertise was not very good if that is the case. I'm sorry to say that he didn't have a good reputation in general, after a while. Talking about Karolik. There was one other client who was very much out of the ordinary and of whom I guess we haven't spoken much about at all. His name was James N. B. Hill. You may know the name.

MR. BROWN: Yes.

MR. VOSE: He was a rather unusual person. He was extremely wealthy. He was a grandson of the empire builder, James J. Hill, of Minneapolis, the railroad builder and so forth. He had inherited a tremendous sum of money. He was a bachelor, at least by any legal connections. He was a great Francophile, particularly a lover of French military history and anything to do with the French military. I think this started when he was in the Naval Reserve - he had lived in France for some time. He spoke French perfectly. During World War I, he was an American naval reserve officer. I don't know how this happened but he was attached as a liaison to a French infantry unit and became very familiar with French military practice and so forth. He became a great collector of what I used to call the French military school of the red pants - the Franco-Prussian war uniforms and history. For some extraordinary reason - considering that the Franco-Prussian war didn't go very happily for the French - the French painters produced a tremendous number of documentary paintings of that episode and he collected those avidly. Artists such as Berne-Bellecour, Detaille, Alphonse de Neuville - Meissonier, of course, comes a little earlier than that. There were others, too, whom he cherished and collected. The strange thing was that he didn't keep them himself. Having assembled a group, he would ship them to France as a gift to the Musee de l'Armee in Paris and he would receive a beautiful letter in French from Monsieur le General, who happened to be the director - a retired general and the director at that time. I guess I must have sold him close to one hundred of these paintings which were quite affordable. They were not tremendously popular as collector's items in American at that time. Many of them were in museum basements in storage spaces. He realized that and he urged me to explore those areas, which I did with some success and he himself did also. He would come to see us whenever I had one to show him and buy it if he liked it, and direct us to put it aside until he had a number. Then, we packed them up and sent them abroad. Of course, he could not take any sort of tax deduction for a gift to a foreign museum, so it didn't do him any good. But, he didn't have to worry because he was immensely wealthy. He was a character. Not in the same way that Maxim Karolik was, but he loved to tell all sorts of stories about interesting exploits, which had occurred and in which he was involved in France. Most of them I swallowed with a whole cloth at the time, only to find out later, that some of them you could find in books in his library. However, he had inherited some really fine paintings from his grandfather, French paintings, not of a military nature. He had - let's see - a beautiful Corot, a really fine Corot, a small portrait of a peasant woman at a well, which was extremely valuable even then and would be tremendously so now. He had some landscapes - a great big Daubigny. There were two or three others, I forget which ones - which he didn't have any personal interest in at all. He felt that since they were his grandfather's he ought to keep them. He paid me to keep them in storage for him. I kept urging him to put them on loan, at least, to a museum or somewhere where they would be appreciated. He didn't see any point in that.

[END OF TAPE TWO SIDE A]

[S.M. VOSE, TAPE TWO SIDE B]

MR. VOSE: The very strange thing is that at his death, it was found that he had left all his paintings, all his French paintings, to the Louvre, which needed them about like a hole in the head. He might have done something quite nice by leaving them either to the Museum of Fine Arts or other museums here in this country, but no, he left them to the Louvre. There was quite a little talk about this. I've forgotten exactly how it worked,

but there was some doubt that this really was his intention. I had to make the deposition that I had known Mr. Hill for a number of years and represented him in a business way and had very frequently heard him speak of his affection for France and so forth, so there was no doubt about is intentions. He was a strange man and an unfortunate one. I think he was not a very happy person, but he did enjoy giving these paintings especially to the Musee de l'Armee. I supposed that perhaps they put them in the basement there, but when my older daughter was to travel in France one time, I asked if she would make a point of calling at the museum. She dropped me a line saying that yes indeed, they had a whole wall of these with a placard in the middle saying that they were "Don de Monsieur J.M.B. Hill de Boston." At least his wish was carried out.

MR. BROWN: He was extraordinary in the sense that he was a very different and a good customer.

MR. VOSE: He was a good customer from my point of view. I didn't always agree with his ideas. I wish he had given the Corot to the Museum, but he didn't even see any reason for doing other than storing those paintings. It didn't interest him.

MR. BROWN: Did people like John Spaulding the Boston collector and impressionist - did he come around the gallery at all?

MR. VOSE: Yes, we used to see him quite often. Unfortunately, we didn't usually have much of what was of interest to him. He and people like Desmond Fitzgerald of Brookline - who is quite forgotten today unfortunately - his little museum is still right down here in Brookline and now a church.

MR. BROWN: He had his own museum here?

MR. VOSE: In my childhood very often, we'd be driving by that little building and my father would say, "There is Mr. Fitzgerald's museum." There is another case for, I think, some regret. He offered that collection to the Town of Brookline if they would maintain it - agree to maintain it. The Brookline Selectmen had no interest whatever in doing it. It was dispersed, which is too bad. He was one of the very early Boston collectors who was interested in the French Impressionists and post Impressionists, too, actually. He was one of those along with several others who were farsighted as far as collecting went in Boston.

MR. BROWN: Do you recall other clients of your early years who were similarly farsighted or fairly adventurous?

MR. VOSE: There were certainly others. I'm trying to think. They don't come to mind immediately as to names. I can think of one other gentleman - I can't think of his name at the moment - I used to see him with Mr. Spaulding. I don't remember his name unfortunately.

MR. BROWN: Did you ever know Denman Ross?

MR. VOSE: Very well.

MR. BROWN: He taught at Harvard still at the time you were there.

MR. VOSE: Yes. Of course, he was a painter, too.

MR. BROWN: And a major collector.

MR. VOSE: Yes. I remember very well that the Museum of Fine Arts had a celebration party for his eightieth birthday. My father was very anxious - he was invited - very anxious to be present indeed. He kept telling me in the morning, "Now, don't forget. Keep the time in mind. Tell me when I should start to go up there." I don't know what time it was, but he went. About half an hour later, Denman Ross came strolling into the gallery. I said, "Why, Mr. Ross, isn't this the day for your birthday party?" "Oh yes. That's the last place I want to be."

MR. BROWN: What was he like? Can you describe him?

MR. VOSE: Yes, he was a very quiet man and of course, very elderly when I knew him. We had an exhibition of still lifes by the Armenian artist Hovsep Pushman, painted here in this country - pictures which to our mind were extremely beautiful and very meticulous still lifes. My father was anxious to have Mr. Ross look at them. This was when he was very, very old. He did appear with a young man who used to go around with him. After looking around he said, "Well, considering what has been done with still life, I don't see much to say about these," which disappointed us very much. I still think that Pushman had really extraordinary abilities.

MR. BROWN: Was Pushman an artist you knew?

MR. VOSE: Yes. We made, I think, two or three exhibitions of his work in the gallery, in the big gallery in Copley Square. He used to be there. Yes, I think I did know most of the - certainly most of the Boston artists of that era and many of the New York ones too.

MR. BROWN: In the '30s when he came to this country, you began showing the paintings of the Russian, Iacovleff.

MR. VOSE: Iacovleff, he was one of my great enthusiasms.

MR. BROWN: Why was that?

MR. VOSE: He was an extraordinary draughtsman, to my mind. You probably know his work. He had been engaged by William James, who was then the head of the Museum School, to teach drawing and painting there, which he did for about three years to great acclaim. People who were his pupils still talk about what an extraordinary teacher he was. He also was very much of a rage in Boston for portraits done in conté crayon, peoples' heads and so forth. It seems to me regrettable that he is very little heard of today. There is a little revival, I think, of interest in him, but not very much. He had been the artist engaged by the Citroen Motor Company expedition across Asia, which later was published in the National Geographic, almost a whole issue. He did the most wonderful life portraits of ethnic characters in central Asia, Afghanistan and so forth, which I found fascinating. Later on, he changed his style somewhat and became quite modern, but died just after he left Boston, a year afterwards in Paris, of cancer. I remember him very well. He was an interesting man.

MR. BROWN: Did he sell fairly well?

MR. VOSE: Yes, at that time he did. Yes, indeed. I was delighted when I was able to buy, very recently, from an antique shop, only just a few years ago, two of those studies of Afghan characters which I had admired tremendously, when we had the exhibition I couldn't think of affording them. I have them now here in the living room, a reminder of those days.

MR. BROWN: You said a little earlier that a great percentage of your customers were museums.

MR. VOSE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: Were there particular museum people that you got to know even in your early days or was your father mainly the person who mostly dealt with them?

MR. VOSE: No, we dealt with them also. We got to know personnel all over the country as a matter of fact, during the time that I was with the business. Bob, my brother, continued to travel quite a bit, though he is now retired. I think his retirement is only semi.

MR. BROWN: In the '30s, you were traveling in the southeastern states, fairly small museums there, but you mentioned also Detroit.

MR. VOSE: That's right.

MR. BROWN: That was a large new museum. Did you get to know its director and so forth quite well?

MR. VOSE: Yes, a succession of them. When we first used to go there, Wilhelm Valentiner was the director. He was a German museum man, who had left this country to go back and to fight in the German army in World War I and then returned and continued as director of the Detroit museum. He, I remember as a man who had a tremendous eye for Dutch seventeenth century painting. I recall that on one occasion my father and I had among other things taken a Dutch seventeenth century painting by a very obscure small - so called "little" - master, whose name I don't remember. Dr. Valentiner walked into the room. The painting was at the far end of the room. He looked at it from the door and said, "What a beautiful so and so," and named the artist. It didn't take him a second to recognize it. - I knew him later on, too, when he had a semiretirement job at the Museum of Art in Raleigh, N. C. He died while he was there. Later on, I knew most of the personnel at Detroit up until within ten years or so.

MR. BROWN: In the earlier days you would actually travel there quite a bit.

MR. VOSE: Oh yes, truly. Yes, I was in Detroit a great deal.

MR. BROWN: What was it like as a museum in the '30s? Was it very competent?

MR. VOSE: Oh yes.

MR. BROWN: Of course, it was the Depression and it was heavily city supported wasn't it?

MR. VOSE: Yes, they had a little trouble that way, but it was an excellent museum. It is a great museum today. I've been there fairly recently, because I attended the American Association of Museums meeting there two years ago. I sort of reacquainted myself with the museum. The city has changed a great deal, but the museum is

a fine one. When we first used to go there the city impressed you as being a beehive of active. There was a tremendous going and coming all the time. Of course, the auto industry was at a high point then. Then, it faded away.

MR. BROWN: Did you know Cleveland, too?

MR. VOSE: Yes, yes, not quite as well, but yes, I used to go there. The Cleveland Museum of Art was one of my particular favorite customers. There, again, you've got a tremendous change in the city. Euclid Avenue which was a very busy and prominent place, now really is not. It has gone down hill tremendously. It is not one of the fine parts of the city. Although, the museum way out there is. Of course, there is also the Natural History Museum in the same complex. It is very fine.

MR. BROWN: Did you know Millican there?

MR. VOSE: No, that was - my father did. That was a little bit before my time. But, of course, more recently, a long time -

MR. BROWN: Sherman Lee?

MR. VOSE: Yes, I was going to say Sherman Lee. I couldn't think of his name. Yes, I knew him very well. Sherman was an interesting man. He was a very forceful man. He was interesting to know. You would pass him on the street one day and he would not even speak. The next day, he would ask you to lunch. It depended on how he happened to feel and what side of the bed he got out of, I guess. But he was a tremendously erudite person, especially in Oriental art but if you had a painting that had anything to do with fishing, that he would buy for himself, personally.

MR. BROWN: But there were various dealers in those Middle Western cities that you also either went to see or you were sending certain things too, weren't you?

MR. VOSE: Yes. I mentioned the Beard Gallery in Minneapolis. My father used to - Mr. Beard was dead by the time I got very active. I know he used to come to Jamestown, Rhode Island and stay with us for a weekend, in Cleveland and Vixseboxse Gallery. It's a very strange name. You probably know it, Vixseboxse. It's a Dutch name. We did a lot with them. That's still going, although it is another generation of the family.

MR. BROWN: By doing a lot, you mean you would send them things on consignment?

MR. VOSE: Yes, or we would buy things from them.

MR. BROWN: What primarily did they have?

MR. VOSE: Old American paintings. Bernard Vixseboxse used to come to Boston quite a lot. - I liked him very much - or I would go there. My father had been there earlier with the Gage Gallery, which had been - which was in the same premises that the Vixseboxse later had on Euclid Avenue. He did a great deal of business with George Gage. In fact, a tremendous amount of business really. He would go take paintings and exhibit them in Gage's gallery and then they would share the profits that might be made.

MR. BROWN: These Middle Western cities were very much on the up - on the rise, culturally at that time.

MR. VOSE: Yes, I think that is true. Although, I may have mentioned earlier that my father - just to tell about his first great success when he was traveling - had an experience in St. Louis. Did I mention that? He used to take with him at that time, a man who was his frame shop assistant. He was the frame shop manager, by the name of Eckberg whose son is still living and later on was a chief carver and gilder at our gallery. Adrian Eckberg used to travel with my father and assist him. The story he told was this - I suppose it was about 1920 or so, maybe it was 1918 - maybe even earlier than that - he had taken some rooms in a hotel in St. Louis and had sent out a few letters notifying people that he was coming. Eckberg went out to breakfast - Father was just getting ready to. He just started turning the door handle and somebody was turning on the other side. This gentleman, the stranger, said, "May I come in." He said, "Yes." He handed him a card. This was Mr. Bixby who was one of the leading collectors in the city, whom he had never met. He sat there looking at the paintings. There were a large number of them. Finally, he would ask, "How much is this, this, this?" He would jot them down on an envelope or something he had. Finally he would say, "Take that away. Take that away. Now what would be the total of these? Alright. If I buy all these together, I should have discount. What would that amount to? Then, take this away." My father said he never felt more like an adding machine than he did that day, but it ended up that Mr. Bixby said, "Very well, I'll take," - it was something like ten - "Take them out to my home on Kings Highway." I should know the address, because it is where the big hotel now stands that I used to stay in. But he and Eckberg had to hire a wagon to take these paintings out. First, Mr. Bixby had asked my Father to go around and give his opinion of the ones he had. My father went along and he would comment on each one. Then, he would go by one

and not say anything. Bixby would say, "Wait a minute. What do you say about this?" "Well, I don't care for it." Which meant several of them were fakes. Finally, Bixby said, "Take them down." Then, Bixby said, "Alright, what discount will you give me for these paintings that you took down." My father said, "Mr. Bixby, you wouldn't have bought the paintings you have from me today, if you thought that I would handle paintings such as those." Bixby said, "I don't care what you do with them. Take them away." This was a very important sale which started his Middle Western routine, which he carried on for many years.

MR. BROWN: St. Louis became a good place to visit.

MR. VOSE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: You continued that over a number of years.

MR. VOSE: I used to go to St. Louis, not carrying an exhibition of paintings there, but going and calling on customers and so forth, and especially the museum. During the time that Charles Buckley was director there, I used to deal with him very frequently. I got to know a number of the people there. I've had some interesting experiences too, with appraisals later on there, including the one of the mercantile library, which I may have mentioned to you before. The mercantile library is a very interesting, almost unique institution which is quite old. It is a proprietary library like the Atheneum here. I guess as a bequest, it had received quite a number of George Caleb Bingham works. Three of them were enormous, great, and now also very famous paintings, such as the "Verdict of the People," "Canvassing for a Vote," - I've forgotten the other one, but it was similar. It was an electioneering painting. Perry Rathbone told me that when he was director there, those were offered to the Museum for sale and that the chairman of his board said that he wasn't going to have the Museum's money spent just on illustrations like that. They did not buy them, but the Boatmen's bank now has them hanging in the lobby. They are very spectacular. But, there also was a collection of drawings, a collection of wonderful Bingham drawings, over 100 which he had made simply from people on the waterfront, many people he knew, I'm sure along the riverfront as well as electioneering parties and so forth, which he was to use in his paintings. They decided they wanted those appraised and asked me if I would do it. It was a very interesting job. The then librarian, who only recently retried, Elizabeth Kirkner, took me down to a bank vault where they were stored and introduced me to the manager, the vault manager. He explained that I was to work at a large conference table - in a conference room and to be locked in. There was a man with a two-wheeler who brought the many, many drawings out in cartons and left them with me. I was told that if I needed to get out for any reason, whether I had finished or to stop for lunch, I could use a telephone, but otherwise I would be locked in. I got to work and made very little progress during several hours in the morning with segregating these pictures on the table into piles according to what I thought the relative value was. I was going to go over them later and be specific. About halfway through, the telephone rang and Mrs. Kirkner said, "We've been invited to lunch by the chairman of the board, so we'll come down and let you out," which they did, excepting that the man with the two-wheeler came back and started grabbing my piles of pictures and helter-skelter stuffing them back into the cartons. I exclaimed - I'm afraid rather loudly, that he was ruining half a day's work. That didn't make any difference. The vault manager said, "No, we can't leave them here." I said, "You have the key to the door." "No, you can't leave them here. They have to be put back in the safe." Well, the lunch was pleasant. I started all over again at the end of the lunch time. But that was a very interesting experience. The chance to study these drawings was really valuable. Later on, they were offered for sale, perhaps because the library decided that with the value I had placed on them, they couldn't afford to keep them there. They were offered for sale, but nobody in St. Louis, including the St. Louis Art Museum, was willing to pay for them. But, when the New York art dealers began to express interest and began to compete with ever higher offers, there was huge uproar in the city. They should not be allowed to leave St. Louis. Eventually, the governor of the state got in to the act and I had a call from the governor, here, asking me what I thought about the values that were being offered. I certainly thought that they were far more than I expected. The state bought them. Now, they are shared by the St. Louis Art Museum and the Kansas City Art Institute, exhibited in one place or the other. That lead also to an appraisal of the Boatman's Bank collection, which except fro those three large paintings in the lobby, is not much known. The collection is a very fine one of Remington, Russell, and Catlin, all of the early western artists. Appraisals have sometimes been interesting experiences.

MR. BROWN: Did you begin appraising fairly early in your career or did this happen later?

MR. VOSE: Yes, Bob and I both did fairly early.

MR. BROWN: Your father had appraised as well.

MR. VOSE: Oh yes, yes indeed. I'm very glad to be through with it. It is a responsibility that one always wonders a little bit about. You could make a mistake and damage someone else's financial interests and you could, of course, be sued. While I enjoyed it and found it interesting, I'm glad to be through with it now.

MR. BROWN: When you began doing this or when your father did it, was there much scrutiny of appraisals by the

government?

MR. VOSE: No, not by the government particularly. Sometimes, there would be legal scrutiny because somebody would object to what you specified. And, of course, you got scoldings from people who disagreed with you when you thought something was misattributed or was indeed a forgery. That happened to me and my brother too. There was a collection in Maine of some family portraits that were supposed to be by Gilbert Stuart. They were indeed copies of paintings by Gilbert Stuart, but they were very obviously copies. I was not popular with the family when I pointed this out. They finally said that they realized that I probably was perfectly honest about this, but that I just didn't know. I thought it was best to let it go at that.

MR. BROWN: Were there the accusations or conflicts of interest that you as a dealer might, by appraising it at a certain value or other, might make it of interest to buy the painting from them.

MR. VOSE: I can only think of one case, which was perfectly ridiculous. A fairly prominent woman in Boston brought a Corot - an alleged Corot painting to be appraised. My father and I were there at the time. We both looked at it and he told her, "I'm terribly sorry, but it is not genuine." Actually, I'm getting a little ahead of the thing. She had been doing business with us, but then her nephew brought this picture, which she knew had been a family picture. He told me, years later, with some humor, that she didn't believe us. He said, "You know my aunt told me, 'Didn't you know why they said that? So they could buy it cheaply from you.'" It is a very unpleasant thing to have said and it amazes me that she would have thought we would then handle it, even if that were true, but that happens. We did, of course, have suggestions made to us to act unscrupulously by dealers, usually small antique dealers. "We could do something to both our advantage," which could annoy you very much.

MR. BROWN: It was a firm rule in your firm that you had to be absolutely honest?

MR. VOSE: Oh, my gracious yes.

MR. BROWN: The fact was that a certain minority of dealers weren't quite honest about these things.

MR. VOSE: In any field that will be true, yes. I'm sorry to say that. I guess our field does lend itself rather readily to such things, but you would want to do otherwise. Just one of the last years I was with the gallery, an antique dealer called me up and said that a client of his, a woman, had a painting she wanted to sell. It was a very good one. She wanted it appraised first. He said, "I would suggest you and then you appraise it so that you and I can both make a good profit on it." I said, "I'll appraise it exactly as I think it is worth." There was a long pause and he said, "Somebody told me you were a good man to work with." I said, "Well, I hope so," and he hung up. This kind of thing doesn't leave a good taste in your mouth. In every field you have the same thing.

MR. BROWN: Through the '30s then, you were learning a great deal very fast, weren't you?

MR. VOSE: Yes, I guess so.

MR. BROWN: Traveling quite a lot.

MR. VOSE: Yes, we did travel quite a lot. I spent a lot of time in Atlanta.

MR. BROWN: Was Atlanta a place with a number of collectors at that time?

MR. VOSE: Yes. I must say that all these trips that I made in the middle of the Depression were more educational than profitable. I went to Atlanta repeatedly. I did sell some paintings that I had ever forgotten. I was looking through the card file yesterday, thinking about seeing you today. I noticed some paintings I had sold in Atlanta that I had forgotten all about, to private collectors, but to the museum also. I was happy in Atlanta with a very, very kindly and fine director for the museum there, an older man by the name of Skidmore, Lewis Skidmore, who couldn't have been nicer to me. I had the privilege of hanging paintings in the gallery, as I mentioned sometimes happened in smaller museums. At that time, it was a small museum, which it isn't anymore. You wouldn't believe it, but sometimes customers of mine would complain that they couldn't see the exhibition because the museum closed at five o'clock as did their office. They couldn't get away. I mentioned that to Skid, as we called him. He said, "Good Lord, you know how to lock the door as well as I do." He always left at five because his wife and mother-in-law came by to pick him up and drive him home for supper. He would say, "Okay," - he called me Mort - "Just remember, lock the door." Can you imagine a museum director doing that today? It was very pleasant. I did some business that way.

MR. BROWN: Were the Southerners quite receptive to paintings? Did you see any difference in tastes?

MR. VOSE: It was said at first when I went to Atlanta, yes you could sell a commission to a man for a portrait of his wife or you could sell a mink coat or a Cadillac, but it was pretty hard to sell any other kind of expensive

thing. That changed over the years that I was going there. I did make some nice connections. At one time I remember thinking that perhaps I knew as many people in Atlanta as I did in Boston. It is not true anymore. It has been a number of years since I've been there regularly. I used also to spend quite a lot of time in Memphis at the Brooks Art Gallery.

MR. BROWN: Was that a different sort of place from Atlanta?

MR. VOSE: Yes, it has very different character, the city does. It is perhaps more of a deep Southern town. Atlanta, you know it was said, that it was very unusual to find an Atlantan that had been born there. Many of them had come from Middle West or from New England, who were the big businessmen. There were just a few prominent native Atlantans. J.J. Haverty, who had a big furniture store, who owned Haverty Furniture Company and who was the chairman of the board of the museum and a big collector, used to be spoken of in awe. "Did you know he was born here." It wasn't common. Whereas, in Memphis, oh yes, there were old families that had always been there. The Brooks Gallery was a very nice museum in the middle of the park. I used to enjoy that - the zoo was in the same park and the trolley car - there aren't trolleys anymore there, but the trolley car that would take me down to the hotel, ran right through the zoo. I used to enjoy walking over after five o'clock and waiting for the trolley while seeing my friends the monkeys and the other animals that were there and going on downtown.

MR. BROWN: Did these people in the south at all resent a northerner coming in?

MR. VOSE: No, I don't think so. I was treated very well, indeed. Although, I remember an occasion in Atlanta. I guess it was Saturday or Sunday afternoon, they used to have volunteer gallery guides from the Junior League. Southern girls are often very pretty. This was pretty nice, long before I was married. I used to enjoy that very much. I remember one of the gals saying that she never had visited Boston. I said, "Why not? You ought to come." "Oh no, I don't think I would ever like to go to Boston." "Why not?" "Well, you know, golly, you-all burned our city down and burned up all the record so it made out you are more high born than we are." It was very interesting. They hadn't forgotten Mr. Sherman. We had another experience which I might just mention. That was in Savannah. This was the first trip my father and I made together, those two cities. There was a lady who, I guess was perhaps chairman of the board of the museum or prominent there. She was known as "Miz" Hattie Saucey and her husband was a judge. We were invited to dinner there. That was very nice. After dinner, we were all sitting about. There had been a good deal of libation during dinner and there was some liqueur afterwards. I think the judge had enjoyed that quite a lot. Somebody, I remember said, "Do I understand that you gentlemen are from Boston?" The Judge immediately interrupted. He said, "I've been to Boston but once and that was of necessity. They have there a section called State Street, which is the financial district. My business being of that nature I wended my way thither, but on the way I encountered a beggar seated on the sidewalk against the wall and he had neither arms nor legs, but he was displaying pencils in his cap on his lap. Well, I considered that man for a minute and I produced a ten dollar bill and placed it in his cap. He was a bit surprised." Now, I'm quoting the Judge, who was quoting the beggar, but I think inappropriately for a Boston beggar. He said, "The beggar said to me, 'Sir, I am moved to inquire the reason for your extraordinary generosity.' I said, 'My good man you asked me so I'm going to tell you. It's the first time I ever saw a damn Yankee in the condition I would like to see all of you.'" That was in front of his guests who were from Boston. That was not the way we were commonly treated.

MR. BROWN: How did your father react to something like that?

MR. VOSE: What could you do?

MR. BROWN: Brush it off.

MR. VOSE: Oh yes, of course. He laughed, but he saw fit to tell that story. Many years later I was in Nashville, Tennessee and was invited to dinner at a place where it was mentioned that the family had come originally from Savannah. I recounted that without mentioning names. My host, who was a young man, said immediately, "I know that man. That was my uncle, Judge Saucey. It sounds just like him." It was. Chattanooga and Nashville, I used to frequent quite often. As a matter of fact, later on, I did quite a lot. After I retired from the gallery, when I thought it was appropriate, I was active on a number of committees of different museums, advisory councils and that sort of thing. One of them was the acquisitions committee of the Hunter Museum in Chattanooga, Tennessee, which would seem inappropriate for a dealer. When I was invited to do that, I objected strenuously because I said, after all, you are still doing business with Vose Galleries, and whether or not I'm active, there, it doesn't sound appropriate. But, I was flattered by being told that they knew me well enough to know that this would not be an influence and that they wanted very much to have me aboard. For a number of years, I enjoyed that connection. They would pay my round trip down by air and one night. They made it very clear. "You can stay as long as you want to, but the rest is on you." One night they would pay for. I usually would stay on two more nights because it was advantageous to see more people and to look around. I got to know some very nice people that way. Many of my friends lived up on the mountain as they called it, Lookout Mountain. I was also on

committees or councils at other museums, the Currier Gallery in Manchester, New Hampshire, the Meade Art Museum in Amherst and the University Art Galleries at Durham at the University of New Hampshire, all of which I've felt I've had to resign from because I just don't have the time anymore with our dictionary project. Those were very interesting contacts however.

[END OF TAPE TWO SIDE B]

December 9, 1986

[Tape 3 of 4]

MR. BROWN: I would like now to move into the eve of World War II or at least the early '40s. Was business picking up by then? I know you had been through the Depression since the early '30s, which you told me. How were things going by the early '40s?

MR. VOSE: They really didn't pick up quite as soon as that for us. There was one thing, however, that might be interesting to mention. My father had always done business in California and usually made a trip in February or March and would stay three weeks to a month. He had developed quite a clientele there. A German dealer - German or Austrian, I think he was German. In the early '40s, perhaps 1941 or two, he called at the gallery and he wanted to talk to him. He seemed to have a very fine group of Old Master paintings, a little bit out of our line, but he wanted to know whether he could make an arrangement where my father would go with him to California and introduce him to customers, both museums and private people.

MR. BROWN: You were no longer particularly dealing in Old Masters, by this time?

MR. VOSE: No.

MR. BROWN: You had earlier, hadn't you?

MR. VOSE: We had earlier, yes, although not extensively. Business was not very good still. Father finally decided that he would agree. Of course, the idea was that there would be a sharing of commissions or profits provided that this worked out. He did agree. They did go out to Los Angeles together.

MR. BROWN: What was the dealer's name? Do you remember?

MR. VOSE: No and maybe I shouldn't mention it. I don't think so. I remember that I had to translate for my father when they lunched together at first because his English was very limited. My German was never very good, but it was enough at that time - it wouldn't be now - to get along. I had to do that. They agreed on terms and so forth. Father went along. It started and it had some success. There were some paintings sold to one of the museums there and some private people. But, this dealer turned out to be very disagreeable, very hard to get along with and made my father's time very miserable indeed. Right in the middle of things, Pearl Harbor took place, which didn't help anything at all.

MR. BROWN: When your father was in California?

MR. VOSE: Yes, while he was with this dealer. They had sold an important painting. I don't now remember what it was. For some reason the German dealer said that business hadn't been good enough and he was not going to pay the agreed commission to father, and that was that. He was very disagreeable and it ended up with a law suit, which my father won because it was fairly obvious this guy was just breaking the agreement. He said that he was not going to pay the agreed commission and that was that, because the whole thing hadn't been quite as lucrative as he expected. That was not a very pleasant ending to the arrangement. That was an unusual thing and it was never tried again. I think if it had not been that business was slow, father wouldn't have agreed to it, but he felt this was possibly lucrative.

MR. BROWN: Here in Boston, what were mainly showing at the time?

MR. VOSE: It would be American paintings mainly. Whenever fine Barbizon paintings came along we certainly did show those. We also imported quite a number of nineteenth century English landscapes. They were not too expensive and rather attractive for home decorations. We did do that. There were a couple of British dealers, one particularly in Bristol, who used to make the American journey, as they called it, once a year, and would offer things wholesale to American dealers. That is still done to a certain extent, surprisingly. That firm, itself, is not doing it, but several of their salesmen have gone out on their own. That was a fairly successful thing. Good English landscapes of the nineteenth century were really quite nice. I'm trying to think of any particular anecdotes. I don't believe so in that case. You would occasionally get a gem among those things. There might be a little Turner or something of that sort or a Constable, earlier pictures. Then, of course, occasionally, the watercolor by Prout or Cox, someone like that. It was always very worthwhile to look over these rather large

shipments - stocked with pictures that would appear and be shown in the Old Brunswick Hotel to begin with and then afterwards Copley Plaza. It was quite an exciting event usually.

MR. BROWN: Would you then buy certain of them outright?

MR. VOSE: Yes, oh yes. Some of the British sporting painters like Fernley and Stubbs, would come along and be very saleable here.

MR. BROWN: The prices were - by comparison to today at least - very, very low.

MR. VOSE: Very, very much so. They didn't look so then, but they certainly were in retrospect if you look at it now.

MR. BROWN: What about the work of contemporary artists? Did that sell very well at all?

MR. VOSE: Oh yes.

MR. BROWN: You did show them?

MR. VOSE: Oh yes, we did. They began increasingly to sell as time went on and then the War started. There was a disruption of course because my brother Herbert went into the Air Force. Both my brother Robert and I tried to enlist and got turned down to our great embarrassment. We tried every branch and there was always something wrong with us. I don't think there would have been, but they thought so. My brother Bob worked for the National Fireworks Company which was making ammunitions and things like that. That left me and my cousin, Charles Thompson, who had been with the firm for many years - a much older first cousin - with my father. It was a little bit difficult to keep things going with quite a reduced staff, but we managed.

MR. BROWN: Did you have as many openings and changes of exhibition as you had before the war?

MR. VOSE: Not as many formal openings, but we did change exhibitions. Through the War we had a number of our regulars like of Paul Sample, who was by that time, the artist in residence at Dartmouth. He was one of our regular exhibitors and sold very well. There were others. My father was very conservative. Some of the contemporary artists that my brother and I liked he didn't like at all. That caused some arguments. There was one artist we showed who was rather interesting and often amusing, James Fitzgerald. You probably remember him. He was a rugged character, who by the time that I knew him well, had been living in Vermont. Before that he had been in Monterey, California. He did wholly water colors. By the time we were showing him he was living on Monhegan. One of the amusing parts of his career was that he had a Chevrolet, and extremely ancient Chevrolet wooden station wagon, which he used just once a year. It was parked in a garage in Portsmouth, New Hampshire. I'm not sure that's right. It could have even been Rockland, Maine - wherever he came ashore. Once a year he would come ashore, usually in the autumn, get it gassed up and some oil in it. He was the only one who could start it. Even the garage man couldn't. He was able to coax action out of it. He would load it up with a bed roll and a few things and he would head off to Mount Katahdin, usually, Baxter State Park. There he would camp and paint to his heart's content, sleeping in this car and freezing to death. He was a very rugged guy. We would have exhibitions of his work which very often didn't sell at all. I thought they were good. Just as a retrospect - not a retrospect - it's a reverse. He has now become world popular. A book has been written about him and so forth, mostly due to one couple who have been faithfully following him. He used to come to the gallery when we had an exhibition and sit there, smoking his pipe. Very often there would be hours at a time when nobody showed up. He would sit there, smoking his pipe and staring at one painting. Suddenly, he would leap to his feet and shout, "God, that's good! Raise the price!" It didn't make too much difference. It wasn't selling anyway. He was very self-appreciative. Have we gone over this before?

MR. BROWN: No. Why didn't he sell?

MR. VOSE: Simply that there wasn't much doing. Things weren't moving - His watercolors were quite broad. They are very strong and quite broad. There were very few sales.

MR. BROWN: Did you talk? Was this a case where your father didn't care for him?

MR. VOSE: Father didn't see any point in having them at all. I liked them and I liked Mr. Katahdin. He would sometimes show up. He did one time, having come down on the bus from Rockland, I guess. He came into the gallery and had a chat. We had lunch together. Then he said, "Well, I had the bus fare this far. I'm going to New York, but this is as far as my bus fare went." It was fairly obvious. He had something he had to do in Boston. I finally ended up making a reservation for him at the Vendome with the stipulation that he could have dinner and breakfast there. He was duly grateful, but the next morning he said, "That was very nice, but still I need bus fare to go to New York." It ended up that I - I said, "Oh, I see. I've got to buy a water color from you," so I did. He went on his way. This was one of those cases where you get acquainted with very interesting people. He was

interesting. He went on and he began to be successful. I remember one time when he came in to see me. He had been terribly ill all winter, just miserable. He hadn't been able to do anything. It was on Monhegan, mind you, in the winter time. The only thing he had been able to do is just help one of the lobsterman haul his traps. I thought, "Well, he must have been awfully sick to do that in the death of winter." Haul lobster traps was all he could do! He went on to go abroad and paint. He always went to very rugged places, remote places. He went several times to remote parts of Ireland on the coast. There, he had a heart attack and died. I've forgotten - I can't give you the exact date. It was probably '46, '47, or '48. Maybe it was '50, maybe early '50s. [Died April 9, 1971] There was an exhibition of his work at the Farnsworth Museum in Rockland a couple of years ago and the DeCordova Museum out here in Lincoln had one, mostly because of the interest of Mr. and Mrs. Hubert, who have pushed his work and seen that he was remembered since he died. I think rightly. He really was rather good.

MR. BROWN: He was your special -

MR. VOSE: Yes, he was one of them.

MR. BROWN: Generally did you and your brother Herbert and your cousin Charles and your father discuss who you would show?

MR. VOSE: Oh yes, surely.

MR. BROWN: Was your father sort of the dominant figure there?

MR. VOSE: Yes, indeed. Sometimes it would be - in one case where I had scheduled an exhibition of an artist whom he didn't particularly care for - he thought it was alright to do, but then something that interested him greatly came along. We had to change things all around because he felt that that was the premier time of year. I'm trying to think of the name. You've got something that may tell.

MR. BROWN: Another one is Arthur Healey, you said, at Middlebury College in Vermont.

MR. VOSE: Yes, I liked his work very much, but it was a little too advanced for my father's taste.

MR. BROWN: Do you mean abstract?

MR. VOSE: To a certain extent. It wasn't really wholly abstract. It certainly was representational to a good degree, but father couldn't see it very much. I did put on two shows and both times in order for them not to be a complete bust for him, I had to buy a painting or two myself.

MR. BROWN: You had to buy these on your own account?

MR. VOSE: I'm sorry to say my wife didn't care for them much either and I think we don't have any anymore. Arthur was - as I believe you will have found out - a real character and an interesting man, a wonderful raconteur by the way.

MR. BROWN: Can you give some instances?

MR. VOSE: I remember he used to tell anecdotes of his father who had been an immigrant from Ireland and had done very well and was finally quite wealthy, I understand. He used to tell about going with the family, with a chauffeur driven car to the races somewhere - I've forgotten where it would be. I remember one time. His father was a devout Catholic and he stopped at the home of - I don't remember the identity of this cleric, Bishop Somebody. He sent his chauffeur in with a present, a bottle of wine or something. The chauffeur returned with an invitation to stop for lunch. His father sent the chauffeur back again, "Tell his Reverence I have better things to do. I'm off to the races." He would drive by a certain place on the way and his wife was always in fear that he would tell the same anecdote. They always had guests with them. He would say, "Drive like hell by this place, Thomas. This is where I had me first job digging potatoes. The old man was mean. I hit him with a shovel. I don't know if he was dead or not, but I left the place," this kind of thing. Arthur would love to put on a brogue and tell his father's escapades.

MR. BROWN: Was he, himself, pretty outspoken?

MR. VOSE: Yes, he was. He invited me to stay overnight. They had a wonderful old house in Middlebury. It was a very, very old house, beautiful. Why they left it, I don't know. They went and built a new one. This old house was perfectly beautiful. His pupils liked him very much. He was a passable watercolorist.

MR. BROWN: Watercolor you thought would sell because they were fairly low priced.

MR. VOSE: Yes. They did better than oils sometimes.

MR. BROWN: Did you begin in the '40s to thinking more and more of showing earlier American art - I mean nineteenth century?

MR. VOSE: Yes, we did. Eventually, what happened was that it simply became obvious that we were old fashioned in our taste and we were being severely criticized for not showing certain contemporaries whom we couldn't see very well while others could. We finally decided that we would stick to older work, with the obvious result that people asked, "You mean I have to die before you'll show me," which is embarrassing, and it also more or less alienated the art writers of Boston. We don't hear much, even today, from them.

MR. BROWN: Beginning in the '40s you were beginning to find that so.

MR. VOSE: Yes, I can't tell you the exact time, it may not have been until the '50s that this happened. We used to be visited every time there was an opening or a new show by the art writers from the *Herald* and the *Post*and the *Monitor* and the *Globe*. All of them were good friends. Dorothy Adlow of the*Monitor* you probably remember. I think she was one of the best art writers we've had in a long time. Robert Taylor is still writing. He used to be with the *Herald*. The *Transcript* is long gone.

MR. BROWN: That gave very extensive coverage.

MR. VOSE: Yes, it did. I don't see, except for the *Monitor* now, very much in the way of art writing in the Boston papers, which aren't very many just the *Globe* and the *Herald*. Theodore Wolfe of the *Monitor* seems to be an excellent writer to my way of thinking.

MR. BROWN: Were you beginning to show nineteenth century American paintings by the '40s?

MR. VOSE: Oh yes.

MR. BROWN: Didn't you begin showing some Hudson River school by that time?

MR. VOSE: Oh yes, we had in the past too, every now and then. That wasn't just something new, but we were dealing more extensively in that, and finally almost solely in American, as we do today. I say, we. It is my nephews now.

MR. BROWN: In the '40s you were still showing British and other European work as well and Barbizon when it came along.

MR. VOSE: Oh yes. We had a nostalgic feeling for the Barbizon school because of my grandfather's involvement with it.

MR. BROWN: Were you finding that a certain number of family's descendants were beginning to bring back to you things that had initially been sold to their forebears?

MR. VOSE: That has happened to this day, yes, very frequently indeed. It is sort of a revolving door.

MR. BROWN: Did the travel around the country continue through World War II?

MR. VOSE: Yes, but of course not as extensively, although, I traveled a good deal then. I was in the south quite a bit during the War - Atlanta, Savannah, Memphis, Charleston.

MR. BROWN: Were most of the sales to museums?

MR. VOSE: They were mostly taking a group of paintings to a museum and usually - as probably would not happen today at all - a small museum would be glad to have a little change of menu for it's constituents and would be glad to show the paintings, provided they were approved of. The museum, of course, received a commission. Many of the local customers would buy there. That certainly happened in Atlanta and in Charlotte and Memphis.

MR. BROWN: Was the Atlanta museum in the '40s still a pretty small museum?

MR. VOSE: Yes, oh yes. It was originally - I've mentioned this before, I'm sure. It was Mrs. High's private mansion. That's why it is the High Museum today. It is not because it was physically high. Mrs. High graciously gave the museum. There was just after the war, that terrible tragedy when a number of art-minded people from Atlanta were lost in a plane crash in Paris. That fueled a real resurgence of interest in art. A new museum building was built, which is now devoted mostly to the performing arts. It was too big when they built it. I think the reaction to the plane crash pushed things along a little too fast.

MR. BROWN: At that time, in the '40s, it was still in her mansion, was it?

MR. VOSE: Yes, the building came later. They added - they put on a small addition, not very big, and it was a very casual organization. If I were there with some paintings and expecting a customer I could stay after hours and lock the door when I went out, with nobody else around. That happened very frequently. The director used to say to me, "Mort, you know how to lock the door. Good night." Even the secretaries would leave and the curator. I would be there alone. Can you imagine that happening today? Not anywhere.

MR. BROWN: Who were some of the directors down south that you got to know pretty well that come to mind?

MR. VOSE: The one whom I got to know particularly was one I may have mentioned previously, in Atlanta, Louis Skidmore, Louis P. Skidmore. I have the greatest warmth in remembering him. He was awfully nice to me. Have we gone over this previously?

MR. BROWN: No.

MR. VOSE: I was when I first started there, quite green. He would make sure, for instance, on a Sunday, if I wasn't doing anything, I would be invited out to his home for dinner with the family. All of the family were very nice to me. I still keep up with his daughter somewhat, who lives over in Arkadelphia. A name like that - that's in Arkansas. He was very considerate and very helpful to me and a most good hearted person. He was sort of a fish out of water because he was a Connecticut Yankee. A Connecticut Yankee in Atlanta - stuck out, quite simply. He used to complain about it. He found it hard to adapt to the very socially conscious southern society, but he did and it worked out well. There were a number of others. I think that Ben Shute, who was the head of the school, is still there. That was a long time ago.

MR. BROWN: In Atlanta?

MR. VOSE: Yes. In Savannah there was an interesting gentleman who was director of the Telfair Academy of Art, which is the museum in Savannah. I can't think of his name. I was going to say it a minute ago and it slipped. His name was Raiford Wood.

MR. BROWN: Was he an outsider too?

MR. VOSE: No, no, not at all. Absolutely the opposite. He was a bachelor who lived with his mother in their paternal mansion, which was famous for its magnificent gas-illuminated chandelier. I remember that, as I used to be invited out there. He conducted himself in his community far differently than Mr. Skidmore did in Atlanta.

MR. VOSE: He was well known by everybody in town. He was also an artist. People sometimes used to complain that the first thing that he would tell you was the latest prize he had won at an exhibition, rather than talk about the museum. He did a good job with the museum, a very good job. He was a very public spirited fellow. He had been rather a hero in World War I. That rather surprised me, because he was not at all a macho sort of person, but he apparently had conducted himself gallantly.

MR. BROWN: Would museums in those days have an active program? Would you give a lecture occasionally?

MR. VOSE: Once in a while, yes, right.

MR. BROWN: Did you find that went easily? Did you enjoy it?

MR. VOSE: That depended on the audience. Don't you find that so? I think it depends very much on whether the audience is receptive and interested. Then, it can be fun. Otherwise it can be quite a chore. There was also an interesting director at the Brooks Art Gallery in Memphis, who was a very, very died in the wool southern lady. Even way before desegregation, she could see it coming and this distressed her terribly. She was a very nice woman. I remember - let me put this in my mind. I recall arriving in Memphis once as I did for number of years. I arrived at the gallery and I was told by her assistant - whom I knew also, very well, another nice lady - what she was out judging an exhibition of student work at the local colored college - Negro college as they called it then. She had been invited to act as judge. Pretty soon she returned and she was in a terrible state. I said, "Miss Clarke, is all well with you?" "Mr. Vose, I never believed that I would do such a thing, but I've done it. I've taken tea with a colored man," the president of the college. This was simply something she never believed she would have to do. Things had not changed - they were coming but they hadn't changed that much.

MR. BROWN: I suppose this astounded you.

MR. VOSE: It astounded me because -

MR. BROWN: On the other hand, you had been going there for years.

MR. VOSE: Yes, she accepted the invitation by the president. I should think that offering her tea was the thing he had to do. Her attitude did surprise me tremendously.

MR. BROWN: What about up here, particularly in Boston? You must have known most of the museum directors.

MR. VOSE: Oh yes.

MR. BROWN: Like George Harold Edgehill, did you know him very well?

MR. VOSE: Funny, I just was speaking about him this morning to Nancy. We were working on an entry for Iacovleff. You remember the name.

MR. BROWN: Yes -

MR. VOSE: We were his agents when he was here in the '30s. That's going back to the '30s. Mr. Edgehill - whom I admired greatly and liked very much - had written a little something about him. I was just quoting that to her. I just happened to pick it up this morning. When I was an undergraduate at Harvard, he was with the architectural school, but he also lectured, of course, widely in the fine arts. He was a delightful lecturer. You may have known him. It was said that he lectured in as polished a manner and as graciously in French and Italian as he did in English, which is saying something because he was a very delightful lecturer and he talked very well indeed.

MR. BROWN: At the Museum of Fine Arts, when he was director, did you maintain a contact with him there?

MR. VOSE: Oh, yes. Yes, indeed.

MR. BROWN: Did the Museum obtain a number of paintings from your gallery in the '40s and '50s?

MR. VOSE: Yes, yes, every now and then.

MR. BROWN: Mr. Constable, W.G. Constable, was the curator at the time.

MR. VOSE: Yes, W.G. People referred to him as W.G.

MR. BROWN: How did you get along with him?

MR. VOSE: Very well. He was such a close friend of Maxim Karolik that if I did business with Mr. Karolik, it always ended up as I may have mentioned, that it had to be passed on by Mr. Constable. Sometimes - I think we went through this before.

MR. BROWN: We may have. Some things you did.

MR. VOSE: I'm just thinking - if Mr. Karolik went through the usual ritual of, "Now commences the beating down," and so forth - if he decided that it probably was something he wanted, it had to be passed by Mr. Constable because eventually it probably would go to the Museum. I may have mentioned this before. He would often say, "Now, that's lovely. You bring it to the Museum at eleven o'clock, eleven a.m. tomorrow. You leave it with Mr. Constable." If anybody was within hearing - he would look around to be sure - "And you leave it in the name of Karolik." I would do that. He would be there with Mr. Constable and he would say, "Hah, so, that's lovely. Go and observe the collections. It will improve your mind." Mr. Constable used to call at our Gallery - I remember that he was usually in a hurry when he came in. He would look around and finally say, "I must flee. I must flee," and depart again. Naturally the people at the Fogg we knew very well, especially having been their students - Edward Forbes, was one, a very, very nice person.

MR. BROWN: What sort of dealings did you have with him?

MR. VOSE: He would come into the gallery to see things. It was not nearly - there wasn't as much in the way of business with the Fogg as there was with the Museum of Fine Arts, of course. If he came in the winter time, Mr. Forbes would not be wearing a heavy overcoat. He would be wearing two light overcoats. It was a little personal idiosyncrasy which is amusing to remember. It has nothing to do with what we are talking about. Of course, Paul Sacks was quite famous. Unfortunately, I disliked him heartily. Many people liked him very much, but as a professor, I did not take to him at all.

MR. BROWN: Why do you suppose?

MR. VOSE: He was rather overbearing and top lofty.

MR. BROWN: That continued when you would see him later?

MR. VOSE: Yes, it was the same thing. Oh yes, it did.

MR. BROWN: Edward Forbes was much sweeter.

MR. VOSE: Oh very much. They were interesting, as you know, a very interesting pair. They got along together. They did wonderful things for the Museum together.

MR. BROWN: Do you think it was partly because Forbes was so accommodating and sweet and reasonable and such?

MR. VOSE: I don't know. I think probably, they each realized that the other had a great deal of taste and scholarship and they appreciated it. It made a mutual attraction probably. Paul Sacks would be quite hard on employees of the Museum, if the slides happened to be upside down or something of that sort during a lecture. I didn't find it pleasant. It was rather tense. The Fogg, of course, we didn't see in a business way afterwards. Chandler Post, professor of Greek and the fine arts - which I thought was an interesting combination - was a wonderful lecturer in renaissance and post-renaissance and Spanish painting, and a character he was. His idea of impressing something on students' minds was to be rather off beat. You might have an examination question such as, "What renaissance Florentine painter was captured by pirates while on a fishing expedition off Sicily?" Which is something you probably wouldn't forget afterwards. It would have been mentioned in one of his lectures, undoubtedly.

MR. BROWN: Were there, in the '40s and '50s, were there various academics that you got to know or that came by the gallery who were either collectors themselves or advising others? John Wilmerding for example, was he one?

MR. VOSE: Well, John actually was an undergraduate when we first knew him. I was a little bit older than he. Yes, we used to see him quite frequently.

MR. BROWN: Agnes Mongan, would come by the gallery?

MR. VOSE: Yes, indeed, Agnes, John, and all the folks at the Fogg would occasionally stop in, depending on the exhibition you had, they would be coming to see you. Charles Kuhn, who was later the director of Bush-Reisinger was often in. I had him as an advisor as undergraduate. He used to come in. You may have noticed just now that there are changes to be made in the Bush-Reisinger. I just received this morning in the mail a description of what was planned.

MR. BROWN: But he would come by. Was this particularly true of all these people when you still had your European Art? Did they continue to be interested when you moved into American art entirely?

MR. VOSE: Perhaps not quite as much. The one who would and did was Arthur Pope, who of course was a painter himself and a great theoretician on color matters. He was interested and quite critical, I remember, of the Hudson River school painters. He used to examine the painting very closely and say, "Now, these fellows are alright. Their relationships of color and form are alright in a small area, but when they get out with a whole thing, they don't always hold together." He used to speak of line and local color. It was one of his favorite expressions. Do you remember he invented a color solid that pointed out his theories on color. He was a very agreeable man as a teacher. He gave Fine Arts 1A, which was the beginning.

MR. BROWN: But as a critic he could be a little severe?

MR. VOSE: It was just that - yes, he could spot what he felt to be flaws in an artist's work.

MR. BROWN: People when you first - you began showing - I believe you had a very large show of the Hudson River school in the early '40s at the gallery.

MR. VOSE: We did, that's right.

MR. BROWN: What were people's interests at that point? Were they quite intrigued or not?

MR. VOSE: Not a great deal. The first - I think that Fred Sweet made the first Hudson River School exhibition.

MR. BROWN: He was the curator in Chicago?

MR. VOSE: Yes, had been one of the very first to show a group, calling it the Hudson River School Exhibition. Then, it began to pick up, but gradually. Of course, what you see today in the way of prices would be completely unheard of then.

MR. BROWN: Then people were just as apt to look for an English landscape as for an American one.

MR. VOSE: Yes, I think so. It was a diversity, of course, in collecting. The colonial portraits, were a different matter. They were gladly collected.

MR. BROWN: They still were even through the middle of the century?

MR. VOSE: Oh yes, and today too, yes. Although, unfortunately, I'm sure you know, it turned out later there was a great deal of deliberate misattribution. There was a dealer in Boston who was supposed to be a great authority on colonial portraiture.

MR. BROWN: That was a bit before the mid-century wasn't it?

MR. VOSE: Yes, it was - oh yes, it was. It was the '30s and probably even before that. Things are only coming to light still. English portraits of the same period were reattributed and so forth.

[END OF TAPE 3 SIDE A]

MR. BROWN: Following World War II, you continued on at the gallery.

MR. VOSE: I did, yes.

MR. BROWN: Your brother, Bob, returned didn't he?

MR. VOSE: He returned. Herbert did not. When he had finished his duty overseas, he had become interested in photography. From then on, his career was fine arts photography, photographing for catalogues and so forth. He did all of ours of course. He became very widely known as a fine arts photographer. He did the catalogues for Smith College and Amherst, some for the Museum of Fine Arts, occasionally - special ones.

MR. BROWN: He had never particularly liked sitting in the Gallery had he?

MR. VOSE: He really hadn't thought that that should be his career. My father was very anxious to have all his sons in the gallery and did for a while. I think it was just as well for Herbert's sake that he did decide to leave. We saw a lot of him because he was always coming in to photograph things for us.

MR. BROWN: Did you notice following the War any change in taste or in sales?

MR. VOSE: Sales certainly picked up.

MR. BROWN: What sort of things were selling?

MR. VOSE: American paintings began to sell well. Of course, it wasn't only exhibitions by any means which we used as sales attractions. We always had a stock of paintings which we owned and also some that were consigned to us for sale. This was quite a difference from when I was first with the galleries in the early '30s. We could have a fine painting for a year, more than that sometimes. That began to happen less frequently. Today, if I go into the gallery, perhaps twice in a couple of weeks, there are things that I haven't seen before and the ones that I saw before are gone. They turn over very rapidly.

MR. BROWN: They were beginning to in the late '40s?

MR. VOSE: Yes, in a mild way. Nothing like today, but yes. We continued - my brother and I continued to travel. Charles Thompson our cousin to some extent, but he died in '57. We were - Robert and I and my father after that.

MR. BROWN: Your father continued to travel?

MR. VOSE: No, not very much after that. He became lame. He had a car accident. He was struck by a car as a pedestrian. From then on, he increasingly had to use crutches. Finally, he was completely confined to crutches. He didn't travel after that at all.

MR. BROWN: Were you traveling - you and your brother after World War II - to see private collectors or as before large museums?

MR. VOSE: Both, of course. A great deal of our business was with museums and of course, continues to be too. Today, there is a great deal of private collecting that we didn't have previously.

MR. BROWN: Predominantly museum?

MR. VOSE: Yes. I don't mean there was none.

MR. BROWN: But predominantly.

MR. VOSE: Yes, predominantly so.

MR. BROWN: Can you think of some outstanding examples of museum people or cases when you sold something to a museum in the '50s or '60s?

MR. VOSE: I was thinking of - no that's in the '70s. That's getting too late. Well, yes, we sold American Hudson River School paintings to such museums as the North Carolina State Museum in Raleigh. It just happens I remember a large Thomas Doughty there. To the Corcoran Gallery in Washington - a little different - we sold a Monticelli painting, which of course, is not American. They have quite a collection of them. We sold, I think one of those.

MR. BROWN: Is this usually the result of traveling to see these people?

MR. VOSE: Yes, or correspondence. We used, for instance, photographs that my brother Herbert made - we would use them a great deal, sending out to prospects.

MR. BROWN: More than you had before?

MR. VOSE: Yes, because they were much better really than even commercial photographs we could get before. He became very well known for that. I remember that one of the English art dealers I mentioned who used to come to this country, used to complain that if he ran out of photographs it was too bad because he couldn't get the quality he got in England. When he saw some of my brothers, he immediately changed his mind and he used to get his photographs made when he got to Boston.

MR. BROWN: Where were the Hudson River School paintings coming from? Were they in families in New York State mainly?

MR. VOSE: Yes - no, not necessarily only in New York state. They would be - they had been -

MR. BROWN: Very widely exhibited.

MR. VOSE: Well, around New England too, certainly. Yes, they came out of private estates or at auction sales which were the result of collections being dispersed.

MR. BROWN: You would go to auctions pretty regularly or just bid at auctions?

MR. VOSE: Oh, we did indeed.

MR. BROWN: Can you describe some of those?

MR. VOSE: Of course, the ones that were especially exciting were usually the ones in New York, the American Art Association to begin with. That's years ago and then Park Bernett, which eventually became Sotheby's. Park Bernett Galleries were the leading auction house for fine arts in New York for so long. We knew both Colonel Park and Otto Bernett very well. It was fun to go to small auctions, of course, local ones. It was quite a different sort of thing. You often found things you could pick up there was well. It is interesting to think now, the way things gradually emerged, which were not appreciated at all. I remember buying a - it was an Alfred T. Bricher *Shore Scene* for 150 dollars, when I was asked to go out and look at something. You often were asked, of course, to go to a home and perhaps the descendants were breaking it up. I brought it back to the gallery and my father was very much annoyed indeed that I spent that much of the firm's money on it - an unknown artist like this. An artist who today brings a very large amount of money. But it took a while to have these things come out. As the interest in digging back into American art history has accelerated so, it has been encouraging to see how many very worthwhile painters have been revived, but of course in the process, enthusiasm sometimes bubbles over and people who should have stayed dead have also been pumped up somewhat. This is inevitable I guess, but it certainly is true.

MR. BROWN: Was that beginning to happen in the '50s or is that a little early?

MR. VOSE: That is a little early.

MR. BROWN: There was still pretty good quality?

MR. VOSE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: You can choose carefully.

MR. VOSE: You find - I think you find increasing interest in the history of art, even back then. Of course, for a long time it had been confined to the colonial portraits and to Washington, Allston, Hewlett, Stuart, people like that. This is beginning to enter the nineteenth century. We would, as I said, be asked to go out to a house to look at paintings. I recall one other amusing incident. I was asked to go out to a house, I think it was in Braintree. The

couple was selling their home. They were going to live with their daughter in California. They had a couple of paintings that I thought we could use and did buy. They also had a perfectly enormous landscape over their piano. I remember it only because I couldn't reach it. I couldn't make out the signature. I had never seen it before. It looked like Cleenewerck. They wanted very much to get rid of that because they didn't know what to do with it. They didn't want to store it and so forth. I said I didn't think we could use it. Twice afterwards, I got telephone calls saying, "We would accept very little for it. We would like to have you take it away if you would." I really didn't think it was one we could use. I was not at all sure the artist was American, but I finally caved in and went down. I think I had to get a truck. Perhaps it went in the station wagon, I'm not sure. I brought it back. To be sure it didn't sell, for years as a matter of fact, but it was a very interesting research problem. It really was signed, H. Cleenewerck, which was very strange. I spent a long time trying to trace him down, which I finally did as a matter of fact. He was a puzzle because when you could find listings, which were rare, they claimed that he was born in Belgium of French parents. His name actually had been Clanneverk. He had Anglicized it when he came to this country. I'm quite convinced that Clanneverk was much more a Flemish name than a French. I think the sources that put it that way had just got it twisted. Finally, it was sold, I think within the last few months. It must have been ten or fifteen years ago that I bought the picture. Once in a while things stay around that way because he was unknown and still is pretty unknown.

MR. BROWN: Do you remember instances of buying at auction - were auctions often places where you could pick up bargains then?

MR. VOSE: Local ones sometimes were.

MR. BROWN: What about Park Bernett?

MR. VOSE: There you had the competition of all the New York dealers which is quite overwhelming.

MR. BROWN: Who were some of the dealers in New York you were most in competition with by the '50s and '60s?

MR. VOSE: Well, among the ones we knew very well was M. Knoedler & Co. The people there, all of the folks, were friends of ours. The Macbeth Galleries by that time had closed, but that was one of the leading and the very first firms to deal in American paintings only. I knew Robert Macbeth and Robert McIntyre, not William, the first one. I don't know why they - I never could understand why they closed just at a time when American paintings were coming into their own. There were a number of others, the Milch Gallery.

MR. BROWN: Did you know the Milch's pretty well?

MR. VOSE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: What were they like?

MR. VOSE: They were interesting fellows. They were brothers. One of them handled prints, etchings and lithographs and so forth. The other one, who I knew better, handled the paintings. The trouble is I now cannot remember which is which as far as names go. I think Eddie was the man I knew best. As he became quite elderly, it was interesting to talk to him because he, like my father, liked to reminisce about things. I certainly heard a great deal of history of art dealing in New York from him. I remember one time he told me a story about how the - I may have this somewhat wrong - it was either the trustees of a museum - or it was a fund that was buying paintings. The trustees came around to his exhibition - it may well have been Child Hassam, one of those American impressionist painters whom Milch had. They were going to buy one, but they decided on it between themselves. Then, they told the artist, "Just wait and when the show is over we will buy it from you directly and you wouldn't have to Milch a commission." The artist didn't think that was very fair, but according to Mr. Milch's - Mr. Milch had a German, combined with a Brooklyn accent. - The artist told them, "Yous is thieves already," and would not put up with such a thing. But this kind of thing he told a great deal. He told of trying to do business with Winslow Homer, which he had found very difficult. He went all the way up to Prout's Neck one time in the middle of a blizzard. He had to wade through the snow up to his knees. He got up and pounded on the door. Homer said, "Who is it?" "Mr. Milch of New York, the dealer." He said, "Go away." He said, "That's as far as I got with Mr. Homer." My father had similar stories of that nature. One of them had to do with - not exactly like that - to do with J. Francis Murphy, not the Mr. Murphy here in Boston, Dudley Murphy, but J. Francis Murphy, of New York; who was extremely popular at one point. I'm going back because this was probably in the teens. He used to tell about going to Mr. Murphy's studio and buying three paintings from him. Just as he was sitting down to write the check out, he glanced up and from another angle, he saw another one that he thought he would like. He said, "Mr. Murphy, can we add this other one?" The reply was, "Good God, Vose, don't be a hog." He was doing so well that he wanted to ration his paintings to dealers. Mr. Milch had a great story about Mr. Murphy's funeral too. The general idea of it was that Mr. Murphy was a very kind hearted man. He had a place up in, I think, Garrison on the Hudson, a summer place, but at Christmas time, he would send the local Catholic priest up there - a sum of money and ask him to buy shoes and things, overcoats, for poor children. Mrs. Murphy was

not of that persuasion - I mean to say as far as charity went. He didn't dare let her know of this. He was doing very well. His pictures sold. Mr. Milch said, "Mr. Murphy used to refer to her as wifey." He told me he got on the train. "Murphy told him, 'Get on the train and go to Garrison,' wherever it was, 'and give the priest a check for 200 dollars. What could you lose? You've got my paintings there.' He was right. I went up and did that. Then, poor Murphy died and they had the service up there in the country in a little Catholic church. The family and Mrs. wifey is sitting on one side and I'm sitting on the other. The priest is making a eulogy. One of the things he says is, 'Few of you know the charity of our departed friend. Only this gentleman here and I know what he used to give,' Mrs. Murphy is glaring at me. Right in church she is glaring at me." I used to hear stories like that from Mr. Milch.

MR. BROWN: Did you spend some time with Bob McIntyre of Macbeth Gallery?

MR. VOSE: Yes, I did.

MR. BROWN: What was he like?

MR. VOSE: That was a little earlier. He was not quite as genial a gentleman. He was the one that closed it finally. I didn't find him nearly as genial. He had a very nice secretary, an older woman who was a great baseball fan. She always wanted to talk about baseball when I went in there.

MR. BROWN: Did you oblige?

MR. VOSE: I didn't know as much as she did about it. To my surprise - and she had been there with him for many, many years - when I heard it was closing I said, "What in the world would you do now?" She said, "What will I do now? I can't wait to get out of the art business." I was quite surprised. I assumed that she had after so many years, enjoyed it.

MR. BROWN: People didn't seem to know why Macbeth closed its doors.

MR. VOSE: I don't know at all why. Bob McIntyre retired to Vermont. He was very happy there, I think, in Vermont. He used to manage the Southern Vermont Art Association.

MR. BROWN: Did you - who at Knoedlers did you know or work mainly with?

MR. VOSE: Quite a lot of them. Over the years they changed. Mr. Henschel was the head of Knoedler at the time we started first with them and for a long time. Bill Davidson was - did you know him? - was one that I knew very well. Did you know Clare - one of the ladies? I think her last name was Clare. I've forgotten what her first name was.

MR. BROWN: No. Were your dealings mainly trading consignments or sending things back and forth?

MR. VOSE: Well, you would buy, they from us and we from them, quite frequently, and much more so in the years before. My father had done a lot of business with them. Then, of course, the Graham Galleries, which are still very much going on Madison Avenue. It was one of the older ones. Most of the galleries, the way they are on Newbury Street today, were on East and West 57th Street, when I remember them particularly. Now, they are all uptown, nearly level with the Metropolitan Museum. It was nice to have them all concentrated. That's an interesting thing to think of. When the Salmagundi Club was founded, which is still going, it was right in the middle of where the concentration of art business was. That's on 11th Street on Fifth Avenue. Today, if one wants to stay there, as I have sometimes, you need a taxi or bus fare to get where you are going, way up on the other end of Fifth Avenue. The art business has gradually moved up through the years.

MR. BROWN: Did you know the Graham's pretty well?

MR. VOSE: Both of them, yes. I don't go to New York much now. I don't have time with our dictionary project.

MR. BROWN: What were the Graham's like would you say?

MR. VOSE: Oh, very nice.

MR. BROWN: As dealers would you consider them very open?

MR. VOSE: Oh yes, they were excellent dealers, and I think still are. Lesley Larkin and I went in there the other day - I was thinking of the other day. It was last spring, I think. We went over to New York to talk to some foundations. We had a chance to go around. They were always very nice. Babcock Galleries was another which we knew. They are entirely changed now. It is not the same personnel as Knoedlers is. Babcock Galleries - there was Mr. DeLisio. Did you happen to know him?

MR. BROWN: I know of him.

MR. VOSE: He - Babcock had died and Carmen DeLisio was operating the Babcock Gallery. He had another associate with him who didn't own it at all, I think, but had worked with him. He had a rather unusual name. I can't think of it. [Name was Gatterdam] Mr. DeLisio was a - just simply a bear for work. He was very, very avid. I remember that his wife finally got him to take a couple of weeks vacation in summer on the Cape. He didn't like to. He wanted to stay and work. He left the - I forget the man's name - in charge and went off. Somebody who came down the Cape or had been there said, "Do you know that he gets in around ten and he leaves around 3:30?" Carmen DeLisio was absolutely furious. He rushed back to New York. Unfortunately, he had a heart attack or something, he was so excited, that he died. He was a great student of American painting too. He really was. I remember he was very, very interested in Winslow Homer. I'm sure that's right. I remember his telling me that Mr. Babcock didn't see why he spent so much time on research. He ought to be selling pictures. He said, "It is going to pay off." He didn't believe it, but it did pay off in the end. He was quite an expert.

MR. BROWN: Including knowing where Homer's were?

MR. VOSE: Yes, that's another thing he did well with.

MR. BROWN: Did you begin occasionally appraising paintings when you were fairly young? Was that work done while you were still - in the '50s or the '40s?

MR. VOSE: In the lat '40s and early '50s. It eventually got to be - as it was become today, I understand - a little bit too much. It took a great deal of time if you had to do a collection - I always tried to be extremely careful in making a report. I would be certain that such physical details as the measurements of each painting, its physical condition, the condition of the paint film and all sorts of things, were very carefully noted - whether it was on canvas and if so if the canvas had been mounted and this kind of thing, which got me quite a lot of criticism. My father and sometimes my brother thought that this was spending too much time.

MR. BROWN: Why did you do appraising? Did you do most of the appraising?

MR. VOSE: No, my brother did a tremendous amount.

MR. BROWN: And your father had done some too?

MR. VOSE: Oh yes, right.

MR. BROWN: Why would they undertake it? There was a fee involved, I suppose.

MR. VOSE: Yes, also, somebody had to do it. It was part of the service the firm would offer. Usually, you will notice any firm's stationary, up until fairly recently, would always include appraising - usually framing, appraising, whatnot. Nowadays, it is very hard to find someone who will do appraising that is qualified. I'm a little distressed about the present situation in Boston. I know my nephews are trying to avoid it if possible.

MR. BROWN: Because it is simply so time consuming.

MR. VOSE: Yes, and also it is also becoming like the medical profession. You really ought to have insurance against suit in case your appraisal is disagreed with to the disaster of the owner. If it is, for instance, a picture that is going to be given as a tax deductible gift, it may be very important, of course. I was worried about that. I'm very glad not to be doing it, although it was very interesting. You had exhibitions - I don't mean exhibitions. We can talk about them. I'm referring to collections of a large, large, number of paintings, which would have to be carefully gone over. The Redwood Library in Newport, which you are probably familiar with, is a classic example. You know that it is hung from floor to ceilings with paintings. I have three times had to appraise that. It is interesting. The first time involved rather athletic feats which I wouldn't think of doing today. In those days there was no burglar alarm. I was allowed to come in after hours and spend the night if I wanted to. There was a huge ladder. I would get way, way up above the hardwood floor. Sometimes in order to reach over to carefully measure a painting or look at it closely, you would step from the ladder or put one foot over on a molding or something. Sometimes it was a little scary. That was enjoyable. I enjoyed that. You had to be careful about the identification and the evaluation because they were going to ensure them.

MR. BROWN: That's why the appraisal thing?

MR. VOSE: Yes, that's right.

MR. BROWN: Can you remember of any where you appraised a large private collections that stand out?

MR. VOSE: Yes, there were many. I'm just trying to think of, I think more of the public ones. I remember one occasion when, toward the end of my being in the gallery at all, I was asked by a very prominent New England

museum - I won't go into details about which one it was - to appraise - they were one of those who thought it best to put all the money into insurance - I mean security, excuse me, rather than insurance. But now, they were going to lend a large number of very valuable paintings to another museum in another part of the country. That museum was going to insure them so they needed the value. My wife went with me on this occasion - which I like to have her do - we went over them together very carefully. It was a tremendous responsibility.

MR. BROWN: She is somewhat trained?

MR. VOSE: She had been with the gallery then for probably thirteen years or so. This was an awesome responsibility. They were extremely valuable paintings. The director was a friend of mine, which of course was the reason he asked us to do it. When I presented what I thought was a modest bill, he was aghast. I had to cut it down in half. He didn't see why I should think of charging so much. It was nowhere near what I think anybody else in New England or certainly not in New York, would have charged him. He thought it was outrageous.

MR. BROWN: You ran a risk of some hard feelings then, did you at times like that?

MR. VOSE: We stayed friends but I had to cut it in half what I charged him. It took time. That's another thing.

MR. BROWN: Would you be called in quite frequently to appraise estates?

MR. VOSE: Yes, yes, yes indeed. That is something now that people avoid like the plague. It is very hard for people to find -

MR. BROWN: Particularly sensitive or particularly liable?

MR. VOSE: Yes, that's right. I have been a little disturbed that there are people in Boston today, young people who don't seem to me to have the necessary experience, who are jumping in and doing it. I hope they don't get into trouble.

MR. BROWN: What would you say you need to be a competent appraiser? What is the list of qualifications and so forth?

MR. VOSE: First, of course, you have to know your business. In other words, you must be able to recognize quality, condition - that is very important. Hopefully, you will be familiar enough with the work of the artist involved to be sure whether they are genuine, which is not always possible to do. Then, you must know the art market. That is one of the things - it began to change so rapidly toward the end of the time that I was with the gallery that it was bewildering. You could hardly know from one month to the next, what your evaluation should be. Then, there was also theories about appraisal with which I didn't agree. The idea that you had appraisal for insurance, appraisal for sales, appraisal for tax - gift tax deduction, all of which are supposed to be fair market value. I always thought fair market value was what it meant and always had the one standard. I think I was in the minority really. I was quite understood by many people that you did it differently for different purposes, which I couldn't quite see and sometimes got in wrong with my customers as a result. They expected differentials. I'm trying to think of an example. Of course, you also got yourself in wrong by perhaps identifying forgeries or misattributions which people didn't like to hear.

MR. BROWN: Particularly if they had a gift.

MR. VOSE: Oh yes. I recall the place in Maine where I was asked to go and see, four I guess it was, very fine Gilbert Stuart portraits as far as I was willing to say. I'm certain they weren't. Not only were they misattributed, they were copies of Stuart's. The people firstly were not very disagreeable. They just were a little pitying my ignorance. They would have to go elsewhere, I guess. I can't imagine anyone who had that experience enjoying it. I would not have said it differently.

MR. BROWN: Has the business - as you more and more concentrated on American paintings were there some considerable collectors that you began dealing with fairly steadily, private collectors?

MR. VOSE: Oh, yes.

MR. BROWN: Can you describe some few of those that stand out in your mind? Of course, you have mentioned Karolik.

MR. VOSE: Yes, he was of course, the one who sticks in my mind because he was such a character, but there were certainly others.

MR. BROWN: We think of some of the great American collections being assembled.

MR. VOSE: You know Dr. McDonough's collection, which is so much talked about and which has been exhibited

around the country in various museums - I remember going to Pittsburgh to the opening of an exhibition of his collection at the Carnegie Institute. I guess I was invited just because I had done business with him. A funny occurrence took place when I had sold him a Rembrandt Peale painting for his collection. He had come to Boston, written in advance that he would be in Boston, he and his wife, and would like to come in to see what we had to offer. Some time, maybe nine in the morning, he called up and said he was coming and asked if I had anything special. I said there was a Rembrandt Peale I thought he would at least like to see, and he bought it. I later saw an interview with Dr. McDonough in a newspaper report, in which he said that sometimes he was pushed into things. He said, "You know, Morton Vose called me up at 6:30 in the morning when I was still asleep in my hotel room and told me I mustn't leave without this picture because it was something that I simply had to have," which is an entire fabrication. I don't know why he wanted to do this.

MR. BROWN: Did you ever challenge him?

MR. VOSE: No, I thought I better not. I don't know what got into him.

MR. BROWN: What about people like Henry DuPont, who is at least furnishing his large place in Delaware with early American things?

MR. VOSE: Are you thinking of Winterthur?

MR. BROWN: Winterthur. I believe your firm did a lot of early business with him.

MR. VOSE: We did do a lot with them. It was interesting too that he used to be very gracious about inviting people to see the estate and its collection, but he would be very careful to limit it to just so many, a rather small number of people. He would make sure that if you were coming by plane or by train, there were limousines waiting at the airport or the train station to transport you. It was a very interesting experience. I was lucky enough to be invited twice there. On one of these occasions - the first time - I noticed the wonderful greenhouses and gardens that he had there. Ruth and I have a little interest in such things as horticulture. I happened to have found something that was unusual to me. It was called a Climbing Onion. It was a really quite interesting plant. I hadn't seen it before. At that time I hadn't seen it anywhere else. I found it at a small greenhouse. The great huge bulb divides. I had one just dividing. I asked him if he knew this and he didn't. He became very interested. It had nothing to do with his art collection. Maybe that was the reason I was invited again. The next year, I got another invitation and then the letter from his secretary asking if I knew anywhere I could locate one for him - one of these plants. I really didn't, but just before going, I carefully divided - it hadn't quite divided yet. Ruth and I wrapped it up with tissue paper and this long, long tendril that it had - wrapped that up in tissue paper and packed it up in a little box with saw dust. I took it along with me. When I arrived there, there was a doorman. This was a cardboard box and I didn't want to carry it in the house, so I said, "This is for Mr. DuPont. He would know about it." No, I guess I hadn't told him I was going to send it. I said, "This is a gift for him, a plant that he might find interesting." The doorman said, "I'll take care of it. I'll take it out to the greenhouse." When I started to go in for lunch, always, nobody could find Mr. DuPont. The secretary was scurrying around. Sure enough, Mr. DuPont was out in the greenhouse unwrapping this Climbing Onion. It is also interesting, if I can take a second, that he was proud of the way he stored fabrics there. He had a very cold area to store the fabrics so that moths would be discouraged. After lunch he would invite people to go down and see this storage place. Many of the ladies would be in short sleeved or sleeveless dresses and so forth. He would get the door open and inside the door on a nail was an old coat and a soft cap which Mr. DuPont would immediately put on. Then, he would lead us all down there and we would freeze to death. The poor ladies. It was, of course, a very interesting experience.

MR. BROWN: What sort of things did the firm sell to him?

MR. VOSE: I frankly don't remember really. Most of those my father sold. If I had known you were going to ask the question, I could have looked at the records, but I don't remember that.

MR. BROWN: Were there other large scale collectors such as DuPont to whom you sold things or with whom you were involved?

MR. VOSE: Well, there surely must have been. I should have thought of this. There was a very interesting collection, a small collection in Worcester formed by Professor and Mrs. Loring H. Dodd. You may remember knowing him. He was a professor at Clarke University and also wrote art notes for the Worcester Telegram. He was a great friend of the Vose family. He would show up at every exhibition, he and his wife, and usually write something for the Worcester paper about it. Yes, he - considering his small home and probably not tremendous means, assembled a nice American collection. I remember particularly, a couple of A.P. Ryders which he had, which he had bought from us. I had to appraise that collection after he passed away. He was a very interesting man. He had no children so his collection was dispersed after he died.

[END OF TAPE 3 SIDE B]

MR. VOSE: Dodd was a very aesthetic sort of man and spoke beautifully in modulated tones. I believe that his pupils - students at Clarke University - at one time had a little saying. They used to say, "Isn't it odd that God gave us Dodd." I think that is because he was rather affected in his speech and manner. He was fun. I think it was an example of the fact that you can, keeping one's eye open and being careful, assemble a nice collection without great expense. Maybe not now. I shouldn't say can, but you could - you certainly could years ago do that.

MR. BROWN: What sort of things do you recall he had?

MR. VOSE: American.

MR. BROWN: Would they have been landscapes primarily?

MR. VOSE: Both of these Ryders were figures as I remember. I'm sorry I don't remember very much else except that they were American, and quite good American paintings of that period. They were not earlier or not very modern either. I thought of someone else a minute ago.

MR. BROWN: You mentioned to me earlier, a man who was a museum person for years and is now, I believe, an appraiser and so forth, Charles Buckley.

MR. VOSE: Charlie.

MR. BROWN: Did you first know him in St. Louis when he was there?

MR. VOSE: No, earlier than that. I was just thinking of him this morning. Charles we knew first when he was a curator in Wadsworth Athenaeum in Hartford, and then when he was director for a number of years of the Currier Gallery in Manchester, New Hampshire. He did a very good job there. Then, as you say, he was a director of the St. Louis Art Museum for a number of years - I think very successfully.

MR. BROWN: How did you get to know him - because you were selling him things occasionally?

MR. VOSE: Yes, and also he was very interested as a student of American Painting. He used to stop in and see us. He was a very close friend of mine when he was at the Currier Gallery. I went up there especially to attend a lecture on Childe Hassam, which Charlie gave. He mentioned that it seemed that Hassam had had his first lessons in painting from a man named Gaugengigl, whom nobody knew anything about. I was pleased to be able to - with tongue in cheek - to say to Charlie afterwards, "Well, I guess that is supposedly true, but I knew him." I did know him slightly, just before he died. I went to the sale of his effects too, auctioned in Boston. When Charlie was in St. Louis, I used to go there on business quite frequently. We would always have lunch together or once in a while dinner. He, I think, mainly left St. Louis and returned to New Hampshire to be with his mother who became widowed and now does still live with her there. It is funny you mentioned this. Yesterday, I received a telephone call from a lady in New London, New Hampshire where we have a small cottage. It was not someone I knew at all, saying that Mr. Buckley had been appraising her collection and that she had not been able to find - somehow had put away and not been able to find one painting. Now, she had found it, but Mr. Buckley was so busy that he could not get back for some time, but she knew that I sometimes came there and would I do it for her. This was the second or third one in about a week. I keep getting these calls. It is very distressing to have to decline, which I do because I explain that I don't keep - and I haven't in some years - kept up with the market. Also, I had to promise my wife on a stack of Bibles that I would not do this anymore because it took time from our project. I had a hard time thinking of anyone she could get, too. Unless you want to come down to Boston and go to see the Boston representatives of Christie's or Sotheby's. They usually will arrange for you. Although, I'm not sure that they will do it if it is for estate appraisal. They are a little worried about that.

MR. BROWN: You also must have known the founder of our Archives, Edgar P. Richardson.

MR. VOSE: Very well. I knew him very well, indeed.

MR. BROWN: He worked closely with your firm.

MR. VOSE: I knew him. We used to be in Detroit a great deal. I knew him there very well, and also going back of him, Valentiner, Dr. Valentiner.

MR. BROWN: You knew him quite well.

MR. VOSE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: What was he like?

MR. VOSE: Of course, he was a German gentleman. He was very pleasant to talk to. He had an extraordinary

eye. I remember - this is going back beyond what we are talking about - I remember the first time I went with my father to Detroit. We carried with us quite a number of paintings. As I may have mentioned before, we went there so frequently that my father always reserved the same suite of rooms and had had hangings made to put there. He just would store these down in the basement of the hotel. When we arrived he would have them taken out and I or it was - it was usually I in Detroit or it may have been one of my brothers - would hang them up all around to make a gallery out of the place. This was like - they called it a sample room usually. I recall that we got - we had some seventeenth century Dutch pictures then. We had some of them standing on little easels and chairs around the room. I recall Dr. Valentiner coming in. The first thing he saw, he stepped into the room and there was a small little seventeenth century Dutch painting at the far end and he said, "What a beautiful," and I don't remember the name of the artists, but he named the artist from across the room. He knew his Dutch paintings. There is a life of him you may have seen, that was published a few years ago, that I read a little while ago. He had a very bad life. He went back to Germany and served in the army there during World War I. Then, came back again.

MR. BROWN: What was Richardson like?

MR. VOSE: He was quite reserved. You probably knew him well.

MR. BROWN: A little bit.

MR. VOSE: Quite reserved. I was told - later on, somebody told me that he and Ted Richardson were walking together, quite a long time after the time we are speaking of, and Richardson came up with an extremely broad joke. He said, "I couldn't believe it was Ted Richardson." I can't believe it either.

MR. BROWN: He was much lower keyed, was he? Did he converse much with you or mainly look at things and take his time?

MR. VOSE: That was more like the point, yes. Of course, he had his troubles. The Detroit Institute of Art is a city museum, not an independent board of trustees. I understand it that when they have an opening or something where they charge admission - perhaps it isn't an opening, but they charge admission to an exhibition, the emissaries of the city are right down there to snag the take on it. He was a very fine scholar certainly, but of course, he and several others founded your organization. When I was out there I used to hear about that from Lawrence Fleishman, who was a very different kettle of fish.

MR. BROWN: Do you know him or did you get to know him fairly well?

MR. VOSE: Yes, before he was -

MR. BROWN: At the Kennedy Gallery.

MR. VOSE: Before he was there he was a business man in Detroit and he was one of our best customers. He would - we had a standard practice where I would write him a letter and send him a photograph from Boston. I'd get a call collect. "Morton, I don't have a dime with me." I didn't mind because he was a very good customer, indeed. I sold him - sold the museum on his - well, I sold to him and then he gave it to the museum a magnificent Bierstadt one time. It was a large picture, but it was in a very, very elaborate frame. The gilding was in good condition. It was very bright. He asked me to ship it to the museum because he wanted Ted Richardson to look at it. He said when the box was opened and they looked at it that Ted Richardson covered his eyes because of the frame. It was too bright, but we hadn't touched it. It was just as we received it.

MR. BROWN: They kept it.

MR. VOSE: They did, oh yes.

MR. BROWN: Even the frame.

MR. VOSE: I think so. Yes, correct.

MR. BROWN: He was a considerable collector then.

MR. VOSE: He was a considerable collector as well as those two doctors.

MR. BROWN: Dr. Burton?

MR. VOSE: Dr. Burton and Dr. Leavit. It was Dr. Burton, I think who used to - they were both customers of mine. You would ask Dr. Burton, "Well, how are you?" "Fantastic!" That was always his reply.

MR. BROWN: Did you as a measure train them to know more about American art?

MR. VOSE: No, no.

MR. BROWN: They were learning quickly though.

MR. VOSE: They were, they were indeed. I didn't have to train them at all. I wouldn't presume to anyway. All three of those people were quite good. Then, of course, Lawrence Fleischman has taken over the Kennedy Galleries.

MR. BROWN: Was that surprising when he bought into Kennedy Galleries?

MR. VOSE: I was very surprised. Then, Dr. Leavit was there for a while. He went back to Detroit again. It wasn't Burton. It was Leavit, I'm sure. I was very fond of Fred Cummings, who was later director of the Detroit Art Institute. He had some little problems eventually and retired. I remember one occasion. I knew him quite well. A customer of mine out in Grosse Point, which you know is quite far out, came to Boston and looked at several paintings and said, "I can't make up my mind now, here. I don't know what I'm going to do because I would have to see the paintings in my home. I thought the gamble was sufficient, so I said, "What if I ship all three out to you and hang them for you?" He said, "I won't promise to buy all or any, but if you want to do that, you can take a chance. That's fine." This was a little later. This was probably in the early '60s or mid '60s maybe. Had it been earlier, I would have known a warehouse or a framer or someone I could trust to unpacking paintings in Detroit. Then, I hadn't been there for quite a while. I called Fred Cummings and asked him if he could recommend one for me. He said, "What's the matter with our shipping department?" I said, "Fred, this is not for the museum. I wouldn't think of taking advantage of you like that." He said, "Oh no. I think that part of our responsibility is to encourage collecting in Detroit. Of course, there is always the chance that such things will come this way. Send them to our shipping department and then we will be glad to transport them out to Grosse Pointe for you." I never forgot that. I thought that was extremely nice. Of course, it was not self-interest, but museum interest that did that. They bought all three of the paintings so that worked out for me very well indeed. I went out and hung the lot for them and arranged lights on them. That sort of thing is always pleasant and interesting. Detroit was a very, very active place for us for many years. St. Louis had been for my father years before, years and years before. Not as much for me, although I used to go there mainly for the museum later on.

MR. BROWN: What about Chicago?

MR. VOSE: Father used to go to Chicago a great deal. I did very little in Chicago actually.

MR. BROWN: What about Cleveland?

MR. VOSE: Cleveland, indeed, yes. Cleveland was a good town for collecting and also the museum. The museum was really our main customer in Cleveland with some others. The director - a famous director of course - I can't think of his name.

MR. BROWN: Do you mean Milliken?

MR. VOSE: No, I'm thinking, just later.

MR. BROWN: Sherman Lee.

MR. VOSE: Sherman Lee, yes. My father used to know Mr. Milliken. I didn't know him. Sherman Lee was an extraordinary person. He managed - of course, especially the Oriental collection.

MR. BROWN: That's special.

MR. VOSE: I got along very well with him. Some people didn't. It also depended on how he felt, I think. He would walk right by you on the street, without speaking, or at other times, he would say, "Let's have lunch together." I also found out that he, himself, was a very good customer, personally, for any painting that had to do with fishing. I always kept that in mind and sold him not a few. He was a very fine museum director. Some of the other people there, too, I've known.

MR. BROWN: As your father got more debilitated, did you and your brother do more and more of the work at the firm? What was his role in his last years, your father's role?

MR. VOSE: He still - he became very, very interested in Alfred Jonniaux portraits. That was his main interest toward the end of his life. He used to arrange exhibitions every year showing his work. - He did succeed in painting a good many people here in Boston or even Worcester.

MR. BROWN: Your father did most of that, didn't he?

MR. VOSE: Yes, we did some too, but most of that was his. He always kept, inevitably, some amusing or

annoying incidences with portrait painting in mind to amuse visitors. I remember one - in fact, one Brookline lady, who was painted by Mr. Jonniaux. She invited her husband to come and see it when it was finished - just the last sitting. I don't know. I wouldn't have wanted to be him after the remark he made. He said, "Ha, that painting looks like you ten years ago." That was about as tactless - Mr. Jonniaux's comment was, "Ah, I understand. I have to return and paint Madame every five or ten years, touch up the painting." She didn't look pleased one little bit. We had other very interesting portrait stories to tell. The man who was so generous to the Boston Public Library - again, my memory is failing me as to his name. I just saw it the other day, too. The portrait is there. They have a room named for him. He was the Italian man who had grown up in the South end. His father had pushed a push cart and so forth. He had haunted the public library and become very educated on his own. He had never gone to more than grade school. Then, he felt that he owed something to the citizens of Boston. He amassed a big sum of money. The story was that he used to come around and observe the library. People wondered what this man was going standing there. Another time it was said that he was in the North Station standing around and some policeman asked him what he was doing. He said that he owned a good deal of the Boston-Maine Railway and he wanted to see how they were doing with it. Finally, he came and asked to have an appointment with the director of the library. That was Milton Lord, who couldn't be bothered to see him. He didn't know who he was at all. Finally, somebody said, "Look, if I were you, I would certainly see him." He wanted to make a large donation, which he did in his name. In any case, he also stipulated that there should be a portrait painted by the best artist obtainable, of him. This would be shown just when they announced the gift and then put away and not shown again until after his death. They approached us to arrange for it. At that time, Leopold Seyffert was the artist we were using, who was excellent. I remember that he arranged for Mr. - I was going to say his name and I couldn't - anyway, the sitter was to be in a large expansive arm chair, seated looking rather grand, his arms on the arms of the chair. The artist got about two-thirds through and the sitter jumped up and said, This will never do. People will think I'm a feeble old guy that can't even stand up. No, Sir, this has to be a standing portrait." They started all over again. DiFerrari was his name.

MR. BROWN: DiFerrari.

MR. VOSE: DiFerrari, yes, was the gentleman who gave the money to the library. I have - if anecdotes about portraits are alright, I can think of another one. Did you ever know Elmer Green, in Boston, the artist? The poor fellow, he died young. He's been gone for many years. He was a very, very charming man and an awfully good painter. He became somewhat of a friend of mine. He made a great hit by painting the Pope. He had been actually allowed to paint the Pope in Italy. Immediately he blossomed forth. He was allowed to paint Cardinal Hayes in New York, I believe, and so forth. He decided to take a studio in New York. He gave up his Fenway building studio. Just after that, I was called upon by a delegation of three gentlemen. I won't say from where - a small New England city - who said that they needed a portrait painter, but unfortunately it had to be a "deader" as they say in the trade, because the gentleman had died and he had never had a portrait painted. They now needed one. He was chairman of everything in the town. I think it was the hospital that wanted a portrait of him and would I find an artist - they wanted a really good one. I called Elmer, his name was - Elmer Green, in New York - and said, "What are we going to do. Are you willing to take a deader?" At the moment he hadn't quite caught on yet as much as he expected in New York. He said, "I guess I would, but I don't know where I would find a place to paint it." He finally managed to rent back his old studio in the Fenway building and he had one awful time. The family all disagreed as to which photograph was the best one and so forth and so on. Then, of course, all his business associates - he must have been a banker I think - had different ideas. Poor Elmer was very, very obliging. He painted and painted, and changed and changed. Finally, they agreed that it was alright and they had a big unveiling and he got his rather large fee and I got a commission on it. A couple of weeks later, I was walking through Copley Square and here was one of these gentlemen who had been on the committee. We stopped to say hello and I tried to be pleasant. I said, "Wasn't it nice that that portrait was such a success?" He looked all around and said, "I'll tell you something. That didn't look anything like the old son of a gun, but it looked so much pleasanter than he ever did that we thought we would take it."

MR. BROWN: It can be a perilous trade, both for the painter and sometimes you people.

MR. VOSE: Yes, oh yes. Yes, we had one occasion where my brother Herbert had managed a commission for a lady painter. This was really to copy an older - I don't know whether it was a Sargent or a Salisbury - something of that sort. Two members of the family were arguing about it. They were going to toss a coin when the copy was made to see who go the original. It was decided that the family didn't like the copy at all. It turned out that this lady had - I don't know whether she had just been converted to Christian Science or she had been - but anyway, she broke her glasses and now felt that she should not have the prescription refilled or her eyes examined. It just didn't go with her faith. Her painting, of course, was disastrous and it wasn't accepted at all. She was adamant. She would not replace her glasses. I don't know what happened to her.

MR. BROWN: This was the lady painter?

MR. VOSE: The lady painter, yes. She decided that this was a crutch that didn't sit with her.

MR. BROWN: Your brother was in a pickle for a bit.

MR. VOSE: Well, yes. The strange thing was that many years afterwards, I became quite friendly with the - I guess he was the nephew of the sitter for the original portrait. We were in the state guard together. When I couldn't get in the army I was in the state guard for five years. He was going to move and he asked me to come out and look over some things. Here was this copy. I guess they had just taken it and put it away. I don't know whether they paid for it or not. He said, "You know the more I think of it, that wasn't as bad as we thought it was after all. I think I'll frame it up and keep it." I don't know if they ever paid the woman. You do get strange fixes with portraiture.

MR. BROWN: I think it was in the early '60s or in the '50s - possibly the name of the firm was Robert C. Vose Galleries or Vose Galleries of Boston?

MR. VOSE: It's been incorporated.

MR. BROWN: Was that a significant change or was it done for business reasons?

MR. VOSE: It was done because there seven Voses in the gallery when my wife and I and son left. That was not wrong, but really very fitting to just have one name. We thought that that was best. There had been changes over the years of course.

MR. BROWN: Your father didn't object?

MR. VOSE: Oh no.

MR. BROWN: He thought it was a good idea.

MR. VOSE: He thought it was a good idea. No, he didn't object at all.

MR. BROWN: You became then, after his death, president?

MR. VOSE: Yes, this was just - a corporation has to have officers. That was the only reason for that - treasurer and so forth. It certainly didn't mean that I ran the gallery any more than anybody else. We all cooperated. You had to report officers. When I left, after twelve years, my brother was president. Now, his son, Bill is president of the gallery.

MR. BROWN: You left - in what year was it you left?

MR. VOSE: It was June of '76.

April 28, 1987

[Tape 4 of 4]

MR. BROWN: This is April 28, 1987. I would like now, after retirement in '76, from the gallery, did you continue with some affiliation at all with it or what did you principally do?

MR. VOSE: To a very, very slight extent. Actually, my wife, Ruth, and I opened our own rather modest, fine arts business in cooperation - I think it was necessary - with the gallery. While we did some buying and selling, we really were more consultants and appraisers. I never was terribly keen about appraising, but of course, there was a lot of it to do and I had done a good deal during my business career with the gallery. I did continue doing that. This went on for about four years. In the mean time, we were preparing to really go into our dictionary of American painters project on a really organized basis if we could possibly do so.

MR. BROWN: This was a project that you had had in mind for some years?

MR. VOSE: I would suppose that you would say some years - I think about 55 years. I had started thinking about it immediately after I came with my father at the gallery in 1931 and found a great number of signatures on paintings that I could not find recorded anywhere. First, of course, I kept notes just for my own convenience, but as I went on, it began to seem that there was material there for something really organized and something that would be a real benefit - first I thought just to art dealers perhaps - but then since it was so vast, this pool of unknown and forgotten artists, that it might be of real help to collectors, museums, researchers - especially researchers. I began to think of a more formal project.

MR. BROWN: Did you feel that existing books were quite inadequate? For example, Mantle Fielding does stop in the mid-twenties.

MR. VOSE: Yes, it came out in 1926. Of course, a tremendous amount of research had been done since then. There had been some updates. James Carr in New York, brought one out in 1965, I think it was, a reprint. It was just a reprint, but with a supplement which had such new information as death dates and so forth, which he had been able to dig up. There was one other slightly later reprint with a short, new dictionary, as a supplement, too, at the back, but nothing very much. Now, since just recently really, there have been two updates of Mantle Fielding, which many people still think of as the standard reference.

MR. BROWN: The New York Historical Society's Dictionary compiled by - Gross and Wallace came out in the '50s.

MR. VOSE: It did, '57.

MR. BROWN: But that was an earlier period than you were thinking of?

MR. VOSE: No, I'll get to that. I was just going to say that just now, first in 1983 and then in 1986, Glenn Opitz, of Apollo Books in Poughkeepsie, New York has brought out two updates and expansions of Mantle Fielding - especially the second one came out in '86 - very good. Yes, Gross and Wallace, we think of - the New York Historical Society dictionary - as really the model of what we should have in the way of a dictionary of American artists. It was a real project. It is still the standard as far as it goes. I assume it was intended to be two volumes. Actually, only one ever came out, which carries it up to artists effective by 1860. There are numerous projects on their way now, of a specialized nature - including one to update that again. The New York Historical Society has the copyright on that and they will probably do something. But, in the mean time, we have really assembled a staff and been working in a fairly organized manner for several years.

MR. BROWN: Mantel Fielding has hardly any text to speak of, readable text at all. Gross and Wallace has some. As I understand it, your project you wish to have more than the other two. That was at least your initial -

MR. VOSE: That was indeed my initial thought. However, it has now grown to such proportions that I don't see how that would be possible in one lifetime. We have now decided on a more or less Gross and Wallace type dictionary. Without text or short text, depending on what is available and how important the artist is. We would, naturally, expect to do a little more in the way of text with newly discovered or forgotten painters, or those who we think haven't been treated specially, well, than we would with very well-known prominent artists, who had been much discussed already.

MR. BROWN: Perhaps you can tell, what were you accumulating for 55 years and how did you go about it?

MR. VOSE: Having this in mind, I was really keeping notes. Since we traveled all across the country in our business and north and south, I used to steal or borrow Saturdays - not Saturdays necessarily, except evenings - but evenings, Sundays, holidays, when I couldn't do the work of the gallery, to visit museums, historical societies, libraries, even for instance, state capitals. State capitals often have portraits by local people who aren't known elsewhere. You can pick up new signatures there. The difficulty with that, of course was that I had not time for research on these people. It was just an identification process. They existed and were kept for a time when I could give full attention to this sort of thing to follow them up.

MR. BROWN: Did you have a network of people who would also say, "You should look here," "You should see there?"

MR. VOSE: Not formally then, while I was in business. We did, of course, have a very wide acquaintance with museum folks across the country and with collectors. They, very often, volunteered information on artists in their locality, who weren't otherwise well-known, and were very helpful.

MR. BROWN: They would know best their local areas.

MR. VOSE: Yes, exactly. When I had a chance to spend some time in a particular area - as for instance, the various places in Georgia. I spent a lot of time in Atlanta on business, Savannah also, and then in Memphis, Tennessee, in Montgomery and Birmingham, Alabama, and in Detroit - not so much Chicago, but some - and in St. Louis. Where I tended to spend some time - two or three weeks at a time - I would have time to do a little research. Therefore, I have a little more information to begin with in those particular areas.

MR. BROWN: Can you describe some of those - do you have any anecdotes to relate, coming upon artists who proved to be very interesting or about whom there was a good deal of local information - even descendents of some artists?

MR. VOSE: Descendents and relatives are the sources you love to come across. I'm just trying to think whether I can remember any particular thing. The artists in Atlanta were of interest to me, simply because they were little known, the older ones. I've been criticized for that attitude. One of our board of advisors, which we now have, a museum director, asked me why in the world I was spending time on artists in Atlanta, when in Georgia, there

were not any important ones according to him. That's not my attitude at all. They were there and people will find those signatures and good, at least passable ones. It is good to have them recorded, I think. The same was true in other places like Memphis, Tennessee. Of course, when you get to Detroit, there was a great deal of painting in Detroit and Cleveland. Cleveland is another place that I used to go frequently. There, there is research already of course accomplished, which you can tap. Then too, there is an organization called the Archives of American Art, which I used to run into when I was in the early days in Detroit, just starting off.

MR. BROWN: I would think that in rural areas, as the south was, largely, you did a good deal of running around for contacts in many places.

MR. VOSE: That's true. Of course, that has continued with more time to pay attention to that since we gave up our business. The same has been true in New England - even places like Maine, Vermont, and so forth - where you find interesting artists recorded absolutely nowhere at all.

MR. BROWN: Do you find them usually, to begin with at least, in local historical societies?

MR. VOSE: Yes, that's one very good source.

MR. BROWN: Town halls.

MR. VOSE: Town halls - mostly towns where the clerks are very cooperative. Most of the while city clerks are not. They are too busy. I hear in some places it's illegal for a city clerk, for instance to release information about a deceased person no matter how long ago, unless to a member of the family. I couldn't very well claim relationship to all of these people. I have been turned off sometimes. Little Rock, Arkansas, I remember, was very, very tight lipped. "This is against state law, what you are asking," trying to find out the exact birth or death dates. I'm told that really if it was strictly applied, that pertains to Massachusetts, but I've never been brought face-to-face with it here.

MR. BROWN: Hope that it never will. Did you do a good deal - after your retirement, did you send out many letters or did you set up an itinerary for yourself?

MR. VOSE: Itinerary more or less implies travel.

MR. BROWN: Correspondence, then - could you do a good deal from here?

MR. VOSE: Oh, yes. As a matter of fact we are doing -

MR. BROWN: Correspondence?

MR. VOSE: Oh, yes. That's what we are doing because I am no longer supporting my travels by business at the gallery. We, of course, have hoped for grant support which we haven't had to the extent that we had hoped so far. Boston is a wonderful center for this sort of a search. Since we are acquainted with museums all over the country and historical societies and so forth, it has been very easy without traveling; especially since we now have set up a network of regional representatives as we call them.

MR. BROWN: You have all the data or most of the data you have accumulated over the many years. After your retirement you and your wife were able to sort this out a bit. Then, you began adding on a staff?

MR. VOSE: Yes, about six or seven years ago, I think, now, we engaged our first staff member, Mary Dewarf, who was perfectly wonderful and continued with us for six years. You can't expect anyone to consider this a lifetime job, except myself perhaps, and maybe my wife and son. She is now doing other things that she found more interesting, but we have some very, very fine people at the present.

MR. BROWN: They will have checked the standard reference work and undertaken the correspondence as well?

MR. VOSE: Not the correspondence so much - well, to a certain extent. Checking the standard references is one of the things that they are doing right along. That is the thing now, because there are several references that we think of at least as standard. We have about ten or twelve which we check through continually. It is amazing - although I am told that it shows my lack of imagination when I say this - it is amazing to me that one can find so many discrepancies in standard references. I'm sure you know they exist. You are experienced. Even in things published just this year, you will find disagreements, birth and death dates.

MR. BROWN: That alone, must take you a great deal of time.

MR. VOSE: That is one of the big time consuming operations. We do have, at the present time, one Ph.D. in American art history on our staff, and several others who are very, very keen, which helps me a great deal, but it also pushes me faster than I can go. They are very eager.

MR. BROWN: You say faster than you can go. Your job is then, as they assemble the data, to look at it and begin to think how it should be written up or not written up I suppose.

MR. VOSE: Yes, although some of it, of course, is only a skeleton - a name with birth or death dates, perhaps, some indication of what sort of subject and what sort of a technique was used. On others there is considerable to be written up. One of my jobs is correspondence. That is really quite considerable. I would like to have a secretary, buy my good wife fills that post very, very well. The trouble is she is also supposed to be right in it with our son and with me on the research.

MR. BROWN: Are you corresponding now still with the societies or with governments or generally with individuals at this stage?

MR. VOSE: With individuals a great deal. We find that some people will become very interested on learning of the project, and voluntarily continue correspondence with us. At the moment, a gentleman in a small town in Maine has been sending me information about artists you can't find listed anywhere. I was surprised how many he knew of, even in his own neighborhood and neighboring towns. He has enlisted others, too. It spreads by word of mouth.

MR. BROWN: From your representatives you hope it will spread to yet others.

MR. VOSE: Our regional representatives -

[END OF TAPE 4 SIDE A]

MR. BROWN: Are there portions of the country you have more heavily represented in, in terms of your contacts and others? Are you thin in some parts?

MR. VOSE: Yes, I'm afraid we are still because our regional representatives - while the whole system is excellent - we find that they vary very much in their commitment and enthusiasm. Some are continually sending us information. Others, we scarcely hear from at all unless we get on the phone and ask them what they have been doing. Since they are mainly volunteer, we can't be too hard on them. We do pay for out of pocket expense such as xeroxing and telephone calls and bus trips and that sort of thing. Some will go right ahead. We have one in New Orleans who simply considers it a regular job. We get letters from him just about every two weeks with new information and also a little bill of what his expenses were, telephone, time and whatnot. We have an excellent one in Denver and another one in Lincoln, Nebraska, and one again, in San Diego. They are spread around pretty well. There are others who are not quite as active.

MR. BROWN: Those people who you have just mentioned then are covering a pretty vast swath of territory.

MR. VOSE: That's true. Yes, that's true.

MR. BROWN: In San Diego you could presumable cover the whole southern Californian scene.

MR. VOSE: Yes, and this gentleman who is connected with the San Diego Historical Society has been doing research on southern Californian artist on his own and very generously sharing it with us and doing some writing for local bulletins and things, which he also shares, which is very helpful indeed.

MR. BROWN: You, several years ago, decided that you would convert the notes that you were taking, the data gathering, to put it into a computer data base. Is that right?

MR. VOSE: That's right.

MR. BROWN: What prompted that decision? Is it simply the best way to -

MR. VOSE: It does seem also the safest way to preserve things. What we have been doing - my son, Seth, is the computer curator of our work. In fact, he has been able to train several of the young ladies working with us so that they are pretty good, too. He hasn't been able to train me, which disgusts him. He has been transferring this information as fast as he could because he is involved in the rest of it too, to disks, and then storing those in a bank vault in New Hampshire so that they are not in the house, which unfortunately isn't fireproof. It is a regular dwelling. We have a huge card file there, between 30 and 40 thousand names on cards, which is one of the reasons we decided not to attempt an encyclopedic narrative dictionary.

MR. BROWN: Simply so many names.

MR. VOSE: It is just impossible, of course, to write entries for that many in a lifetime.

MR. BROWN: You are going down - what is your scope - from what date to what?

MR. VOSE: From the very beginning, as Gross and Wallace does - they have two or three in the 15 hundreds - through those born before 1900. I must confess I wish I had cut it off a little sooner now that I see how many there are.

MR. BROWN: You have presumably, everything that Gross and Wallace have plus a great many others who were active after 1860.

MR. VOSE: Oh, yes. Yes, indeed because there are many living today, of course, who were born before 1900 and are still working. It is a question how many a publisher would allow us to do. We are having, of course, conflicting advice all the time. We just had some interesting meetings and we were urged on the one hand to get something out quick, before there is too much competition and to let people know what was going on. Then, maybe, make a supplement later, which is not at all my idea. I have to confess I was much better pleased when another authoritative voice said, "Don't be silly. Publish all of your 40 thousand," or whatever it is, "because this will be the standard in the future." That's what I would like to do, but it still will take a number of years to complete.

MR. BROWN: Could you possibly have a first printing before you have the flesh attached to the skeleton in a number of cases? It seems you have the names.

MR. VOSE: I think that is what they had in mind originally - the people who advised us to get it out in a hurry. It doesn't appeal to me greatly. I think that to do that, perhaps, would be a little off the idea. I would much prefer to go ahead and finish it knowing - I admit there may be other things out before we can finish.

MR. BROWN: Approximately how many entries were there in the Gross and Wallace and Fielding?

MR. VOSE: Fielding - I'm terrible at exact figures. Gross and Wallace had something like - we just checked the other day, but we've checked so many different ones that I'm a little uncertain. Gross and Wallace have something like, I guess, 20 thousand.

MR. BROWN: You are probably twice as many?

MR. VOSE: Yes, I would think.

MR. BROWN: Including a great many from the - more additions from the year which they didn't cover.

MR. VOSE: But you see there is another thought to that comparison. Gross and Wallace included sculptors and painters, which we don't. These are only painters and yet we have well over 30, going onto 40 thousand, now.

MR. BROWN: How many did you think you would perhaps come up with when you embarked on the project?

MR. VOSE: I had no idea. I can't answer that question really with any sense at all. I don't know how long it is going to take us now. Of course, we have to set dates. For instance, when you apply for grants they want to know how long it will be. One has to make an estimate. It would seem that we have a dead line, a target date, of 1991. That discourages some publishers. They want to see something much sooner. It is possible that one could do it in perhaps two years less if we had grants, which would allow us to double the staff. There are seven of us working on it now. We could use - well, we could use certainly three or four more.

MR. BROWN: Who would be checking references.

MR. VOSE: Yes. And following up on leads. There are all sorts of special things. You could even use a librarian, and I could use a secretary, for instance, which would speed things up tremendously. With everybody, in our own staff, doing something with filing, you inevitably find duplications and difficulties. I'm not a very orderly person myself. I have a hard time - I spend more time looking for things than in actual research. I would like to correct that.

MR. BROWN: Interest in research has always been with you, hasn't it? As I recall, you did that not only in the art field, but you are interested in language and the like. You always brought to bear a rather scholarly perspective when you were in business and, of course, now.

MR. VOSE: I don't know how scholarly it is. If it is - I find it very intriguing to look into things of this sort. There were other possible fields I would have liked to do, but this is the one I find most exciting right now.

MR. BROWN: You've always felt it very important to try to have excellent reference tools in your research.

MR. VOSE: Yes, and especially to have accurate ones, which - it is amazing how inaccurate some of the things that are used right along turn out to be. Of course there have been a great many specialized dictionaries of artists published recently, such as *Artists of the West Coast*, *California Painters*, etc.

MR. BROWN: Women artists.

MR. VOSE: Chris Petty's *Woman Artists* is very good. That is supposed to cover the world which is quite a huge job and it is all in one volume. It is not like *Thieme-Becker*, Benezit [*Dictionary of Artists*], which is something like 28 volumes. Benezit has gone through several editions. The one I have is eight volumes, I think.

MR. BROWN: Would you perceive your volume or several volumes eventually being so fleshed out that it would become another *Thieme-Becker*. In time, presumably 50 years or so from now -

MR. VOSE: If there was somebody to carry it out. Seth, my son, is interested in doing so. It is possible, I guess.

MR. BROWN: A narrative with detailed biographies where available.

MR. VOSE: You would need a huge staff. Of course, *Thieme-Becker* and Benezit had a stack of writers. You'll notice initials under many of the articles, the entries - different initials.

MR. BROWN: At this point, it is essential to have something accurate.

MR. VOSE: In my mind, there is not much use in having it if it is not accurate.

MR. BROWN: Of course not. You look to the future of this fairly optimistically don't you?

MR. VOSE: Yes.

MR. BROWN: Until you pin down the publisher, of course.

MR. VOSE: Yes, we had had some interest - quite strong interest - from two publishers. Each one of them is a little disappointed to find that it is not press ready - as you might say - as yet. Of course, it is not - one has to realize it is not really a best seller kind of project. It has special appeals. I think that there are a good many people - curators would be the first step, I think. Curators and collectors - certainly collectors - art dealers and appraisers, historical societies, libraries. I would expect a big art museum would want more than one copy and the same with good large libraries. Antique dealers, I think, would be interested as well.

MR. BROWN: Do you sometimes think your whole career has been devoted to this in the way of research and with an art firm as well?

MR. VOSE: No, some people seem to think that I ought to feel that way. Not so. I very much enjoyed what I did with the family galleries. As I think back, I don't think I would wish to change if I had a chance to change and do it over differently. That's where it stands now. People are inclined to ask us, "Are you through the M's yet," or something of that sort. It doesn't work that way of course because especially with our network of regional representatives, we are receiving information on painters who may begin with Z. It isn't an alphabetical thing, A to Z, alpha and omega. No, I think that probably we might be said to be somewhere near halfway through because there is a great deal now to do in the way of actually writing the entries. Of course, we have prototype entries written, which we offer as samples to publishers, but only a very small number compared to what has to be done.

MR. BROWN: Does most of the staff at one time or another, write the entries?

MR. VOSE: That hasn't been so. We were trying that when we thought there would be longer entries, but more recently - well, yes. The ones we have done now - we only have probably between 50 and 100 done - they have been written by different members of the staff, including myself. We had thought too, of course, asking specialists in various fields to write them. Although, since they are fairly brief, it might not interest many scholars.

MR. BROWN: Perhaps as consultants they could come in in the preliminary stage and look at whether they want to or not.

MR. VOSE: They ought to be reviewed, of course, by specialists and scholars, which we do hope we can do.

MR. BROWN: The problem is you need a little bit more support, more funding.

MR. VOSE: Yes, that is the big problem right at the moment.

MR. BROWN: And the problem with getting a commitment from publishers is that you don't have enough quite completed.

MR. VOSE: That's true.

MR. BROWN: Publishers won't reach out and say, "We'll take it here and we'll fund the further research and compilation."

MR. VOSE: Not the ones that we are anxious to use. We have had - I had an offer a year or two ago from one New York publisher to take over all of the expense and everything. I checked around and was told, "You better stay away from that fellow. He will control everything. Tell you exactly how to do it and make it as cheap as possible. We paid no attention to that. Apparently, we have to get it pretty well press ready before they will take it on.

MR. BROWN: I think it is great that you want to have it as you wish it to be - not a skeleton - before it is published for the first time.

MR. VOSE: Very much so. I don't think I will be doing more than one of these in my life so I have to have something that can be a standard for a good time. There is no reason why it shouldn't be, I think, if we are allowed enough funds to finish it up. My son is interested to carry it on. In fact, my will provides that if I'm not around when it is finished, he is going to carry it on. It will be in his name. The ownership will be in his name.

[END OF TAPE 4 SIDE B]

[END OF INTERVIEW.]

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