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Oral history interview with Meyer and Vivian
Potamkin, 2001 Feb. 12

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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a tape-recorded interview with Vivian & Meyer Potamkin on February 12, 2001. The interview took place at their apartment in Philadelphia, PA, and was conducted by Avis Berman for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. Funding for the transcription of this interview provided by the Smithsonian Institution's Women's Committee.

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

Interview

AVIS BERMAN: This is Avis Berman interviewing Vivian and Meyer Potamkin for the Archives of American Art on February 12, 2001 in their apartment in Philadelphia. Now, what I am going to start off with is a couple of just background questions, and then we will be getting into more specific questions about works of art. But before I start, is there anything that either of you had in mind that you wanted to get on tape, or things that you were thinking about?

MEYER POTAMKIN: Well, the one thing that --

[tape stops, re-starts]

VIVIAN POTAMKIN: I didn't hear what you were saying.

MR. POTAMKIN: When we were collecting, we never looked upon ourselves as being collectors. We looked upon ourselves as individuals who helped others. As a result, many things we gave away. We gave things to the White House, we gave things to [inaudible], which the Guggenheim had their tongue hanging out for, and which we gave to the Guggenheim. We gave things to the National Gallery. We gave, as I said, 400 things or more to Dickinson College. We gave to --

MRS. POTAMKIN: Allentown.

MR. POTAMKIN: Pardon me?

MRS. POTAMKIN: Allentown, we gave --

MR. POTAMKIN: Yes, Allentown, the museum. And I think we gave something to the Michelin [phonetic] Museum.

MRS. POTAMKIN: And of course the big collection to the state museum.

MR. POTAMKIN: Yes. We gave away a very, very large collection of William Penn and his treaty with the Indians to the Museum of -- the state museum. And it came to the point where the -- oh, it culminated with Hicks's of William Penn's treaty with the Indians. And one of the silly things that happened was when it was being [inaudible] residence, an individual in the crowd wondered why we gave it to Pennsylvania. I just laughed. I said, "Where else would you give it?" So that's when it started. And then, as time went on, and we had a mixed -- [inaudible] would acquire things, and we saw [inaudible] in 1950. And, as a result, in about 1955, we had to make up our mind, because either -- well, there would be a polyglot. The field was so vast, that it was impossible for us to stay on top of everything. So, we decided that -- and I have a master's in social group work -- in New York City there is the Bowery [phonetic], and things of that sort, were very interesting and exciting at the moment. And so we decided that we would sell [inaudible], sell our European things, and keep our American. And some of the things I wanted to keep was a self-portrait by Chagall. So we gave that, but then we got that back again. Everything else we [inaudible] was American. And also, in 1963, we had already collected what we felt was one of the greatest collections of the Eight. And since it was the last year of the [inaudible], the president of the board of the art museum suggested that we give them to the art museum, where I was on the board. And he [inaudible], so -- which we did. And we -- this past year, we gave the life estate up. And we felt it was the greatest collection of the Eight put together. Included with that was a sculpture, by Lachaise, of peacocks that he had patina'd himself.

MS. BERMAN: With the gold?

MR. POTAMKIN: With the gold.

MS. BERMAN: Yes.

MR. POTAMKIN: So, from that point on, 1956 was when we started to actively look for -- it was a collection.

MS. BERMAN: Well, beforehand, before 1956, the fact that you were thinking about giving it away, and the diversity, how did that affect how you did collect? In other words, what was the mind set, pre versus post-1956?

MR. POTAMKIN: It was -- we had a large house, a large four or five-story house. [Inaudible.] And it was a -- and when we moved here, we had a choice to make. The choice was, what are you going to do with things that hang in the hallways, and -- well, we didn't have hallways here. So, we had two paintings of about 1860s, 1870s --

MRS. POTAMKIN: No, a little earlier than that, because it was when the Fairmount Waterworks [phonetic] --

MR. POTAMKIN: Oh, yes.

MRS. POTAMKIN: About 1835 or 1840, something like that.

MR. POTAMKIN: And so the White House wanted them.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Nickoli Cavio [phonetic], who was commissioned to come to this country to do all the interesting -- he was Italian, he was commissioned to come to this country to depict all the wonders of the new country, and the great buildings, and so on. But go ahead, dear. I didn't want to interrupt. Go on.

MR. POTAMKIN: -- the White House, and we felt a [inaudible]. And also, when we sold our European things, [inaudible] certain that we can buy them back through a dealer. And, as a result of that, we acquired a Mary Cassatt, which we still have, and we acquired that in Paris. And the -- there wasn't anything too unusual about the sale, except a lack of knowledge on the part of Americans about European things, was when the Duffet, Jean Duffet, [inaudible] the individual purchaser paid for it [inaudible], which was -- there was very little knowledge of basic European things. And that was it.

MRS. POTAMKIN: You asked about our mindset. Did you mean did we change our attitude? Were we looking to buy things to give away?

MS. BERMAN: Yes, versus --

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes. Well, we weren't.

MS. BERMAN: Okay.

MRS. POTAMKIN: We just always acquired things that we fell upon that we liked that we could more or less afford, and so on. We really did very little studying.

MR. POTAMKIN: Yes. It was a very interesting thing. When we got started in 1950, we didn't know any more about art [inaudible] within Europe. We didn't know anything about it. We didn't own any great art works. The only ones we knew about were the Swiss works.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Skera [phonetic].

MR. POTAMKIN: Yes.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes.

MR. POTAMKIN: Skera. And there was a three-volume set that was about the, I guess, [inaudible] 15 or so of volumes, and the American section was 3 pages, 3 volumes. And it was just the Impressionists. And sometimes, [inaudible]. So, and I'm an avid reader. I used to stay up and read, and read, and we would discuss things. And the New York scene was very interesting. The -- they were -- there are things which excited you. There was the Haymarket riots. And it was interesting that, at approximately the same period that they took place, in two cities [inaudible] apart, in London and New York. So, the -- also [inaudible] Marsh [phonetic], and I paid a dime to see the -- [inaudible] around the interior of this barrel that he painted [inaudible]. So, it was -- the New York scene were the scenes, which I grew up in. The towers, the literature. At that time, in Philadelphia, we had two Yiddish papers, and [inaudible] because -- and in New York, they had this one, The Forward, which was a marvelous paper that appeared all in Yiddish. Later on it had a back page in English. But it was exciting. Things were happening. And, also, things were reasonable. By "reasonable," I meant it was about the same scale as today. In other words, if a Morris and Hartley was selling for \$300,000, the ability to pay for it, and the economy, was at the same scale as it was when it was selling for -- you could have bought that Morris and Hartley at Rosenberg's [phonetic] on 72nd Street, and they had a Monzu [phonetic] sale, and hanging on the wall was a cemetery, black and white, it was \$900. But we were making -- I was making, at that time, about \$26 a week. So it -- that was level. And, also, it was exciting, because every time you walked into a gallery, an American gallery especially, they locked the door and threw the keys away, and wouldn't let you out. There was nobody buying. And I can remember the first time I walked into Pashal [phonetic] Gallery, and got there in the early part of the afternoon, about 2:00, and she was on 52nd Street. And she was a lovely person always. And we told her that we were

interested in a Glaggins [phonetic] or Prendergast. And she brought a few things out. And the first time we met her, we bought something. I think it was \$300?

MRS. POTAMKIN: I don't remember. Was it the Prendergast?

MR. POTAMKIN: I don't know. It was the Glaggins.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Oh, that picnic thing, yes.

MR. POTAMKIN: Yes, Glaggins.

MS. BERMAN: Was that, that still life there, in the other room, in the dining room, was that a Glaggins?

MRS. POTAMKIN: No. The Glaggins is a small -- oh, I forget where it's hanging. It's a picnic scene on the Dauer [phonetic] River. It's tiny. [Inaudible.] But the --

MR. POTAMKIN: With \$100.

MRS. POTAMKIN: I think so, yes.

MR. POTAMKIN: [Inaudible.]

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes.

MR. POTAMKIN: And the way we would ask for things, later on, we said [inaudible], you walked in and we said -- I said, "I wanted a Glaggins [inaudible]," so she brought that out. And it had been in the 1908 show of the Eight, and she told us that she would sell it us. We agreed on a price. However, we could not take it, because it was going to be in a reincarnation of the Eight. So we waited for it. And that was one which we [inaudible] museum. But the other part was that the -- going into galleries was so easy, because the gallery owners were knowledgeable, and they wanted you to be knowledgeable. There was no desire on the part of a gallery owner to keep his knowledge to himself. Also, if you wanted to buy something, or you offered to buy it, you would be surprised, a few days later, when it would arrive -- and the understanding at that time was that if you wanted to buy something, and the -- you did buy it, after they sell it to you, you can send it back at their expense. There was no expense on your part, whatsoever, which is unusual. Also, we knew nothing about fakes. All we knew was we would go in, and they'd show us works, and someone like Harry Bertioia, a marvelous individual, who made a recording of the sounds of his sculpture and gave us a copy of it. And he would make up these recordings, because he had a brother who was a musician. And his brother visited him each summer. So he would try to make up things that he could accompany him with. And these -- Harry Bertioia's studio was spotless, you could eat off the floor. And he was really gracious. There was a sculpture of -- next to the clock.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes.

MR. POTAMKIN: It's five pieces, or five tones, five true music tones that Harry Bertioia made. There is a story with it, but I'm not going to tell you that story.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Well, you ask the questions.

MS. BERMAN: Well, if you wanted to tell the story having to do with --

MRS. POTAMKIN: Well, it would relate more to Harry Bertioia and our own personal feelings.

MS. BERMAN: That's okay.

MRS. POTAMKIN: We used to open our home frequently for non-profits, for fundraising functions. And one time we were opening our home for something, and I thought, "Well, all the flowers and the nuts and everything, and the silver being polished and all that, why not have a dinner party either the night before or the night after," which we did. And the -- we had the visit first, and then the next night we had a dinner party. And the next morning, I came downstairs for breakfast, and this piece, which is, you know, consists of fine wires, was resting on a piece of furniture. And the sunlight came through a window, just as I happened to glance at it. And I noticed -- I don't know when it had happened -- I noticed one spoke had been bent at right angles. Someone had deliberately bent it with a fingernail. I still get sick in the stomach. I ran upstairs and I threw up, because I couldn't imagine how this could happen. And then I called my husband. I was practically hysterical. And he said, "Calm down and call Harry Bertioia," which I did, eventually. And he also said, "Calm down," or words to that effect. And he said, "Bring it out, and I will repair it for you." We didn't have too many instances of people taking aggressive action, but we did have a few, unfortunately. One time we had a party and friends were there. And one of our friends apparently had had too much to drink. And we had a large Prendergast at the time, which we no longer have. And the woman's face had no defined features. He took a fountain pen -- and I happened to be

there, and I started to scream -- he was about to draw in some features. So, I mean, that's one aspect of collecting that one must --

MS. BERMAN: I can't even believe that someone would touch someone else's property.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Oh, yes.

MS. BERMAN: A so-called friend.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Oh, unfortunately, we have had several experiences, yes.

MS. BERMAN: What was the so-called reason for him doing that?

MR. POTAMKIN: Who knows?

MRS. POTAMKIN: Oh, just was happy, he had too much to drink, and he thought the face should be more defined. That is a part of collecting that goes along with the story, you know, and the --

MS. BERMAN: Now, I'm not surprised about the Bertoia, because people are less respectful to anything abstract.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Interesting, yes.

MS. BERMAN: Because of all -- at the Smithsonian, on the wall, of all the museums, it used to be that the Hirshhorn was vandalized the most. Now, maybe it was the layout, but it was also the more abstract things.

MRS. POTAMKIN: I guess people are annoyed by it, yes.

MS. BERMAN: Well, they think it's not art.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Oh, yes, yes. Toys.

MS. BERMAN: They don't respect it.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Right. I guess --

MS. BERMAN: This was some years ago, when I read this, and that was what --

MRS. POTAMKIN: Interesting.

MS. BERMAN: And that was what they had surmised, the more abstract things. The "my child could do it" stuff.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes. Oh, yes, we get that all the time.

MS. BERMAN: "Well, your child could do it, but you couldn't."

MRS. POTAMKIN: That is well put. Mostly, collecting has been a wonderful experience, a lot of fun, you know, and we expanded our horizons and the whole thing, and learned a lot, and met wonderful people, and so on. But every now and then there is a little thorn that --

MS. BERMAN: Now, it was interesting. You were saying you didn't know about this, you hadn't studied. Mrs. Potamkin, was there something --

MRS. POTAMKIN: Call me Vivian. It's easier, if you don't mind.

MS. BERMAN: Not in the least. Well, Vivian and Meyer, if you don't mind.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Pat. Pat.

MS. BERMAN: Pat, okay. Then, was there an art -- you know, was there something in your background, in terms of art? Had you started to look -- how did you come to art?

MRS. POTAMKIN: Shall I tell the first story, the story of our first purchase? We were engaged to be married. My folks had a summer home in Atlantic City, which was a beautiful city at that time, very elegant and everything was very luxurious, and so on. And we were visiting for the weekend, but we already had decided on a -- on living quarters. And we were buying furniture, and had decided on a color scheme, which was very important at that time. And the -- we were walking along the boardwalk. There were two or three very good galleries, and we happened to glance over -- we were on ocean side, and we happened to glance over to the side where the shops and galleries were. And lo and behold, there was something in the window, which was our color scheme, which,

at the time -- we were terribly avant garde -- it was black, brown, and pumpkin. And so, we zoomed over. In our lives, we had never been in an art gallery. We had been to a museum or two over the years, of course, as students, you know, in school and all that. And we looked at each other and we thought, "My gosh, this matches our color scheme, let's go in and see what it's all about." So, in retrospect, I like to say this. If the dealer had not been as gracious and as welcoming and as pleasant as he was, we would never have bought another item that might become part of a collection. But he was adorable, he was very sweet. And he knew we were novices. And we asked him what this was, and he said it was a lithograph. Well, I personally had never heard of a lithograph as an art form. And so he explained it to us, what the form was. And then, we inquired about it. And it was \$10, framed. So, we looked at each other -- well, that's when you were making \$26 a week. And I was earning \$17. I was like a big executive at the time. And we pooled our -- we thought about it, and we said, "Well, we will make the plunge," and we bought it. And so that was the first thing that we hung on our walls. And I think it was an inspiration. We saw that we had a work of art on our walls, and it matched our color scheme, and we could afford it. And from then on, we started to look at objects, sculpture and painting and so on. And then we started going to galleries. We were not intimidated after that nice experience, because it could be. Today I think anyone who started to collect who would go into one of these very hyped up galleries would have to be intimidated by the atmosphere. And sometimes the snobbishness --

MR. POTAMKIN: And the prices.

MRS. POTAMKIN: And the prices, of course.

MS. BERMAN: When did this occur, this first purchase, when you --

MRS. POTAMKIN: 1940, the summer of 1940. We still have it.

MS. BERMAN: Oh, and who is the --

MRS. POTAMKIN: And, strangely enough, we have never identified the artist. It's just there. And every --

MR. POTAMKIN: I tried, once.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Did you really? I don't remember. Yes.

MR. POTAMKIN: [Inaudible.]

MRS. POTAMKIN: Well, no. It didn't mean anything to us then. It just matched our --

MR. POTAMKIN: No, for him.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Oh, to him. Yes. But, I mean, we didn't keep the bill.

MR. POTAMKIN: No.

MRS. POTAMKIN: We didn't -- the name of the artist didn't mean a thing to us.

MS. BERMAN: Right.

MRS. POTAMKIN: So it was just like buying a dinner plate.

MS. BERMAN: It was decorative, but it obviously served an important purpose.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes.

MS. BERMAN: So you got it, so you feel what you feel about it --

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes, yes.

MS. BERMAN: And did you start going to galleries in Philadelphia --

MR. POTAMKIN: Well, what happened after that was we moved into the apartment --

[Tape stops, re-starts.]

MS. BERMAN: You got married, or --

MR. POTAMKIN: We got married. And at that time, everybody, over their sofa in the living room, had a large mirror. And I was walking down Chessler [phonetic] Street, and in an art gallery was this antique frame. So I thought it would be very nice to have that antique frame with a mirror in it. So, I went in. And it happened to be

someone who I had -- we had [inaudible] each other. And so he [inaudible]. And so I said, "Well, I will buy it. But I want a mirror in it." And he said, "Well, you put it in." I said, "No, you take care of it." So, we got chatting, and as people [inaudible], and I told him we were just starting. Well, he had a few small John Francis, and he brought them, three of them --

MRS. POTAMKIN: Of course, he had never heard of John Francis --

MS. BERMAN: He's still not well known, except to specialists, of course.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes, right.

MS. BERMAN: So --

MRS. POTAMKIN: Excuse me. My therapist came a half-hour early today.

MS. BERMAN: Oh, would --

[Tape stops, re-starts.]

MR. POTAMKIN: So, he brought the Francis, we bought two of them. And then, because of that, the local art scene --

MRS. POTAMKIN: Excuse me [inaudible].

MR. POTAMKIN: -- became conscious of us. And they --

MRS. POTAMKIN: I knew she was coming, but I thought it was better for us to get started.

MS. BERMAN: Definitely.

MR. POTAMKIN: -- [inaudible] we met --

MRS. POTAMKIN: Hi, Lisa.

[Tape stops, re-starts.]

MR. POTAMKIN: And the [inaudible] two schools, the [inaudible] Academy, and Tyler [phonetic]. And when I [inaudible] master's, I had gone to Tyler. I took ceramics and lithograph. We used those in my work as a social worker. So we acquired and [inaudible] of taking a garage, when we lived out in the suburbs, and turning it into - - it was part of the house -- and we turned it into a gallery.

MS. BERMAN: Since you are here by yourself, I'm going to do this. [Rearranges microphone.]

MR. POTAMKIN: In 1949, we took a little vacation to the Caribbean. We went to Haiti. And Haiti's colors, and their resurgence in the arts, were marvelous. And they were -- and we never realized the difference between a Haitian black and an American black. A Haitian black is -- they're very liberal, a fighter, and so forth. And they were educated. And our guide --

MRS. POTAMKIN: Excuse me one minute.

MS. BERMAN: Sure.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Avis, would you like to see some of the collection?

MS. BERMAN: Well, why don't I wait until we come to a break. I was going to say --

MRS. POTAMKIN: Oh. I was going to say --

MS. BERMAN: Right.

MRS. POTAMKIN: While I'm working, maybe you could walk around.

MS. BERMAN: Oh. Well, I would be happy to do that, but I don't want to be -- get to the point where you're too tired.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes.

MS. BERMAN: Which is better? What is better for you?

MRS. POTAMKIN: [Inaudible.] Do what you like.

MS. BERMAN: Okay.

MR. POTAMKIN: What?

MRS. POTAMKIN: Do whatever you like.

MR. POTAMKIN: All right. We will wait for you.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes.

MS. BERMAN: Okay. Okay. Shall I turn this off, then?

[Tape stops, re-starts.]

MS. BERMAN: We will make a start without Vivian Potamkin, and I will ask a few things. Which was it? You had mentioned Hirshhorn and Arthur Altschul. Have you found, in your collecting -- I mean, or in -- that -- have you experienced a lot of anti-Semitism?

MR. POTAMKIN: Not -- we've been all the way from Maine to Texas, from the East Coast -- Mrs. Bliss [phonetic] sold me the [inaudible], because she wanted to go to Europe and she needed \$50,000. The -- on the New York scene, we were lucky [inaudible]. The name Potamkin, to some, was more Russian than -- some thought -- and we started to collect before my brother started Potamkin Cadillac, so that was -- didn't have that situation. And -- but went to the Kennedy [phonetic], old Kennedy gallery, and galleries in New York, none of them were -- I would say that almost every gallery in New York -- some of them didn't handle Jewish artists. But, as a former social worker, I never -- see, I was also in basketball. College education, of course, I was all-city. So, as a result, sure, I had my fistfights on the basketball floor and so forth, but [inaudible] area, and going on the board of the art museum, I was the first real Jew who went on the board. Before that, Leslie Rosenwald [phonetic] was a board member, but he was anti-Zionist. And this is -- Allenberg [phonetic], and there was one more Jewish woman who was Christian Scientist. So I was the first real Jew that went on. And I had no problems with guys like Titus Geezy [phonetic]. Titus Geezy was a great collector of early American farm furniture. He was the secretary to Henry [phonetic] DuPont. And Henry DuPont was -- and we were friendly. And, let's see, who else was there? The -- maybe I was blind. I came in, I was me. Others would come in, there would be questions about American art, I would tell them where to go, and so forth, make phone calls for them, and things of that sort. And there was -- besides -- we had George Widler [phonetic], we had Mrs. Bonnie Winterstein [phonetic], with whom we became very friendly. We were very friendly with the -- Dodo Hamilton [phonetic], who was a large stockholder of Camel [phonetic]. Her husband passed away about two years ago, Sam Hamilton. And we were drinking buddies. So, I would say that the -- it was just us.

MS. BERMAN: Well, I was thinking when you first started collecting in Philadelphia, if you found that a little bit --

MR. POTAMKIN: When we started in Philadelphia, the -- it was a mixed bag. You had Jewish artists, you had Irish artists, artisans. And all they wanted to do was sell for \$10, \$20, \$30, anything. And that was it.

MS. BERMAN: Well, let's just talk for a minute or two about when you first began, some of the art personalities on the scene. For example -- because, you know, you were involved with Carlin [phonetic]. Did you know --

MR. POTAMKIN: Bob Carlin. There was an article about him last night on Pippin [phonetic], and how he helped Pippin, and so forth. Bob Carlin was a mixed up bag. He was graduate, I think, of Tyler. Great knowledge. A rascal, a crook. [Inaudible.] Saved him twice from going to jail. And yet, he would not bring us things that -- in our area. He sold us a Hicks, only because he needed the money. He -- we were shown in 1950 -- in Paris, we were shown -- a Degas, nude, coming out of a bath, with a man holding a towel. So all you saw was a towel and her head. We knew nothing in 1950. We called him. He said, "Don't buy it, it's a fake." We were stupid enough to accept his -- towards the end, we never saw each other, I -- we stopped, I just --

MS. BERMAN: Why did he not sell you things that were in your area?

MR. POTAMKIN: He was a -- he did the same thing to Bob McNeal [phonetic]. He would tell Bob McNeal that he would sell him something, but he wanted 10 percent profit. Well, Bob knew he had bought it at the auction a week before for \$1,000, and now he's asking \$5,000. So Bob stopped dealing with him. He had an Peal [phonetic] that we hungered for, and he turned around and he sold it to Fleischman [phonetic]. Fleischman then sold it in New York. And he sold it to Fleischman, because Fleischman told him that he was going to give it to [inaudible]. He was a very, very mixed up guy. He used to bring his things -- he used to run them in a downtown gallery in New York.

MS. BERMAN: Edith Albrecht [phonetic], right.

MR. POTAMKIN: And she treated him like dirt. And that's why -- you couldn't treat him nice. The nicer you treated him -- when I saved him from going to jail, he issued a bad check to IRS. And the other time, he gave an appraisal of a large group of [phonetic] who had a number of \$.25 and \$.50 stores around the country. He would go to Paris each year in the summer time and come back with 30 or 40 paintings and then give them away to schools, and then take deductions. Well, the deductions were [inaudible], and Bob was -- Bob Carlin -- was the appraiser. So here, the guy paid \$5,000 for everything, now he's asking \$300,000. So, he -- the judge, Judge Masterton [phonetic], who I happen to know, very upright individual, he asked Bob, he says, "How are you a European appraiser? What's your background?" And, fortunately for Bob, it came late in the day. So that was the last question. They were going to start up the next morning. Well, Bob comes to me, crying. What could he do? He has no lawyer, you can't bring a lawyer into it at this session, that's like saying you're wrong, you're guilty. So, I said to him, "Look, before the session starts, go up to Judge Masterton, and ask if you could talk to him for a minute at the bench, and tell him that you're not a European appraiser, that you took on the appraisal from your knowledge of art for so many years, and that you realize that you didn't have enough knowledge. And, therefore, you would like to bow out of the thing as the assessor. But since you're in it, and you regret, and you apologize for getting into" -- so he accepted his apology and so forth. On the case, I gave him a check immediately, we brought a check into the IRS, and said that he hadn't noticed that he was out of balance, and so forth. He -- we were collecting things about William Penn and his treaty with the Indians. And there was a letter from Madison and Monroe [phonetic] or vice versa, that he had. And he showed it to me. And he agreed to sell it to me at \$250. Suddenly, it disappeared. And there was something else he had that we agreed to buy, a painting, and that disappeared. So [inaudible], because he looked for -- he would go out -- he bought a Hendreim [phonetic] that's -- as part of the Eight. And he came in and told me he paid \$1,500 for it, which was a bargain at that time. We're going back many years. And he said, "I want to make 10 percent on it." He had paid \$150, so he charges us \$1,500. That's 10 percent. He -- we didn't know he had paid \$150 for it. However, a fellow went in to buy a Chevy from my brother, and he says, "Are you the Potamkin who bought this from my aunt?" So he said, "Well, you bought it for \$150, it was a steal." Now he tells me, "Why do you have to lie about all these things? And don't ask," and so forth. You know what the word "zitto" [phonetic] means? To ridicule. He would go into an art -- into an antique, and see something worthwhile, and he would buy it, and go out and sell it for four times what he paid for it, and then come back and tell the dealer how stupid he was.

MS. BERMAN: It was sick.

MR. POTAMKIN: Yes, it was. So -- and [inaudible] has -- had two daughters and a wife. And one of his daughters had never had dinner at the Barclay [phonetic] Hotel. And this was a -- at the best restaurant in town. So he asked me if we would have dinner with him at the Barclay. So we wound up, his two daughters, his wife, the four of them, and my wife and myself. It came time for the check. They brought the check, he said, "I'll be right back." Never came back. Never remember him apologizing in any way, saying, "Let me sign," or -- never got a call from him about it. So -- yet he brought out Pippin and some of the others. Never offered us a Pippin. I would say that the -- a lady had a gallery. It was open until, I guess, we came along, and then they closed the gallery.

[END CD1]

MS. BERMAN: -- side 2, February 12th, with Pat Potamkin.

MR. POTAMKIN: Had great knowledge. He would often come to our home and bring something. Like [inaudible] he was going to buy something, so [inaudible] compare it with what we had. Never offered us anything, unless he was stuck with it. Often he would -- when we were in the suburbs, he would come with [inaudible]. He was out trying to sell something, and couldn't sell it, so he would bring it to us.

MS. BERMAN: He was crazy. Well --

MR. POTAMKIN: And he -- had a very funny experience with him. There is the Sixth Avenue [inaudible]. He was sitting around one night. We had moved in from the suburbs into the city, and we were living in a hotel. And he was telling us, "Well, what can I sell you? What can I sell you?" So, Vivian opened up a book on urban art and showed him the Sixth Avenue and 30th Street. And two weeks later, he brings it in. The Rands [phonetic], who had been collecting, her husband became ill and needed money, so they put it up for sale. So we bought it. However, he brought it on a Friday night, and Saturday morning we were leaving for Europe, because it's Christmas time. I wasn't going to stay in a two-bedroom apartment with the kids having the bedrooms and bringing their friends in over Christmas. We would go nuts. So, we decided to go to Europe. And it was a very cheap time to go, because the husband paid full price, the wife paid half, and the children paid a quarter. So then, we had to pay for it. And that was another experience, getting in touch with a banker to pay for it. But we had to pay immediately. But -- so that was the -- he -- there was a [inaudible] banker here by the name of Goldman, and he was collecting. And he had collected Prendergast, and he wanted to sell a Prendergast. And Bob had sold it to him, so Bob turned around and he sold it to us. And Goldman [phonetic] made a very nice profit on it. I didn't care, we just wanted what we wanted. But he was a Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde character. And he always had the excuse that he wife needed the money, or he needed this, or he needed that. One of his children

was Joan Baez's business manager. And it was a case of three against one.

MS. BERMAN: Let me switch to another person. I mean, going back to sort of the early -- you know, we're sort of -- who were around in the 1940s, when you became aware of the Philadelphia art scene, but some -- how about -- did you know or have a relationship with Fiske Kimball?

MR. POTAMKIN: Fiske Kimball was a viral anti-Semite. At the museum, they have now formed a Kimball [inaudible]. I won't give to it. He -- there was only one [inaudible] period -- there was only one Jew who was on the board. At that time, the art museum was made up of a very mixed up corporate structure. There was a board of trustees of about eight. There was one Jew on it, by the name of Morris Wolfe [phonetic], who, I guess at that time, was the most prestigious Jewish law firm in town, [inaudible]. And then, there was a board of governors. And on the board of governors were, as I said, Essie Rosenwal [phonetic], and Zanbar [phonetic], and so forth. At that time, it was a general shake-up, and it merged into one, instead of this type of thing they had. The -- Fiske Kimball was basically an architect. The building -- they needed money badly. He went out and he spent a great deal of money for some vases and things of that sort. However, as a structure, the art museum, visually, [inaudible]. As a working place, it stinks. It's a rectangular building. It's impossible to go from one section of the building to the other. Because once you get past the corners, you have to go to the next corner. Very difficult building. And spent a great deal of money on it. Also, I will tell you a story, but this is off the record. The -- at one point, I was notified by the president, George Heston [phonetic], that the nominating committee didn't want to nominate me for another term, because of my critical attitude, for which I'm thankful. Anyway, the -- at that moment, the mayor put me on the Philadelphia Art Commission. The Art Commission was one of the two commissions that, once the mayor put you on, had no authority over you. You were the boss. So, it was 1975, and [inaudible] available for air conditioning and [inaudible] bicentennial. And the plans came in for the air conditioning, and the roof of the building is like this. On the inside, there is a well.

MS. BERMAN: I should say, for the tape, you're making, like, a church roof, a triangle.

MR. POTAMKIN: Yes, a triangle.

MS. BERMAN: A triangle.

MR. POTAMKIN: And there was a well. And the well was put in to put light on the grand concourse, grand staircase. When the engineers saw this, they decided to make that their -- where they were going to put their water. In other words, they didn't --

MRS. POTAMKIN: Did I miss anything?

MR. POTAMKIN: I'm telling her about the well now, the water [inaudible].

MRS. POTAMKIN: Oh. Oh, at the museum.

MR. POTAMKIN: And this -- so when they put the new plans in, I said, "You spend a fortune to keep water out of your house, why do you want to invite it in?" So, as a result -- and since it was also [inaudible] -- we were holding it up for that reason. Finally, last minute, either we approve it that day or they would never get the \$400,000 to do it. So they [inaudible] president, everybody from the art museum. So we agreed that, only if they give us a letter stating that they would be responsible, aesthetically and for any damage that would be done, that we would approve it, which we did. Within a year-and-a-half or so, the museum suffered damage of over \$2 million -- the Lansdowne [phonetic] Wing was destroyed, and had to be rebuilt -- by water [inaudible]. So that was [inaudible].

MRS. POTAMKIN: Would you like a little chocolate, chocolate mint?

MS. BERMAN: Yes, thank you. Thank you. Well, I did look around a little more. And what -- I had asked about a couple of Philadelphia personalities from -- who were on the scene, and we really discussed, at length, Mr. Carlin.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Oh.

MS. BERMAN: Just telling you, so -- and we briefly discussed Fiske Kimball. And I was going to ask you if perhaps you had met Pippin, or -- he pre-deceased your interest, right?

MR. POTAMKIN: Pre-deceased, yes.

MRS. POTAMKIN: We -- did he die before we became interested? I --

MS. BERMAN: Yes, he died in 1946.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Oh, sure. Yes, yes. Well, Bob gave him his first show.

MS. BERMAN: Mm-hmm, right.

MRS. POTAMKIN: And did you know -- did you interview Mr. Carlin?

MS. BERMAN: He was interviewed by, I believe, Maria Pacini [phonetic], who was here for years.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Oh, yes, yes. She never asked to interview us, which I thought was a little funny. I mean, here we are, right under her nose, and everybody knows our collection, and so on.

MS. BERMAN: I don't know. She -- her main job was to sort of survey and try to gather papers.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes. Oh, yes.

MS. BERMAN: But she did do some oral histories, as well.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes. The -- I don't know, did you tell the real truth about Bob?

MS. BERMAN: Yes.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Oh. Oh.

MS. BERMAN: Well, he's gone, so it's all right.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes.

MS. BERMAN: I don't -- you're not the first, let's put it that way.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes. Well, let's say that we were the only ones who really stuck to him. I don't know why. He did bring us some very good things. He also brought us a fake or two. And, actually, with all modesty, we taught him about this school of painting. He used to make fun of us.

MS. BERMAN: You mean some of the Harley [phonetic] and --

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes, everything. Any American art.

MS. BERMAN: Oh, okay.

MRS. POTAMKIN: He was interested in folk art and in naive art.

MS. BERMAN: Right.

MRS. POTAMKIN: But he really couldn't understand why we would be interested in this, rather than the French school, say, is what impressed him. Strange man.

MS. BERMAN: Well, now, what about Barnes [phonetic]? Did you know Barnes at all?

MRS. POTAMKIN: No, no.

MS. BERMAN: He would have --

MR. POTAMKIN: We wrote to him [inaudible] come in, visit him. Never got an answer. We knew Violette Demasia [phonetic].

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes. Intimately, really. We met her just -- I want to tell this one story, which is off the record. It wouldn't be of interest to the archives. We met Miss Demasia because of a -- the firm's lawyer's wife, who was a pupil at the time. And we never wanted to take her course, because we just wanted to do our own thing, and not be brainwashed by somebody else's ideas. So we weren't that intense about it. We looked at things, and either liked them or didn't, you know. At any rate, we never intellectualized over -- at least I never did -- over a painting. And so, this Mrs. Newman [phonetic] became friendly with Violette, had a very cordial relationship. And Violette was advising Mrs. Newman on not only how to look at a painting, but what to buy. And she followed her instructions very carefully. And she one day said, "Violette would like to meet you, would you like to meet her?" I said, "Of course, I'd love to." And she did come. And our daughter must have been about 12 at the time, or 11. And she took one look at her, and after she left, she said, "Mom, she looks like a Beatnik." [They laugh.] And the reason was that she was dressed in these sandals, long skirt, and her hair was all kind of wiry and so on, and she didn't have any make-up on, and --

MR. POTAMKIN: She looked like one of these [inaudible].

MRS. POTAMKIN: What, dear?

MR. POTAMKIN: She looked like one of those Greek maidens.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes.

MS. BERMAN: Well, she was just sort of an ancient Bohemian.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Exactly. Well, at any rate, I asked Helene [phonetic] Newman, what should I serve her, you know, because she was coming, like, for a drink or something. She said, "Serve herring and chopped liver." [They laugh.] And she came, and that's what I had, herring and chopped liver. And she enjoyed it, she relished it. And we started to talk about Barnes, and tears kept flowing down her face. So that was the most contact I had, emotional contact, with her about Dr. Barnes. And, of course, she always quoted him, and considered him [inaudible], and -- but do you know her background at all?

MS. BERMAN: I have read about it in the past. I mean, I think --

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes.

MS. BERMAN: But because I have read -- I read the Barnes biography, and I have read Ira Glackenson's [phonetic] books, so I'm just not remembering --

MRS. POTAMKIN: Well, a neighbor of ours, when we were younger and we lived in the suburbs, had had French lessons as a child from Violette. It seemed -- and according to what our neighbor told me, it seemed that Violette came to this country after a broken romance. And she came here to Philadelphia, because she had relatives here, relatives of the family. And these relatives were Jewish, and they were sort of stable, nouveau riche at the time -- I would say through the 1920s and 1930s and 1940s -- and they were educating their children as well as they could, and they gave them all sorts of lessons. And since Vio was here, a whole group of them had her teach their children French. And that's how she earned her living at first. I guess this was in the 1920s, I guess, yes. So, that was a strong family connection that brought her here, and they took very good care of her for a while.

MS. BERMAN: Well, now --

MRS. POTAMKIN: And, I mean, that's from the horse's mouth. I don't know what other things may be myths or exaggerations.

MS. BERMAN: Now, were you interested in meeting artists, living artists, in your, you know, collecting? Because, obviously, some of these people were alive, some of these Americans. Some are still alive, like Jack Levine [phonetic].

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes, yes.

MS. BERMAN: But --

MRS. POTAMKIN: Like who?

MS. BERMAN: Jack Levine is still --

MRS. POTAMKIN: Oh, yes. Jack Levine, yes. We met him several times.

MS. BERMAN: Right, but were you interested in meeting artists? Was that a -- you know, or hanging out with artists? Was that --

MRS. POTAMKIN: Not particularly. Do you agree? I mean, I never was that --

MR. POTAMKIN: Some of them were -- [inaudible] Joel Lasser [phonetic], who is a [inaudible]. You got someone like Will Barnett [phonetic], [inaudible]. I mean, he is a chameleon. And we didn't want to be swayed by what was happening at that moment. We were looking at things that we thought had, in our eyes, critical value. But the [inaudible] the Sawyers [phonetic], they weren't interested in you, they were interested in what they were doing, and they had their gallery, and you weren't -- the -- something like Laura Baskin [phonetic] -- it was a mixed bag.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Now that you're talking, we did have intimate with a few artists.

MR. POTAMKIN: Yes, I'm just saying --

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes. Jack Levine, Leonard [phonetic], John Helliger [phonetic]. I mean, they are varying experiences.

MR. POTAMKIN: Right.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Jim Lingers [phonetic].

MR. POTAMKIN: Some we helped.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes, yes.

MR. POTAMKIN: Jimmy Lingers we -- the Philadelphia scene was -- had some good artists. They had to eat. So -- there was Marty Jackson [phonetic] --

MRS. POTAMKIN: Probably never heard of him.

MR. POTAMKIN: -- who started out as a -- could have been a great influence, very fine teacher, except that he had -- he was living with a girl, she became pregnant, he got married, and he had to sell. And, therefore, his paintings became saleable things, not artistic things. But the -- then we had the three schools -- two, basically: the Academy and Tyler. And Tyler had a good faculty. The Pennsylvania Academy, we knew very little about them, that school. But I would say that the -- Barnes used some of the teachers as teachers at the school. Though he hated Catholics and Jews, they used them for their own purposes.

MRS. POTAMKIN: We never sought artists out, though. As a matter of fact, I think we shied away from them. Just as Pat said, we didn't want to be influenced. But we had two or three experiences in our early days of collecting, where we would go to an artist's studio. And, finally, we realized how painful the situation was. I think, by the third time we went, we decided never to go again. And it was too painful to look at the work and make a decision, and --

MR. POTAMKIN: They would say --

MRS. POTAMKIN: Get our -- yes.

MR. POTAMKIN: -- "Make a suggestion."

MRS. POTAMKIN: Or, you know, if you bought or you didn't buy, or whatever. So that kept us from visiting an artist's studio, except in one case with Harry Bertoia. Somehow we struck up a rapport with him.

MR. POTAMKIN: Yes.

MRS. POTAMKIN: That didn't bother us at all.

MS. BERMAN: Well, that was why I asked, because that would seem to be -- you seemed to be so friendly with him. I wondered if --

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes, yes.

MS. BERMAN: How about artists in different generations, different type -- and I think [inaudible], before he died, lived very close here. What about someone like Emlin Eddie [phonetic]?

MRS. POTAMKIN: Well, we knew him, but --

MR. POTAMKIN: Emlin Eddie [inaudible] of his own.

MRS. POTAMKIN: We were sort of distant social friends. Never anything to do with art.

MR. POTAMKIN: He was -- at the beginning, he was a good painter.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes.

MS. BERMAN: Right.

MRS. POTAMKIN: He -- I think he was a nice guy, and all of that. And I think one could have spoken to him seriously about art, not necessarily his own. But I think he was unfulfilled. I think he was basically unhappy, is my analysis of him. He had a very forceful power of a wife who was very popular.

MS. BERMAN: Gloria [phonetic]?

MRS. POTAMKIN: Gloria Eddie, yes. And --

MR. POTAMKIN: She came from a musical family, the Braghiatis [phonetic].

MS. BERMAN: Right.

MRS. POTAMKIN: And one other experience that we had -- or that I realized; I don't know if it meant anything to Pat -- we had a dinner party in honor of a visiting artist. I think he was exhibiting here at the Academy. There was some reason he was in Philadelphia. We were asked to entertain him, and we had a dinner party for him. And I can't think of his name. He is still living. And he paints still life in a very rhythmic, structured way, a pallet that is sort of subtle. I don't know if you -- I will probably think of his name, eventually. Very popular, very well known, and very appreciated. He must be in his late sixties by now. At any rate, he walked in the door, never looked left or right. Didn't see one painting on the wall. So that was kind of strange.

MS. BERMAN: Yes. What kind of artist would that be? Well, I will -- the reason -- you know, I'm just trying to build this picture here, because, you know -- well, it seemed to me, also, you had a lot -- of course, he may have -- you may have gotten them after he died, but with so many Arthur B. Carleses, I wondered if you had met Carles.

MRS. POTAMKIN: No, no. We never met him, either.

MS. BERMAN: All right. And then there was Franklin Watkins.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Oh, yes. He was a charming guy.

MR. POTAMKIN: We met him.

MRS. POTAMKIN: We knew him, and -- sort of distant social friends. And, also, there is a story, if you want to hear about it, our big Carles --

MS. BERMAN: Sure.

MRS. POTAMKIN: He wasn't the world's greatest painter, you know.

MS. BERMAN: No.

MRS. POTAMKIN: But he was very nice. And you could talk to him, too, I felt.

MS. BERMAN: That's what people said.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes, yes. Didn't force his views on you, or anything else. We were at a -- we had leant a Pippin or a Hicks, or maybe both, to an exhibition in Pittsburgh. Was it, Pat? We met Harold Diamond [phonetic]. Did you know Harold Diamond? And what he was doing there at the time, I don't know, but I don't think Harold missed an opportunity to meet anybody, because that was not his interest, you know, that school of painting. And when he heard we were from Philadelphia, he came over to us, and he said, "You know? I just got something by a guy who is a Philadelphian, and I never heard of him before. His name is Carles." And, I said, "Oh, you brought" -- at that time, we knew enough about Carles and had seen enough of his work that we were interested. So we said, yes, we did know about Arthur B. Carles. And he said, "Well, I've got this great, big thing" -- I mean, he wasn't very respectful -- and we said, well, we'd like to see it. So, we made arrangements. He was coming from New York to Philadelphia one day, he was going to bring this painting. It's over there, it's quite a size, you have to see the size of it.

MS. BERMAN: Oh, yes, yes.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes.

MS. BERMAN: Okay, yes. I see -- right. I was looking at it before.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes.

MS. BERMAN: Enormous still life, floral.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes, yes. So -- right. So, he -- we were living in this townhouse around the corner at the time, and he rang the doorbell, and he had parked his car right in the street. And I looked out, and he had this station wagon, and the back was open, and this was hanging out.

MR. POTAMKIN: It was raining.

MRS. POTAMKIN: And -- well, it was certainly misty. And so, he brought it in. And it was dirty. It had been hanging over a fireplace in New York for a number of years. It was done in the mid-1920s. And this had to be -- when did we buy it, in the late 1960s or 1970s? I forget. But at any rate, it was in that frame. And it had a painting on the reverse. And we looked at the painting on the reverse, and it had a pin prick of a hole, a tiny little hole. And we were so serious at the time, we thought, well, we didn't like that painting on the back, but we love the one on the front. And, historically, should we preserve the thing on the back? You know, it was very serious. And should we split it? We went through this whole thing, which was rather stupid at the time, but we didn't know. And so, finally, we decided -- we thought it was by Franklin Watkins [phonetic], because it really was just like his kind of El Greco sort of thing. And he lived two blocks away. So I called him and I told him we had this painting, and we wanted to identify the painting on the back. And we thought it might be his. I have to tell you, it wasn't a good painting. So, the house had a vestibule, and I had the painting leaning against the wall, with the back showing. And he walked in, and he stopped dead in his tracks, and he said, "That's not mine." And he said, "That's by Breckenridge [phonetic]." And so, to this day, I don't know who really did it. But we cleaned it and relined it, and we didn't feel it was worth preserving.

MS. BERMAN: Well, why wouldn't you think -- I mean, Breckenridge, you know, he was certainly --

MRS. POTAMKIN: Oh, the three of them worked together.

MS. BERMAN: Right, well, that's what --

MRS. POTAMKIN: They shared a studio, and he told me -- it was a darling story. I should really tell you. He shared -- they shared a studio, and they shared canvases. They would paint over each other's, or they would -- I mean, you know, honestly. If somebody was dissatisfied, then the other would take it and make his own painting. And -- or they would paint on the reverse. And I must tell you, he just loved that painting. And he actually did a jig in front of it. And he said, "I congratulate you, Mrs. Potamkin, this is one of the great paintings by Artie [phonetic]," and then he went on to tell me something. He said, "You know what? Artie was not only a great painter, he was a great teacher, and I can remember him teaching Matisse's theory of color to create form through color." And I'm really quoting him now. And he said, "Artie would take a newspaper and crumble it and throw it on the floor, so that the pupils could see the light and the dark and the form. And that opened up a whole vista to me, on how to look at a painting, or especially how to look at Carles's. So that was a nice experience, that was a very good learning experience. And that was -- Watty, we used to call him --

MS. BERMAN: Right.

MRS. POTAMKIN: And he enjoyed doing that kind of thing, apparently.

MS. BERMAN: Right. He was involved with the Pennsylvania Academy

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes. He taught there. He was a graduate. He had studied there, and he taught there.

MS. BERMAN: How about Earl Horter?

MRS. POTAMKIN: We never knew him, either. We knew about him, but we never met him. We never sought these people out, and occasionally we would come across somebody, but --

MS. BERMAN: Only because, you know, you -- I mean, the Eight were so great, anyway, but so many came out of Philadelphia.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Exactly.

MR. POTAMKIN: There is another fact about -- they had their own society.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes.

MR. POTAMKIN: And they didn't -- to us -- we were interlopers to them. They --

MRS. POTAMKIN: We were very private about what we were doing. It was a very personal thing. We weren't looking for advice, or bargains, or anything of the sort, you know.

MS. BERMAN: But sometimes artists come to look at pictures, too.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Well, that we have experienced, yes. We have had many artists come who want to see the collection. And, you know, all sorts of professionals: curators and directors and so on.

MS. BERMAN: Right, right.

MRS. POTAMKIN: And other collectors who are serious, and --

MS. BERMAN: When did that begin to build? I am curious about that, and not just for the mass of your collection, but in terms of the interest in American art. When did --

MRS. POTAMKIN: Well, we have several theories. You want to go into yours?

MR. POTAMKIN: I would say it started, as I said, when we suddenly came up against a brick wall. Here, we had been collecting, and all of the sudden the field got so vast. And there were no books. And we went to New York, and we bought some of the [inaudible] that were done at Whitney [phonetic] by the artists themselves --

MS. BERMAN: From the 1930s?

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes.

MR. POTAMKIN: Yes, and Morris Northley's [phonetic] books, which were very erudite. And so, it got to a point where we had to decide.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Well, I think what Avis means is how did other people become interested when --

MR. POTAMKIN: No, no, no. I'm talking about when we suddenly --

MRS. POTAMKIN: Oh, became --

MR. POTAMKIN: -- became interested, and decided that it had to be American. And we had to just --

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes. We couldn't collect everything.

MR. POTAMKIN: Yes.

MRS. POTAMKIN: We couldn't know about everything. We had had several collections. We had a collection of African artifacts, until we began to realize we didn't know enough about it. But we had a number of things, a large number of things. But we collected them aesthetically. We never really worried about whether they were even authentic, you know. And they were pretty good. And we even collected a few Egyptian artifacts, until we started to read the dynasties. And we have collected Native American --

MR. POTAMKIN: We had [inaudible] books.

MS. BERMAN: Right.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes, and we had wonderful illustrations, wonderful books, art books, wonderful ones. And -- but they were difficult to keep. I mean, we had been through so many different kinds of things over the years. The --

MR. POTAMKIN: Catesby's.

MS. BERMAN: Oh, Mark Catesby's. They're beautiful.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes, gorgeous. We had one of the few existing original complete copies. We bought that in London. It was gorgeous. But we were keeping it in the closet. And I saw a silverfish one time, and so we sold all of our fine art books at that time. I mean, like Catesby. And we sold them all. It was a loss to us, I mean, because they were so beautiful. But we didn't look at them anyway. So -- but here, in Philadelphia, there was a sudden surge in interest of this type of American art. And that, I must say, was due to an exhibition in which we exhibited at the Academy. We were one of seven or eight collectors?

MR. POTAMKIN: That's right.

MRS. POTAMKIN: And we were the only Americans. And the whole community responded to it, and all the sudden, everybody, they would -- people would call us and say, "What gallery do you go to," and they would come over, and could we give them advice, and so on and so forth. So that one exhibition, here in Philadelphia, did a great deal to develop interest in this kind of thing here, which then, of course, spread. They went to the New York galleries. And what happened in New York or California, I don't know. But we can definitely pinpoint it here in Philadelphia.

MS. BERMAN: Was that -- now, for some people -- was that before or after or around the bicentennial? Because I know some American collectors --

MRS. POTAMKIN: That was before.

MS. BERMAN: Before the bicentennial.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes.

MS. BERMAN: So probably maybe the late 1960s or 1970s?

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes, yes. Even early 1960s, it might have been.

MR. POTAMKIN: Early 1960s.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Early 1960s?

MS. BERMAN: Early 1960s.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes, mm-hmm [affirmative].

MS. BERMAN: That's interesting.

MRS. POTAMKIN: And --

MR. POTAMKIN: It had to be after 1956, because --

MRS. POTAMKIN: Oh, yes.

MR. POTAMKIN: -- [inaudible].

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes, yes, yes.

MS. BERMAN: Now, in terms of -- you know, we were talking about some dealers before. What about Edith Halpert? What was your relationship with her?

MRS. POTAMKIN: Oh --

MR. POTAMKIN: Well, by the time we met her, she was sick.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Oh, yes, right, she was --

MR. POTAMKIN: We bought the tango dancers three times.

MRS. POTAMKIN: And unbought them the next morning. Allen [phonetic] would call us and say, "She changed her mind." She gave him the job.

MR. POTAMKIN: We bought the telegraph pole at a show at --

MRS. POTAMKIN: At the Whitney.

MR. POTAMKIN: At the Whitney.

MRS. POTAMKIN: It was 5:00 on a Saturday. You tell the story.

MR. POTAMKIN: We bought it. It was at a show in Connecticut [inaudible]. And we bought it. And, again, she negated it. Then, at the Whitney, we walked past it, and I guess he told [inaudible] to buy it, [inaudible], and --

MRS. POTAMKIN: Pat called her on the phone from the Whitney. It was, like, 5:00 on a Saturday afternoon.

MR. POTAMKIN: And then she accepted a check. [They laugh.]

MRS. POTAMKIN: I had a series of personal experiences with her. The Philadelphia Museum, there is a women's committee there. And one of the women on the women's committee was very enterprising, and she decided that the Philadelphia Museum should do something like the -- like Moen [phonetic] was doing at the time. They had a wonderful little sales and rental gallery. I don't know if you were around then, or --

MS. BERMAN: Yes, I --

MRS. POTAMKIN: It was terrific. And the -- so, at a board meeting, they said -- they asked Pat, because he was the only American art collector -- if he would help them start a sales rental gallery. So, out of the kindness of his heart, he said, "I won't do it, but my wife will." [They laugh.] Well, I got involved to the tune of eight years, where I was there -- I like to say -- 8 days a week and 25 hours a day. But it was a great growing experience for me. There was nobody who was a curator of American art at the time at the museum. So I was the authority.

And -- oh, and my standard was -- I said I would only do it if these things would be curated, to an extent. But there was no curator. So, I was the curator. And I felt that I could go to these few galleries we had been dealing with, and depend on them, and get the right thing. I mean, it was a question of we didn't want to get any fakes, didn't want to get anything that was overpriced, or something of that sort. So, I took on this role as a volunteer. And I went on my own, at my own expense, left my husband and two kids almost every month for two nights/three days, to do the galleries in New York, and get them on consignment for the sales rental gallery. Well, finally, I started to go to Edith Halpert. And she would tease me along, you know. And -- but finally, one day, I broke her down. And you will never guess what I got. For \$400 each, I got these gorgeous little dove watercolors. I'm choking when I think of it. And I didn't buy one for ourselves, because I felt it was such a coup at the time. And dealers from New York used to come in and pick these things up from the sales rental gallery. Used to bring things over from -- when we would travel, we would bring some very good lithographs over from England and France, and so on. So, that was another phase of the sales rental gallery. But Edith Halpert finally capitulated. I don't know what made her do this, at \$400, these beautiful little watercolors.

MS. BERMAN: Someone in Philadelphia is probably very happy. But you say another dealer probably bought it?

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes. Although there were quite a few, seven or eight of them. And I know one collector who bought two or three, and he is now married to Anne Percy [phonetic]. I don't know -- well, they've been married for a number of years. Anne Percy was a curator at the Philadelphia Museum.

MS. BERMAN: So, did any other Philadelphia -- you know, major Philadelphia -- collectors start out of what they saw at that sales and rental gallery, do you think?

MRS. POTAMKIN: Oh, definitely, yes. We have a famous photography collector, Harvey Shipley Miller [phonetic] and Randy, Randolph Palmer [phonetic]. They bought amongst their first photographs from our sales rental gallery. And I knew nothing about photographs. And this is a case of I didn't know anything about it, but I knew what I liked. And I went to -- Bob Schaukopf [phonetic] used to be very helpful, and I was visiting him one day on one of these trips, and lo and behold, he had some photos, and I thought, "Well, this is something new," you know. And he said the same thing. He said, "I don't know anything about them, but they appeal to me." They were \$75 for all these great photos, Heinz [phonetic] and what's the woman with the three names?

MR. POTAMKIN: Bourke-White?

MRS. POTAMKIN: What?

MR. POTAMKIN: Bourke-White?

MS. BERMAN: Margaret Bourke-White and --

MRS. POTAMKIN: No.

MS. BERMAN: Not Jesse Turbock-Spiel [phonetic].

MRS. POTAMKIN: No, no.

MS. BERMAN: No?

MRS. POTAMKIN: She did sort of romantic things. At any rate, I will tell you that definitely the -- Harvey and Randy, that was a basic part of their start. And to this day, I still meet people occasionally who say, you know, "You were a great help," and the sales rental gallery, and all that. But everything was carefully chosen, and I only went to the best dealers that I knew. And the -- our own museum bought 17 items from my sales rental gallery. And the Met [phonetic], Stuart Fell [phonetic], I got the most gorgeous Anshultz [phonetic] charcoal drawing of a woman sort of -- almost in profile, with one of those great hats. And I got that from Graham [phonetic] Gallery, right around the corner, from the Met. And it laid in the gallery for about two months, and my contract was to send it back in three months if it didn't sell or rent. And I had just spoken to Pat about it. It was a great big drawing, big size. And I said, "I think we should buy that, because I have to send it back anyway." And we had just made up our minds to buy it. And I did -- I was very lackadaisical, and I thought, well, you know, it's going to go back on Monday, and this is over the weekend. Wouldn't you know it, Sunday afternoon the girl who was working there on Sunday said this man came in, he says he's from the Met, and he wants to buy the Anshultz. No, it was Monday, that's right, because I called Pat at the office. And I said, "Well, did you get his name?" And she said, "Well, he said he's a curator. I don't know. He said he's from the Met." And so she said -- I think it was Stuart Fell, was his name. So, I called Pat, and I said, "Should I give it up, or let's do it, buy it for the Met?" So he said, "Call back, and find out if Stuart is buying it for himself, or if he is buying it for the Met." And so, whether or not he ever bought it for the Met, I still don't know. But she asked him that, and he said yes, it was for the Met. So that was another nice instance of the sales rental gallery helping people.

MS. BERMAN: Do you have an Anschutz in your collection?

MRS. POTAMKIN: No, we don't. Isn't that funny? And we both love his work, but we just never got around to it. There are lots of people whose work we love, and never got around to it, you know?

MS. BERMAN: I had asked Pat before, because I thought the great anomaly was that there was no Akins [phonetic], and he had said that you were too late.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes, we were. And my taste with Akins is limited. I just like the free, outdoor things, the sort of sketchy --

MS. BERMAN: The boating pictures?

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes, I love that, mm-hmm [affirmative]. And, somehow, we just never really applied ourselves to look for that.

MR. POTAMKIN: They weren't available.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Well, they weren't available. It was like Whistler, too. They weren't available to us, at the price that we could afford, let's say that.

MS. BERMAN: If, as you say, your collection is going to the Philadelphia Museum of Art, you don't have to worry about filling in for the Akinses.

MRS. POTAMKIN: No, exactly. Well, not our whole collection, no.

MS. BERMAN: Some just --

MRS. POTAMKIN: Some [inaudible] --

MR. POTAMKIN: The collection may go to the Academy.

MS. BERMAN: Oh, okay.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes, we haven't decided yet.

MS. BERMAN: Oh, okay. Excuse me. I take that -- I thought that was what I thought you had said.

MRS. POTAMKIN: No, no, no.

MS. BERMAN: Okay, because you were talking about the life interest.

MRS. POTAMKIN: That's right.

MS. BERMAN: So, some are going to the Philadelphia --

MRS. POTAMKIN: Some did go to the -- the ones that we promised already went. And that was the Eight, each of the Eight, which, as Pat said, we think was the best example. You couldn't do that again today. You couldn't get as great of the Eight as we had, straight across the board.

MS. BERMAN: Right, absolutely.

MRS. POTAMKIN: And the -- I mean, you'd get three great ones, or five great ones, but you wouldn't get eight great ones.

MS. BERMAN: No. Plus --

[END CD 2]

MS. BERMAN: Okay, we are now continuing. This is tape 2, side 1, February 12th. We are continuing to interview the Potamkins about their collection. And you were -- Vivian, you were just saying that you found Prendergast early on in your collecting, because -- that's correct?

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes.

MS. BERMAN: And that was at the Crashauer [phonetic] Gallery?

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes.

MR. POTAMKIN: The first one was [inaudible].

MRS. POTAMKIN: Hanging in the dining room.

MS. BERMAN: Right.

MRS. POTAMKIN: And we really didn't know anything about him, except his name. We had no idea what kind of painting --

MR. POTAMKIN: [Inaudible.]

MRS. POTAMKIN: And we went [inaudible].

MS. BERMAN: Well, just -- we had -- I just also wanted to finish up. Were there any other artists or pieces that you missed, or you regret not getting, or things -- why don't we -- because we were kind of doing holes, or anomalies.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes.

MS. BERMAN: And why don't we finish that section, as well? What were some other -- something you missed, or should have had?

MRS. POTAMKIN: Can you think back? I know there were several --

MR. POTAMKIN: [Inaudible.]

MRS. POTAMKIN: I know, but that's not one that we missed. Avis is saying what did we not get.

MR. POTAMKIN: I remember that one. And one of the [inaudible].

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes, yes. Well, we have this little [inaudible]. But as a matter of fact, at our house one time, Joe Frasier [phonetic] and Henri Marceau, we had them for dinner, and -- oh, this is years ago, after we bought [inaudible]. And they said to each other, "You know, this is really the best kind of [inaudible]." [They laugh.] Which I thought was very amusing. Well, we have missed a few, yes. Can you remember which we regretted now? We had sold a few that we regret. And we've given some way -- in my heart, I really do regret. I would love to have them. I still miss the Eight -- I mean, we have others by the Eight. They were a great unit. But what I really miss, strangely enough, is our Gaston Lachaise. It was such a beautiful piece of sculpture.

MS. BERMAN: The peacocks?

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes. And it had such an important place in our home. The whole gallery looks different now, without it. It's just lost its unification.

MR. POTAMKIN: The thing that's hard about it is that we weren't going to give it, but then Anne asked for it. It was her favorite piece.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes, yes, yes. Can you remember which we had been sorry that we -- I guess we have become accustomed to missing things. And Pat always says there will be something else, and there usually is. Oh, we don't have a great Bellows [phonetic], and I don't really know why. Maybe we should have had a great Bellows.

MR. POTAMKIN: We saw a few. But, you know, the Bellows that we saw, like the tennis match and other things I saw, were very crude in comparison to his prints.

MRS. POTAMKIN: We had some famous prints. We still do. We had two tennis matches, two different ones, and we had one of the boxing, and we had another thing, viewing art and so on, right here in the bar. So we did have a lot of Bellows prints. But somehow we never got a Bellows painting.

MR. POTAMKIN: The tennis match, it was very crude. And --

MRS. POTAMKIN: And another thing was we were hung up on several galleries. We always went back to the same galleries. And we never went into a gallery looking for any particular artist. We went into a gallery to see what was there. And that's how we acquired things. So, our collection was never structured. And it's just a representation of our taste and our opportunity --

MR. POTAMKIN: It became structured in time.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes, yes, in time.

MR. POTAMKIN: [Inaudible.]

MRS. POTAMKIN: Right, but I mean we're not filling holes. Never did we want to fill a hole.

MS. BERMAN: Mm-hmm [affirmative], but -- except that you decided you were going to focus on the Eight.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes.

MS. BERMAN: Because you liked the city scenes?

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes, yes. And then, as time went on, we became interested in the Impressionists and the early Moderns, and so on. But I think we were influenced more by the galleries we went to, not that they tried to sell us, but it was what they had. And, as I like to say, what we could more or less afford.

MS. BERMAN: So the galleries you went to were Crashauer?

MRS. POTAMKIN: Graham, Harold Milsch [phonetic]. What?

MR. POTAMKIN: Babcock [phonetic].

MRS. POTAMKIN: Babcock. Virginia Sabrisky [phonetic], eventually, and --

MR. POTAMKIN: She was a great talent.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes. And -- oh, Bob's [inaudible] would come up. These aren't all simultaneous, but as the years went on. We even went to Kennedy [phonetic], the old Kennedy, where we bought our prints --

MR. POTAMKIN: [Inaudible.]

MRS. POTAMKIN: What, dear?

MR. POTAMKIN: I said that.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes. And I don't know. Who else? That was the basic --

MR. POTAMKIN: And then there were --

MRS. POTAMKIN: Of course, Edith Halpert.

MS. BERMAN: Right.

MR. POTAMKIN: Then the one where we got the Pippin.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Oh, we got the Pippin through Bob Carlin.

MR. POTAMKIN: No. Pippin came from New York.

MRS. POTAMKIN: It did? I have to look that up.

MR. POTAMKIN: The --

MRS. POTAMKIN: Wasn't that the one that was owned by that clothing manufacturer?

MR. POTAMKIN: The Pippin? No. The Pippin came from -- I know what we paid for it, even. We paid \$25,000 for it, and it came from a new gallery. It was up by 229 [phonetic], or something like that.

MRS. POTAMKIN: I have to look that up, but I can't get to the records now.

MR. POTAMKIN: Yes.

MS. BERMAN: Do you still collect? I mean, have you --

MR. POTAMKIN: Oh, yes. We still [inaudible] to something.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes. It's not easy. In the last year we haven't been in a gallery, but --

MR. POTAMKIN: We went up as far as [inaudible].

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes. Well, what was the last thing we bought? That was the last thing we bought, what's her

name. Dove's [phonetic] wife. Oh, can't even think of her name. I love her work.

MR. POTAMKIN: Porte [phonetic]?

MRS. POTAMKIN: Isn't that stupid? Arthur Dove's wife.

MS. BERMAN: Oh, Helen Tour [phonetic].

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes, Helen Tour.

MS. BERMAN: So those boats are --

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes.

MR. POTAMKIN: Yes, that's what I --

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes.

MS. BERMAN: Helen Tour.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes. And we more or less bought that over the telephone, because Carol [phonetic] at Crashauer knew that we had been looking for one. That's one I -- we really miss, by the way. Graham Gallery had a wonderful flower piece by her 10 or 12 years ago. And I was -- we were slow in making up our minds. And the last time I saw it at Graham Gallery, either John Canady [phonetic] or some other critic happened to be in the gallery at the same time, and raved about the painting. And I had just been raving about it, and was going to come home and talk to Pat, you know, to buy it. So, about two days later, we had decided to buy it, and I called, and Robin [phonetic] said, "I took it home. Everybody raved about it."

MS. BERMAN: They're not supposed to do that.

MRS. POTAMKIN: I know, but he did.

MS. BERMAN: That's funny.

MRS. POTAMKIN: So that was one that we missed.

MS. BERMAN: Now, you were going to tell me, Vivian, you said there was a story about the Donelman [phonetic], the Chanteuse [phonetic].

MRS. POTAMKIN: Oh, yes. Actually, we got that through -- what was her name?

MR. POTAMKIN: Bliss.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Bliss, yes. I'm forgetting people's names. What was her first name, Anne? No.

MS. BERMAN: Well, there was Eliza Parkinson Bliss, there was Lizzie --

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes, yes.

MS. BERMAN: Mrs. --

MRS. POTAMKIN: She was a Rockefeller. Yes, yes. And poor dear, she wanted a certain amount of money to buy a ranch.

MR. POTAMKIN: I'm sorry. A ranch, or go to Europe?

MRS. POTAMKIN: Or go to Europe.

MR. POTAMKIN: [Inaudible] money.

MRS. POTAMKIN: No, it was -- do you want to quote the amount?

MR. POTAMKIN: Yes, it was \$50,000.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes. So that gave us the opportunity to buy the -- and we went there to look at it. And, oh, she had dozens of Nodelmans [phonetic], and -- no, no, not Nodelmans, what am I talking about? Prendergast furniture and screens and --

MS. BERMAN: Charles [phonetic].

MRS. POTAMKIN: Charles, mostly Charles. And I think a couple of Maries [phonetic], if I'm not mistaken. And there was a chest of drawers, there were screens, there were plaques, there were all sorts of things. And so, I wrote to her, which was kind of stupid, and I thought I was being very subtle. And I can just see she's [inaudible], "What the hell," you know, "I've got the \$50,000."

MS. BERMAN: Who needs you, right?

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes. And -- but that was through Anne. Anne knew that it was available. So that was very nice, and she told us about it. We were the only people that Anne knew who might be interested in it at the time. So --

MS. BERMAN: Well, that's good.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes.

MS. BERMAN: Well --

MRS. POTAMKIN: But we had another Nodelman and we had a couple of drawings.

MS. BERMAN: Right.

MRS. POTAMKIN: We have a beautiful head over there --

MS. BERMAN: Right, you have the ideal head --

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes, yes.

MS. BERMAN: The earlier one, from Europe.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes, oh yes, from Europe. Yes. From London or Paris, wherever it was he had that --

MR. POTAMKIN: Paris.

MRS. POTAMKIN: That belonged to Henrietta Rubinstein [phonetic]. Did you ever see her collection of Nodelman heads?

MS. BERMAN: Oh, yes. Well, I actually -- there is a Nodelman show. Unfortunately, it's only going to go to a museum in Texas and the Frick in Pittsburgh. But it's called "Elie [phonetic] Nodelman Classical Folk," and it's about the classical folk --

MRS. POTAMKIN: Oh, oh.

MS. BERMAN: It's going to be all figures, no animals. And I did one of the essays, so I am very aware of --

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes.

MS. BERMAN: And Cynthia Nodelman did one. So it's the first time that anyone has gone beyond Lincoln Kerstein [phonetic], in terms of research and all. So --

MRS. POTAMKIN: Oh, isn't that great? Yes.

MS. BERMAN: Yes.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes.

MS. BERMAN: So I just wish that it were going to another place, but --

MRS. POTAMKIN: Well, I --

MS. BERMAN: But we're very familiar with all the Rubenstein, because it's very critical --

MRS. POTAMKIN: Well, I was in her home, and one side -- this whole frieze around this great, big room of Nodelman heads. I was there because it was the American Federation or somebody was having a fundraising function. Pat didn't go, and I went over. And she was a personage.

MS. BERMAN: Did she ever comment about the Nodelmans or the heads --

MRS. POTAMKIN: No, she didn't say a word about anything. But she was quite elderly. And I guess she was my age, she must have been about 85. And she was dressed in very dramatic clothing. Everything was bright and

flowing. And she was very zaftig, you know, the -- and she was flowing. And she was very lined, very lined, and heavily made up. And jewelry -- interesting. Not diamonds, but colorful jewelry dripping from every place. And she was very cordial, but she was definitely a personality, and she was gracious, and that was her character at the time. So, little did I know that we would ever come across one of those heads that I had scene. I never forgot that look, all around the living room -- or some room, some salon. And --

MS. BERMAN: Well, it's marvelous that she kept them together for so long.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Exactly. And this was a fluke, too, that we acquired this.

MS. BERMAN: You are pointing to?

MRS. POTAMKIN: The head. The head.

MS. BERMAN: The -- oh, okay.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes. The Nodelman head.

MS. BERMAN: Right.

MRS. POTAMKIN: We have a niece who lives in Seattle, my sister's daughter -- my late sister's daughter. And I guess it was about 1975, because we were moving here in 1976. I talk to my niece frequently. And one day we were talking, and -- there are some interesting galleries in Seattle. I don't know if you're aware of them, if you've ever been there, you should do the galleries. They're West Coast sort of -- and the artists like Toby [phonetic] and Graves [phonetic] and all of that --

MR. POTAMKIN: Callahan [phonetic].

MRS. POTAMKIN: And Callahan is from the Seattle gallery, too. And he was a great, beautiful draftsman. We have seen shows of his, drawings that would really bring tears to our eyes. He died recently. But my niece said, "Viv, I had this strangest feeling. I went into this gallery, and I thought there was a head of my mother." And she said, "It's by a guy by the name of Nodelman. Did you ever hear of Nodelman?" And I said, "Oh, my God," of course, you know. So we called immediately to the gallery, and if my niece had not walked in that day, and if she didn't see a relationship to my sister, her mother -- and we called, and they sent us photos, and so on. And we were moving. As a matter of fact, we had the movers in our house then. We were moving to this apartment. And we knew it was going to be a long, drawn-out thing. And so we negotiated, and we bought it, and they kept it for us for a whole year. We never saw it in person until shortly before we moved in here. So --

MS. BERMAN: Does it look like your sister?

MRS. POTAMKIN: Well --

MS. BERMAN: Or is there a --

MRS. POTAMKIN: There is an expression around the eyes, yes. And the -- so it's strange. I never see my sister in it, though, really. I think I have divorced myself from that.

MS. BERMAN: I was going to ask you about the Martobi [phonetic]. Is that -- it -- not that everything has to be [inaudible], but that struck me as a little bit outside your area of collecting, and why it appealed --

MRS. POTAMKIN: Well, in a way, everything is outside. We like everything, you know? We have sort of honed it down to make it sort of more level.

MR. POTAMKIN: There are two Martobis there.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes. You probably didn't realize there is another one, an early one, 1932 or 1935.

MS. BERMAN: Was that a city scene?

MRS. POTAMKIN: No. The city scene, "Snow in the City," is a later one.

MS. BERMAN: Right.

MRS. POTAMKIN: That's the one I think you mean.

MS. BERMAN: Right, that --

MRS. POTAMKIN: But there is a big horizontal one. It's a still life.

MS. BERMAN: Okay.

MRS. POTAMKIN: And he was in England then, teaching at some famous art school.

MS. BERMAN: Dartington [phonetic] Hall, or --

MRS. POTAMKIN: I think so, yes.

MR. POTAMKIN: Dartington?

MS. BERMAN: Yes, Dartington Hall, or something like that.

MR. POTAMKIN: Yes.

MRS. POTAMKIN: And that's where we bought it. That's another story, too, but --

MS. BERMAN: Well, we want the stories.

MRS. POTAMKIN: You do?

MS. BERMAN: Of course.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Well --

MR. POTAMKIN: Well, this -- we woke up one morning, and we noticed in the newspaper there was a sale of -- Barnum's [phonetic] Auction House.

MRS. POTAMKIN: [Inaudible.]

MR. POTAMKIN: [Inaudible.] So we walked down to it, and there were two things in which we were interested in. One was --

MRS. POTAMKIN: May I interrupt for a minute?

MR. POTAMKIN: Yes.

MRS. POTAMKIN: The ad listed about six names with just an initial, and not the first name. So, we were a little skeptical, but it piqued our interest. And we were going home a day or two later.

MR. POTAMKIN: Right.

MRS. POTAMKIN: And so -- this is all part of the story -- but we went over, and --

MR. POTAMKIN: It was, like, a Wednesday, and we were leaving Saturday. So we went over, and there was this Toby [phonetic], and then there was a Nodelman. The Nodelman was a lost piece of sculpture in which one of the legs had been knocked off at the knee. And --

MRS. POTAMKIN: [Inaudible.]

MR. POTAMKIN: -- was a bunch of junk. And so, we started to bid on the Nodelman. And Barnum's and the European auction houses are much different than American, because you can pay a week later. But we didn't know that. So we bid the guy up to -- I guess the Nodelman [inaudible] \$15,000 or so. Then we bowed out. This guy was a Frenchman. He hated us, because I bid him up. He thought he was going to buy it for \$1,000. But then the Toby started, and we determined I was going to get that one. So we got that. The Toby had been owned by a fellow named Straight Clark [phonetic]. Straight Clark was the president of Rolls Royce and [inaudible] could barely see through the glass, the dirty glass. However, the individual who curated that show was an American with knowledge of English watercolors and prints and so forth.

MRS. POTAMKIN: He was working for Mellon [phonetic].

MR. POTAMKIN: Mellon.

MRS. POTAMKIN: He was doing research for Mellon, Mellon's English watercolors. A young man, very young.

MR. POTAMKIN: So, we bought it. Then I started to scrounge around. And I went to my bank, and my bank wouldn't give me any money. And I wanted to buy something [inaudible] ridiculous. I went back to the auction house. They said, "Oh, yes, we can do it." So we finally paid for it, and brought it home with us, got it cleaned up, and so forth.

MRS. POTAMKIN: The Nodelman -- Virginia Sabrisky had a gallery in Paris at the time, and behind us was a nice young American kid. He was bidding on the Nodelman for Virginia. And after it was all over, he tapped me on the shoulder, and we identified each other. He said, "You were interested in," you know, and "I am working for Virginia," and all that. Well, we had known Virginia for many, many years when she first started out, when her gallery was in her little living room.

MR. POTAMKIN: We bought the Stella [phonetic] --

MRS. POTAMKIN: From the --

MR. POTAMKIN: Pittsburgh.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes. Oh, that's right, yes. That great drawing.

MS. BERMAN: That's wonderful.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes, isn't that a nice drawing? Yes. So, the -- that was an interesting experience, coming upon something just at the last minute. And, as I say, we were skeptical, because we only saw the initial of the artist.

MR. POTAMKIN: Incidentally --

MRS. POTAMKIN: That was --

MR. POTAMKIN: -- you were talking about the interest in the Prendergast. They had -- there is a small Prendergast [inaudible], which we saw. And it was at Norse [phonetic] Galleries. I asked what he wanted for it, it was \$1,400. So we bought it. I told him it would take me a couple of months to pay for it. Well, the fellow who sold it wanted his money immediately. So, Larry [phonetic] called and he apologized and said, "He wants his money. I got to sell it to somebody else." So we relinquished it. And then he said to us, "I [inaudible] later on," you know. About [inaudible], he says, "He is so interested in that Prendergast." I said, "Yes, but you know, it's the same price."

MRS. POTAMKIN: Isn't that nice? Well, that was typical of that era.

MR. POTAMKIN: And in that situation, a relationship with the -- we were in London, and it's the last day we were in London. Our plane leaves that day. We had been lucky, we were able to get a very good price on a Concorde. The Concorde would leave 7:00 at night in London and arrive at 5:00 in New York. So, we had this [inaudible], and if we took the [inaudible] plane, we wouldn't. So we went into Agnew's [phonetic], and they had two Sergeants [phonetic], watercolors. [Inaudible.] One was Corfu [phonetic], and the other one was -- I forget. So, he told us what they were. And [inaudible]. Because our first time, we bought things. Our last, [inaudible] broke. And I made a mental adjustment myself, and I would [inaudible]. Anyway, so he gave us the prices. And we arrived the next day or so at New York, and went to see [inaudible], we told him about these too. So he immediately, on our approval, he called Agnew's and he booked them. He sold one immediately. He called us, and he said, "I want to thank you. They are beautiful. I sold one, and made a very, very nice profit on it. And if you want the other one for the same price you would have paid in London, you can have it."

MS. BERMAN: That's marvelous.

MR. POTAMKIN: [Inaudible] Corfu?

MRS. POTAMKIN: Corfu, yes. But interestingly enough, he sold that to a woman who was at the Institute, drying out. She was an alcoholic, and from a very wealthy family. And the custom in those days was to have your room with your own furniture from your own home, and your paintings, your objects that you wanted. So -- and she had been a long-time customer of Harold's. I don't remember her name, but it was a well-known name in Philadelphia. So I thought that was another aspect of collecting.

MS. BERMAN: Right.

MRS. POTAMKIN: And -- but this was typical. The dealers were very helpful. Even to this day, we have a -- oh, I'm losing my mind, I don't know if it's the chemo -- the glass guy, the man who does glass.

MR. POTAMKIN: Winchell [phonetic] --

MRS. POTAMKIN: No, no, the -- we have the two windows, and the --

MR. POTAMKIN: Oh, Lefarge [phonetic]?

MRS. POTAMKIN: Lefarge. I couldn't even think. Ira Spaniarman [phonetic], who is still of the old school, really, I

think, in a way. Not like Harold Melch [phonetic] or Antoinette. But I think he still loves art. A lot of dealers don't, you know. He gets excited about things. Well, Lefarge. I used to go to New York a lot without pay. And it was a ladies day special train rate. So it was \$4.50, round trip. So I could go over two days a week and it would never cost anything. And I would just go for a few hours and back, and I would do the galleries then. And I had seen this Lefarge at Ira's and I liked it very much. And I came home and told Pat about it. And things weren't going too well for Pat at the moment, a couple of things had happened that upset him. But Ira sent it for us to look at, and Pat just wasn't in the mood to acquire it, so we sent it back. He had quoted me a price. And about two months later, I am -- or maybe three months later -- I am fooling -- I am going through an antiques magazine, and lo and behold, a Lefarge is advertised. And I showed it to Pat, and he said, "Oh, well, tell him to send it again." I called him, and he quoted exactly the same price he had quoted before, which I thought was very unusual. I mean, it was advertised, and he didn't raise the price. And so that was sort of a decent thing to do. And we bought it then.

MS. BERMAN: Now --

MRS. POTAMKIN: So we've had nice relationships with most dealers. I wouldn't say we had too many unpleasant ones.

MS. BERMAN: Now, certainly you were involved, as you say, with a lot of the New York dealers. Were you ever -- was there involvement with the Whitney Museum, say in former days? I mean, not any --

MR. POTAMKIN: Well --

MS. BERMAN: You know, with either Lloyd [phonetic] or Jeff [phonetic] or --

MR. POTAMKIN: Armstrong [phonetic] was a dear friend of ours.

MS. BERMAN: Well, that's what I was going to ask you. Actually, that's the next thing. Because he started -- he was at the Pennsylvania Academy.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes.

MR. POTAMKIN: We were very good -- we're still good friends.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Lloyd Woodrich [phonetic] is a fine gentleman, a very nice guy.

MR. POTAMKIN: Lamar [phonetic].

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes.

MS. BERMAN: With Tom [phonetic], what did Tom do at the Pennsylvania Academy? In other words, what did he bring to it, and --

MR. POTAMKIN: He brought stature.

MRS. POTAMKIN: And he brought a vitality. And he saved our building. I don't know if you ever heard that story.

MS. BERMAN: No, I'd like to.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes. There was -- I don't know how many years ago; when did Tom come? I can't remember any more.

MR. POTAMKIN: Well, it was there --

MS. BERMAN: In the 1970s?

MR. POTAMKIN: It was there before 1975.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes, yes, of course.

MR. POTAMKIN: So I would say -- let's say 1968.

MRS. POTAMKIN: That far?

MR. POTAMKIN: Pardon me?

MRS. POTAMKIN: Was it that long before? Well, whatever. I mean, that's a matter of record. We could find that.

MS. BERMAN: Right.

MRS. POTAMKIN: There had been a big sort of fundraising dinner which we didn't attend, but heard about, at the Academy. And at that dinner, it was announced by the then-chairman of the board, who was a very nice guy -- I met him subsequently -- that they were going to start a campaign to raise, like, \$10 million, or something like that -- I don't know how much it was -- to knock down the Furness [phonetic] Building and to build a new one. So that's what boards do.

MS. BERMAN: That's one of the great buildings of Philadelphia.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes, yes. I could tell you stories about boards that would make your hair stand on end, and board decisions, and so on. Well -- VOICE: Excuse me, I wanted to say good night.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Okay, dear, see you tomorrow night.

MR. POTAMKIN: Okay.

[Tape stops, re-starts.]

MS. BERMAN: Knocking down the Pennsylvania --

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes, the Furness Building.

MS. BERMAN: Yes.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Well, at the same time -- oh, who was the director then? I don't know. It became apparent that they knew -- I was not on the board at that time.

MR. POTAMKIN: I think Tom was the new director, and that's when he brought in --

MRS. POTAMKIN: Well, no --

MR. POTAMKIN: -- Mrs. Rockefeller --

MRS. POTAMKIN: That was -- no. Tom became director after this statement was made.

MR. POTAMKIN: Oh.

MRS. POTAMKIN: And they brought him in. I don't know why, I can't remember the details any more. So Tom was brought in as director. And he was like a breath of fresh air, as a matter of fact. And he was horrified at the prospect of knocking down this building. I mean, so he quickly stepped on the bandwagon, and he organized a committee to review the situation, and to advise the board as to what to do about the future of the Academy. And he got Blanche Rockefeller -- what was his name?

MR. POTAMKIN: Brown, Jules Brown [phonetic].

MRS. POTAMKIN: Jules Brown. And the guy from Antiques Magazine?

MS. BERMAN: Wendell Garret [phonetic]?

MR. POTAMKIN: Garret.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Wendell Garret.

MR. POTAMKIN: [Inaudible?]

MS. BERMAN: He's on The Road Show.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Exactly.

MR. POTAMKIN: Oh, The Road Show.

MRS. POTAMKIN: And I'm glad to see he's still active. And who was the fourth? Oh, some other great critic, or somebody. I can't remember. I used to keep the report around, but I threw it out a long time ago. Well, they did a very careful study of every aspect of the Academy. And, of course, they wrote this great report, very detailed and very sincere, and very intelligent. And they strongly advised not to knock down the Furness Building, it was one of the great treasures in the country, and certainly one of our great treasures, here in Philadelphia. So that was Tom Armstrong who did that. Otherwise, that building would have been knocked down.

MS. BERMAN: I'm surprised -- well, I'm sure directly after that it was declared -- you got it declared a landmark, because it certainly is.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes. Oh, definitely.

MS. BERMAN: And that was restored in the mid-1970s.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes, yes. It's been restored twice. The first restoration was a destruction, actually, because they covered everything with plasterboard, so that all these great columns, and all the color wouldn't show. But then Tom had everything ripped out. And I had a photo, which I can't lay my -- as a matter of fact, it's at the framer's, she never brought it back -- I have a photo that Tom gave us, a great big black and white. He is crawling out of the woodwork, as they're restoring it, out of a hole in the wall. It's wonderful. He had -- he was a breath of fresh air.

MS. BERMAN: He knew how to do things, I mean [inaudible] people, and --

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes, yes.

MR. POTAMKIN: [Inaudible] do things in New York. He had a committee set up of the Rockefellers -- not Blanchette, but the other Rockefeller.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Oh, Barnes [phonetic]?

MR. POTAMKIN: Had a two-floor apartment on Fifth Avenue, and had [inaudible], and it had [inaudible].

MRS. POTAMKIN: Lloyd Goodrich [phonetic].

MR. POTAMKIN: Goodrich and so forth. [Inaudible], Ray Harris [phonetic] and ourselves. And the purpose of the meeting was to set policy for the Whitney for the future. And after a few hours, it was -- the policy was set, and [inaudible] followed the life of Mrs. Whitney. [Inaudible] touched her life, then it could touch his life. [Inaudible.] And then, [inaudible] set policy, but of course it wasn't.

MS. BERMAN: Well, in 1980, for the 50th anniversary, they did that. Most of the -- you know, many of the artists had been with the original Whitney. Well, this interests me profoundly, because I wrote a biography of Juliana Forest [phonetic].

MRS. POTAMKIN: Oh, did you? We met her way, way back. She was behind the counter. She was the one who sold us the first --

MR. POTAMKIN: On 10th Street.

MRS. POTAMKIN: On 10th Street, the first whatchamacallits, monographs.

MR. POTAMKIN: [Inaudible.]

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes.

MS. BERMAN: Well, I think you met Marie Appleton [phonetic], right?

MRS. POTAMKIN: Oh, I don't know. Maybe.

MS. BERMAN: Oh, because she was the lady with white hair behind the desk. Juliana was --

MRS. POTAMKIN: I thought it was Juliana, but I could be wrong. I mean, this goes back, way, way back.

MS. BERMAN: Right. She died in 1948. And she had red hair, whereas I would think this -- it's hard to believe that the director would be behind the sales desk.

MR. POTAMKIN: No, she wasn't.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Then it wasn't her.

MS. BERMAN: That was Marie Appleton. But she had been there for 100 years, too. And she was the sister of Helen Appleton Reed [phonetic], who had been the [inaudible], and a vicious anti-Semite. Worse, a Nazi apologist.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Is that so?

MR. POTAMKIN: I was sorry to see them give up 10th Street.

MS. BERMAN: Yes. No, it's too bad they did that. But now that is the New York Studio School. And it's a --

MRS. POTAMKIN: It serves a purpose.

MS. BERMAN: It's an art school, and Arthur Carles -- you know Mercedes Matter founded it.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Sure, sure. Yes.

MS. BERMAN: So it's kind of a --

MRS. POTAMKIN: Have you seen her recently?

MS. BERMAN: I haven't seen her. You know, I think I saw her at a cocktail party or something last year, but she is still -- you know, she lost that suit for her Pollock.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Oh, she did?

MS. BERMAN: Yes. So --

MRS. POTAMKIN: That made her unhappy, I'm sure.

MS. BERMAN: It would make you unhappy, too, if a Pollock had been -- you know, it's a lot of zeroes to lose.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes.

MS. BERMAN: In a work. So -- well, also --

MRS. POTAMKIN: What was the story? Why did she lose it?

MS. BERMAN: Well, she had put that and her possessions in a warehouse. And I'm not sure if it was stolen -- this is a crucial difference -- either it was stolen from the warehouse, or they had not paid their bill, and it was -- and then the warehouse sold the contents.

MR. POTAMKIN: Oh.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Oh, oh.

MS. BERMAN: What's what they -- that's a big difference.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Sort of shaky, yes.

MS. BERMAN: And then, it eventually ended up in Marlborough, which sold it to this -- a collector in London, who did buy it in good faith. In other words --

MRS. POTAMKIN: Sure.

MS. BERMAN: But it was many years ago. I think they had put it in the warehouse in the early 1950s. So that's what I am not sure about, if it was the individual items were taken, or if they had just left them there. And then, if the --

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes. [Inaudible] can take that seriously, I guess.

MS. BERMAN: Right, I guess not.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes.

MS. BERMAN: It was a wedding present to the two, Mercedes and Herbert [phonetic].

MRS. POTAMKIN: Oh. We have a Hans Hofmann that came from Mercedes. You may not recognize it as a Hans Hofmann, but before you leave I will show it to you. And that, too, has a story from Mercedes.

MS. BERMAN: Oh, well, this is the time to put stories on the record.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes. And that time -- that story should go on record. It was Harold Diamond who told me. But I interrupted you. What were you saying, do you remember? What were you talking about? Oh, about the Whitney and the 10th Street and the school, and so on. Yes.

MR. POTAMKIN: The most important part of all of these things that happened is that they're abrupt. It's not like reading a book, and you come to the end of a book. All of the sudden you're in the middle of a book, and something happens. And as [inaudible] told me, this is what happens [inaudible]. And in the American [inaudible], there was an article in the New York Observer in the last few weeks by Hilton Cramer [phonetic], the various turns and the changes in painting, ultra-Modernism, inter-Modernism, and outer-Modernism, and all these things that --

MRS. POTAMKIN: Post-Modernism, under -- everything.

MR. POTAMKIN: Yes. The -- and so, you had this inability -- there was a -- can you turn this off for a minute? [Inaudible.] It's a story of -- an explanation of [inaudible] who wants to buy -- his wife says, "Everybody else is buying paintings, why don't you buy a painting for our apartment?" And he said, "I don't know anything." She says, "Well, [inaudible] is an artist. Get him to get it for you." So, he calls Bush [phonetic]. He says, "Bush, my wife is driving me crazy. You got to find me some paintings." Bush says, "Well, I'm going to Paris, and I will find a painting. [Inaudible] I'll tell you how much money." So, he goes to Paris, and he finds a painting. He says, "Found a painting. Four foot by six foot, interesting, \$10,000." [Inaudible.] So he brings it back, [inaudible], hangs it up, and it's three or four [inaudible] on a blue background, nothing else. And he says [inaudible]. So, [inaudible]. So he says, "Okay." He calls his friend, and he goes back to Europe. And he says, "Now, a larger painting, \$20,000." He sends the money, brings it in. Brings it to him. This one is six foot by eight foot. And it's a flop, triangles and half-circles in various colors. So, he says, "[Inaudible.]," which means a little bit all mixed up. So, when you get situations of that sort, where they're different -- and this is what happens -- the -- many individuals, when they look back on Rothko, Pollock, and others, and they often wonder what is there behind it. Is there a philosophy of emptiness? Is that a philosophy of fullness? Is there -- just the idea of seeing what can happen. There was a newly [inaudible] on Sunday.

MS. BERMAN: Oh, yes.

MR. POTAMKIN: There was a [inaudible] that came with. You remember the --

MRS. POTAMKIN: No, I don't.

MR. POTAMKIN: The [inaudible] was an American artist was an abstract painter. Did his painting in the [inaudible] of Canada. And the only way to get to his cabin is from a seaplane into a lake. So, he works there the whole summer. Then, at the end of the summer, the dealer comes up. Now, he had been painting on four by eight boards. He comes up, and they start taking out all the boards. And they had this electrical --

MRS. POTAMKIN: Saw?

MR. POTAMKIN: Saw. And they start cutting off the four-by-eights, and three-by-sixes into [inaudible] shapes, and [inaudible]. The others, they throw them away. [They laugh.] So, often the question is just that. I mean, [inaudible] or just very -- there is a group -- I don't know if you ever read it -- when abstract started, the majority of our good painters were out of business. A group calling themselves the Realists --

MS. BERMAN: Right, that was Sawyer and Bishop and Marsh, and some of the --

MR. POTAMKIN: Yes. Do you have copies of that?

MS. BERMAN: It's called Reality. That was their journal.

MR. POTAMKIN: Yes. Do you have copies of it?

MS. BERMAN: In the archives. I think, well, we have Rayfield [phonetic] Sawyer's papers, and he donated some copies.

MR. POTAMKIN: Oh.

MS. BERMAN: Hopper [phonetic] was in it, too.

MR. POTAMKIN: [Inaudible] --

MS. BERMAN: Another person I think -- oh, you've got the watercolors.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes. Hofmann, yes. We have a story about Hopper and his wife, too. But go ahead, dear.

MR. POTAMKIN: So we have copies, so if you want a copy for your files, let me know.

MS. BERMAN: Okay. Well, I am going to defer to you, because first I want you to tell me about the Hofmann and

the Hopper, whichever way you prefer.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes. Well, you have to see the Hofmann first, before I tell you. The Hopper involves her more than it involves him.

MS. BERMAN: Jo [phonetic]?

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes. This was years ago. We were at the Whitney one day, and they were there. And --

MR. POTAMKIN: He would sit there, like her school boy. She would be sitting there, he would be sitting there. They wouldn't say one word to each other.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes. And, finally, they went outside and we went outside. We hadn't talked to them, but they were sitting on the fence outside. The stone wall, or whatever it is. And we went over and introduced ourselves. And I don't know if he was having an exhibition there, or not. We have a Hopper watercolor, so we went over and started to chat with him and with her. And he tried to be gracious, but she hogged the conversation. And we said that we had this Hopper, of which we were very fond, and he said, "I would like to know which one it is." So, we said, well, we would send him a photo and a note with it -- which we did, I'm not usually very prompt about that kind of a thing, but we did; we had somebody working for us then. And we get a letter back from her, thanking us in a very broad manner, but not mentioning him. And apparently, she would not allow him to sign that letter. She did not want us to have the signature. So that's my Hopper story.

MS. BERMAN: I have heard similar --

MRS. POTAMKIN: Have you really?

MS. BERMAN: From the people at the end. You knew -- did you know Joan Washburn [phonetic]?

MRS. POTAMKIN: Oh, of course. And that was another person we used to go to. Joan, we know when she was kid [inaudible] Crashauer [phonetic].

MS. BERMAN: Well, Joan always said -- this was many years ago, when Hopper was alive, and Edmund Dickinson [phonetic] and she had, I think, a Dickinson show, and Hopper and Dickinson hadn't seen each other for years. And she brought them together, and they were talking, and they were attempting to talk --

[Tape stops, re-starts.]

MRS. POTAMKIN: Ben Wolfe [phonetic], who was a local -- what would you call Ben?

MR. POTAMKIN: Art critic.

MRS. POTAMKIN: An art critic, and sort of a little painter, and so on. But a very nice, intelligent, intellectual guy. And he once went up -- now, this is what he told me -- he once went to their loft, or their studio, and years ago, to interview him or her -- I'm not sure which --

MS. BERMAN: Probably him.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes, I think so. He said there was a line, a physical line, down the length of this studio. One side was hers, a physical line, and one side was his. I thought that was kind of interesting.

[END CD 3]

MS. BERMAN: I just want to say that this is tape two, side two, and about Harold Diamond telling you a story about Hans Hofmann.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes. Okay, how can I direct you? Did you want to go --

MS. BERMAN: I'll do it in there --

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes.

MS. BERMAN: But why don't you tell the story?

MRS. POTAMKIN: Okay. Well, not many people realize it's a Hans Hofmann. And experts have asked us who is the painting of. And, actually, I think [inaudible]. It's a watercolor. But anyway, it's hanging in the gallery on this side.

MS. BERMAN: Closer to the [inaudible] door.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes. A little past the entry door. There is another door after the entry door. It's right next to that second door on this side. And [inaudible]. It's actually a scene, an outdoor scene. And I think [inaudible] or something like that. And it's not really abstract at all. It's almost realistic. Howard told me that it came from Mercedes, by the way, and she had studied with him and lived with him and so on. And I'm quoting Harold, I didn't know any of that. And Mercedes told him that this is the beginning of his change of approach, because [inaudible] in Germany around that time. And when she saw Hans's work, whichever it was before that, I don't know, and she said to him -- and now I'm quoting -- "Hans, you don't know what's going on in the world." And she is supposed to, according to Harold, have turned his ideas around, and started him thinking in this very non-objective way. So it's sort of a historic moment in somebody's life.

MS. BERMAN: Right, right.

MRS. POTAMKIN: If, indeed, that is true. But Harold Diamond told me that from Mercedes. So I thought that was kind of a sweet story.

MS. BERMAN: Well, it also -- there is an element -- because of course, you know, Carles and Hofmann were very friendly.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Oh, sure.

MS. BERMAN: Of course, and as you say, she studied --

MRS. POTAMKIN: With him, and she lived with him, too. So it -- now, she is one of two daughters, I think, of Carles. And they don't get along. I don't know if the other one is still living or not.

MS. BERMAN: I don't even know that they are --

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes.

MS. BERMAN: -- I mean, anything, because Mercedes is pretty much kind of the representative.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes, I guess. I don't know about the other girl, but I know we had them at the Academy at one time for some occasion, and they weren't very nice to each other, obviously. So that's the Hans Hofmann story. And the interesting -- if you think you would have -- I think it's 1934 or 1944 -- couldn't be 1944.

MS. BERMAN: No, he was doing the cubist grids by then.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes, so it had to be, like, 1934. She had just left Germany, apparently. I don't know whatever happened to her, to Mrs. Hofmann.

MS. BERMAN: Oh, Liz [phonetic]. Well, she -- they were happily married until she died, and then a few years later he married a young woman, a German woman, named Renatta [phonetic], and who also kept up his legacy. But she was -- made his life wonderful, and in Provincetown, ran the students, and was a --

MRS. POTAMKIN: Oh, is that so? Oh, that's nice to hear.

MS. BERMAN: And he was married to her until she died.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Oh, great. But so she wasn't disturbed by this relationship with Mercedes.

MS. BERMAN: I guess --

MRS. POTAMKIN: I guess -- well, who knows? Yes.

MS. BERMAN: Right. Well, and that -- you know.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes, I know that's not part of --

MS. BERMAN: Right. That's not something I do know. I just know that --

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes, yes.

MS. BERMAN: Well, he always had -- you know, don't forget, also, because there were the groupies that were always students --

MRS. POTAMKIN: Of course, yes.

MS. BERMAN: -- around, all over.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes, it was a dumb question.

MS. BERMAN: Oh, no, it's not a dumb question. I just don't know that.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes.

MS. BERMAN: Someone who really specializes in Hofmann might know that a little more, in terms of the dynamics.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes. Who cares? I mean, I just wondered, you know, what Mercedes's relationship was with him, and so on.

MS. BERMAN: Who knows?

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes.

MS. BERMAN: But there were certainly always adoring students, adoring females, around all the time.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes. Had to be, I'm sure.

MS. BERMAN: Yes, especially there seemed to be many, many female students up there every summer.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Is that so? Yes.

MS. BERMAN: I mean -- but I think that --

MRS. POTAMKIN: He was a very dynamic man.

MS. BERMAN: Yes, I think very hardy and happy, and people liked him. I mean, that's what -- I mean, I was very friendly with Katherine Cooh [phonetic], who knew him very well.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Oh, my God. We have a Katherine Cooh story, too.

MS. BERMAN: Oh, well, you're going to have to -- well, I'm Katherine's literary executor, so you're going to have to tell me Katherine's story.

MR. POTAMKIN: The Katherine [inaudible] story?

MS. BERMAN: Yes.

MR. POTAMKIN: Katherine Cooh came back from California thinking that she had won the Harrisburg [phonetic] collection.

MS. BERMAN: That's correct.

MR. POTAMKIN: And when she got off the train in Chicago, the headlines were, "The Harrisburg Collection goes to Philadelphia." It was -- the author had a [inaudible]. The day she left, he arrived in California. And he made a deal that they would keep the collection together [inaudible] five years, which the Chicago Art Institute didn't want to do. So, shortly thereafter, she needed some surgery. And at that moment, she was writing the [inaudible] books. And she had just done three weekly articles, one right after the other, "What You Should Do if You're a Director of a Museum;" "What You Should do if You're a Trustee;" "What You Should -- Member of a Committee."

MRS. POTAMKIN: We had a lot of respect for these articles.

MR. POTAMKIN: So, this was about 1950s, late 1950s.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Well, we were still at 1808, so it had to be -- oh, yes.

MR. POTAMKIN: We just moved in.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Excuse me. That's right. We had just moved in, yes. It had to be in the late 1950s.

MR. POTAMKIN: So, I tried to get her on the phone. And it rang and rang and rang. I didn't realize she had this surgery. And one Saturday night, I was about ready to go on down for dinner or something, and I tried to call then. And she answered the phone. And I said, "Miss Cooh," I said, "The name is Potamkin, I'm just a new member of the board of trustees of the Philadelphia Museum of Art." [Inaudible] word. Out from the telephone bursts this cry, "Why did you sell the Turner [phonetic]?"

MRS. POTAMKIN: I heard it. I heard it through the telephone.

MR. POTAMKIN: I said, "We didn't own the Turner." And she -- bang, she hangs up on me.

MS. BERMAN: That was Katherine.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Right, we --

MS. BERMAN: She was so passionate.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes.

MS. BERMAN: Did you call her back?

MR. POTAMKIN: I met her later on, when she was active on a show at the National Gallery of Mary Cassatt. And the Cassatt that we have, which is a sort of a monotype type of thing. It's not a monotype, but it's --

MRS. POTAMKIN: It's -- when you take the duplicate. The Met has the other side.

MR. POTAMKIN: Right.

MRS. POTAMKIN: I forget what it's called. It's a pastel, and you have another --

MR. POTAMKIN: She sat at a table, and we discussed a few things with her. But she was a very knowledgeable individual.

MRS. POTAMKIN: What do you do for her? You publish her --

MS. BERMAN: Well, I will -- after she died, I became her literary -- I brought out one of her books after she died.

MRS. POTAMKIN: I see.

MS. BERMAN: And I sort of watch over the copyrights and give permission for things.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Oh, right.

MS. BERMAN: Well -- and I met her just the way I met you, doing an oral history for the archives.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Is that so?

MS. BERMAN: I had gotten a grant, and she had so much to say I was going to go twice and I went 16 times.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Never. Isn't that wonderful?

MS. BERMAN: And after that, of course, we were friends.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes.

MS. BERMAN: Because I knew so much about her.

MRS. POTAMKIN: How wonderful.

MS. BERMAN: But that was Katherine. "Why did you sell the Turner?" I mean, she would not be appeased. But it was great. She had utter integrity.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes.

MS. BERMAN: I mean, I realize she made a mistake, but she was very passionate.

MRS. POTAMKIN: That was irrelevant, that she made a --

MR. POTAMKIN: [Inaudible.] The [inaudible] art association, which did the centennial. And the -- it was an inside deal [inaudible] New York, sold through an auction house in Philadelphia. Sold quickly, got out of town, and [inaudible].

MS. BERMAN: She wouldn't have liked that, either.

MR. POTAMKIN: No, but the museum had nothing to do with that.

MS. BERMAN: Well, the other thing is -- I don't know if she ever discussed it with you -- but she always said that the Aransberg [phonetic], what happened with the Aransberg, she always called that the greatest failure of her career. So really -- I mean, and she did work very hard in cataloging it, and -- I mean, it was a very important show. They did do the show, and that was very important. But it was certainly also true that Philadelphia had a huge empty space.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Absolutely.

MS. BERMAN: I mean, that was --

MRS. POTAMKIN: They needed it so desperately.

MR. POTAMKIN: And Henry Clifford was a real Renaissance man.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Oh, he was fabulous. He was one of my most favorite people in the whole art world. He was wonderful.

MS. BERMAN: Now, what was his position at the museum?

MR. POTAMKIN: [Inaudible.]

MS. BERMAN: Oh, okay.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Very cultivated, witty, sense of humor, didn't take himself seriously, knew everything, knew everybody.

MR. POTAMKIN: [Inaudible.]

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes, yes. Great having him in Mexico. We visited him there, and he invited us several times to Florence, but we never went. He was a charming guy. And he could really charm anyone. And they may have been impressed by him personally, too, you know?

MR. POTAMKIN: We couldn't accept many of these invitations, because they just -- the question of what clothes to take.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes, Henry McIlhenny used to invite us to his castle, and you know, we would feel so out of place, that we would always make an excuse not to go. You know about Henry McIlhenny?

MS. BERMAN: Oh, yes. Well, actually, that was another -- that was the next person I was going to ask you about.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes.

MS. BERMAN: If you were --

MRS. POTAMKIN: Well, he was a -- well, do you want to say anything about him? What do you want to say? I mean, you had closer contact with him.

MR. POTAMKIN: He was a -- the first few years that I was on the board he was great to work with. And as he got older, he narrowed down. And also, it seemed that he spent more mental time in Ireland, even if he was in Philadelphia. And also, he got caught into the IRA situation. And each year he gave a sum of money to the IRA, to protect his holdings. And then he gave his estate in Ireland to the Republic.

MS. BERMAN: I never knew that. Boy, that's --

MR. POTAMKIN: And he -- there was a very close relationship between Henry and his sister.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Bonnie.

MR. POTAMKIN: And it was one that each one had a basic loss. He had -- his loss was that he had no female. Her loss was that her husband committed suicide. And -- but she went beyond that, and she was a good friend.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes, she was great. She was a supporter of everything, really. I mean, genuinely -- especially, of course, the museum and the Academy. She was very well-educated, she was a good sportswoman and bridge player. She was very well-rounded. Gave great parties, was fun to be with.

MR. POTAMKIN: She had guts enough that she gave a big [inaudible] beef stew. There are not many people --

MRS. POTAMKIN: All the elite in Philadelphia.

MR. POTAMKIN: Who?

MS. BERMAN: Right.

MRS. POTAMKIN: I say for the elite in Philadelphia.

MR. POTAMKIN: Yes.

MS. BERMAN: Right, it definitely -- because, you know, if you're that elite, you could be down-home, or --

MRS. POTAMKIN: Exactly.

MS. BERMAN: -- plain, or you don't have to impress anybody.

MRS. POTAMKIN: She had a number of Picassos, you know.

MS. BERMAN: Oh, right, yes.

MRS. POTAMKIN: I forget --

MR. POTAMKIN: And she collected everything. She had some marvelous American paintings, very few. She had about 15 Picassos. She had a marvelous Matisse.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Oh, that was great. Yes, that's a famous one you see --

MR. POTAMKIN: A very famous one, a girl with big blue -- light blue and white --

MS. BERMAN: Yes. That was sold at auction a few years ago, or did that --

MRS. POTAMKIN: No.

MS. BERMAN: Or did that come here?

MRS. POTAMKIN: No, that's here. I think it's here. God, I don't even know any more.

MR. POTAMKIN: I think so.

MRS. POTAMKIN: I tell you, I'm getting so confused about what's where any more. And of course, Henry had a --

MS. BERMAN: It had like a frilly -- it was a frilly blouse.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes, yes.

MR. POTAMKIN: Yes.

MS. BERMAN: It was -- right.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes.

MR. POTAMKIN: Blue and white.

MRS. POTAMKIN: And Henry had this historic [inaudible] that we used to see through the window. He gave great parties, too. We used to attend his parties. And, as a board member, chairman of the board, he often brought great picnic baskets for lunch. And --

MR. POTAMKIN: We would have a meeting of the committee, and he would bring a picnic for about six of us. And once -- I forget who it was, it was the president of Wannamakers [phonetic] at the time, and a friend -- he offered to help. And Henry McIlhenny looked down on him and he said [inaudible].

MRS. POTAMKIN: Well, Henry had one of the great chefs, one of the great butlers in Philadelphia, if not the great chef and the great butler. And he was very hospitable. One time, our son and our daughter-in-law were dying to see his collection, and I asked him if I could bring them over Saturday or Sunday, when they were going to be here. And he said, "Yes. I would be happy to have them. But I am going to the movies at that time with Emlin Eddie." They were buddies. And he said, "But Patrick will be here." And he gave them free run of the house. Oh, and how about when he had Stanley Marcus [phonetic], when he had them for tea? Yes. He did a great job, a tea like I've never seen on the stage or anywhere for Henry -- for Stanley Marcus and his then-wife. It was great, and they were so thrilled to be there. So he was very cordial. And he liked to share his art experiences with people who were interested, and share his -- you know, viewing his collection.

MR. POTAMKIN: He had this 13-year-old girl [inaudible]. He --

MRS. POTAMKIN: Oh, yes, the Degas.

MR. POTAMKIN: The Degas.

MS. BERMAN: Right, that's --

MR. POTAMKIN: The dress was --

MRS. POTAMKIN: Falling apart.

MR. POTAMKIN: Falling apart.

MS. BERMAN: The tutu.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes.

MR. POTAMKIN: He went to Paris, went to France, searched out the mill that made it, and they still have a roll of it. And he bought it, and brought it back, and had it --

MS. BERMAN: Only in Europe would they have not thrown it away.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Exactly.

MS. BERMAN: And he was able to find it.

MRS. POTAMKIN: I know.

MS. BERMAN: And that it still -- that the mill, it still exists today, after two wars.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes. What a story.

MS. BERMAN: That's good.

MRS. POTAMKIN: And I have another story about Henry. He was here. Occasionally we would exchange visits. And, by the way, he was very influential in founding the American Museum in Britain.

MS. BERMAN: Oh, the -- with Dallas Pratt [phonetic] and --

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes, exactly.

MS. BERMAN: And you know the director knows Bill McNaught [phonetic].

MRS. POTAMKIN: I know. We know him.

MR. POTAMKIN: Yes.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes, isn't that great? Yes. And he has brought people here, Bill McNaught, you know, to see the collection. But we've known him a long time. At any rate, the -- I guess we originally must have met him at Henry's, maybe. I don't remember how we knew him first. But we became life members because of Henry. And it was just being founded then, and Henry gave this great big party and invited people --

MS. BERMAN: Yes, Dallas Pratt and John Judkin [phonetic] founded it.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Right. Exactly, right. And so that's one of the reasons that that institution exists. And, by the way, we had a very nice experience with him, too. We did this exhibition. Before you leave, I have to give you this catalog. Now we only have five left. I gave one to Becky [phonetic], one to our granddaughter, and one to Macy [phonetic] last night. And this is the catalog --

MR. POTAMKIN: [Inaudible] Dickinson say we gave them 400 things?

MS. BERMAN: That is actually the Whitney. I found -- that is -- if you've only got a couple, why don't you save that?

MR. POTAMKIN: We got a lot of those.

MS. BERMAN: Oh, okay. I would take it if you -- because I got a couple of your catalogs that were at the Whitney, and those pictures --

MRS. POTAMKIN: Did you get the catalog on the William Penn?

MS. BERMAN: That wasn't there.

MRS. POTAMKIN: No, it wouldn't be. We didn't enough of them printed, unfortunately. But the -- I will give you that.

MS. BERMAN: I will donate it to the archives.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Oh, that would be nice.

MS. BERMAN: I mean, I won't take it personally. I will put it in the archives.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes. Okay. And that belongs there. And -- but you have to read it.

MR. POTAMKIN: Also the [inaudible].

MRS. POTAMKIN: Well, that's -- oh, yes. The tape.

MR. POTAMKIN: Yes.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Can you put your hands on one now? It's in that cabinet, but I don't know if you will find it. I promised I would send it, but --

MS. BERMAN: You could --

MR. POTAMKIN: [Inaudible.]

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes. The --

MR. POTAMKIN: [Inaudible] Hofmann.

MS. BERMAN: Okay. Well, why don't -- I think -- did -- are we -- so are we pretty much finished, do you think?

MR. POTAMKIN: [Inaudible.] I'm waiting.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Let me tell you a story about Henry. But I'm glad to tell you that he was one of the founders of the museum. Oh, when we were doing this William Penn thing, and we were in England, London, and we went to the museum in -- oh, where is --

MS. BERMAN: Bath.

MR. POTAMKIN: Bath.

MRS. POTAMKIN: In Bath, of course. Lo and behold, we found, amidst all the artifacts, a puzzle that had been made in this country of the image of William Penn and his treaty with the Indians. So they leant it to us for the year --

MR. POTAMKIN: It was a jigsaw puzzle.

MS. BERMAN: Oh.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes, a jigsaw puzzle.

MS. BERMAN: And they leant --

MRS. POTAMKIN: So they leant it to us for our exhibition.

MS. BERMAN: Oh, great.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Wasn't that sweet? Yes. We never found one of that type. We found others, but not that one. Well, at any rate, Henry was here [inaudible] --

[Tape stops, re-starts.]

MS. BERMAN: Right, the one with the horse, or the --

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes, the one with the horse.

MS. BERMAN: The woman on the horse.

MRS. POTAMKIN: The woman on the horse. Now, you have to have known Henry and his background. And he said yes, he had met her one time.

MS. BERMAN: Oh, Isabelle?

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes. And he said -- he motioned -- "She's like this." Well, here is Henry McIlhenny, making this great, big, voluptuous form --

MR. POTAMKIN: As skinny as he is.

MRS. POTAMKIN: What, dear?

MR. POTAMKIN: As skinny as he is.

MRS. POTAMKIN: As thin and skinny, you know? And so I thought that was very interesting. It was kind of a cute -
-

MS. BERMAN: Yes. Evidently she was enormous.

MRS. POTAMKIN: That's what he said. She must have towered over him, you see, over --

MS. BERMAN: Right.

MR. POTAMKIN: When you saw her originally in the garden --

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes, the museum, yes.

MR. POTAMKIN: -- the museum --

MRS. POTAMKIN: Oh, that was a very impressive -- oh, and then the patina had been rubbed off when they went to Russia. Did you ever hear that story?

MS. BERMAN: Oh, yes. They were -- because Ida Crawford [phonetic] sort of went on that trip to Russia.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Oh, did she?

MS. BERMAN: Yes.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Oh, that I didn't know.

MS. BERMAN: Yes. Well, she spoke Russian, of course, so --

MRS. POTAMKIN: Oh, yes. Of course, yes.

MS. BERMAN: But they were all -- yes, that thing was a -- I mean, an absolute --

MR. POTAMKIN: The patina was rubbed off the --

MS. BERMAN: Yes.

MRS. POTAMKIN: [Inaudible.]

MS. BERMAN: Right. At first, everyone was very upset. And then she said, "Oh, this is Mother Russia, like the Earth." And then they all got it.

MRS. POTAMKIN: They got it, yes. And that was smart.

MS. BERMAN: Because -- mm-hmm [affirmative].

MRS. POTAMKIN: And that's true, really. Mother somebody.

MS. BERMAN: Yes, exactly.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Hardly Mother Russia, I guess.

MS. BERMAN: Well, she was -- she improvised well.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes. Yes. She had a sister who lived here. Did you ever hear about her sister?

MS. BERMAN: Oh, yes, because that's the -- you know, her niece and her heir is Sonia [phonetic].

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes. Sonia?

MS. BERMAN: I think her name was --

MRS. POTAMKIN: Walker [phonetic]? What was her name? I should know any more. I tell you, the things I have forgotten. I think it was Sonia. She lived right down the street here.

MR. POTAMKIN: Yes.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Had wonderful things which wound up in somebody else's hands.

MS. BERMAN: Oh, well, it ended up with Natalie [phonetic], one of her daughters.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes, yes.

MS. BERMAN: Because Natalie was the one -- Natalie Balm [phonetic] was Edith's niece, who used to work there, and she was the one who told me that Mother Russia story.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Oh, that's -- I love that, that's very clever, yes.

MS. BERMAN: And Natalie is gone now, too. But she used to live in Washington, D.C.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Oh. She is in Washington?

MS. BERMAN: Well, she was. She died a few years ago.

MRS. POTAMKIN: I see. Well, now, is she the niece?

MS. BERMAN: Yes. She was Sonia's daughter.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Oh, Sonia's daughter. Yes. But there was some kind of an unhappy arrangement about those --

MS. BERMAN: Well, right, because she had, you know, offered it, and then she was not in her right mind, and she had offered it to all the museums, and then of course nothing ever happened. And, eventually, some of it went to the family, but it was sold at Sotheby's.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Oh, yes. That catalog --

MS. BERMAN: Right, exactly. But she had promised everybody this collection.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Oh, no.

MS. BERMAN: And everybody courted her.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Oh, of course. Yes. Well, she used to --

MR. POTAMKIN: She always drove [inaudible] crazy.

MS. BERMAN: Exactly, yes.

MR. POTAMKIN: She was putting on a show of her things at stores, and we [inaudible] and other collectors [inaudible]. And the day before, she called Marvin [phonetic], and he was sending a truck to pick everything up. And she told him not to send the truck. He almost went crazy. He went down and spoke to her, and persuaded her.

MS. BERMAN: I'm sure that's true.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Well, do you want to see the Hans Hofmann?

MS. BERMAN: I certainly do.

MRS. POTAMKIN: Yes.

MS. BERMAN: And thank you very much. This was great.

MRS. POTAMKIN: So --

MS. BERMAN: And thank you for making this effort.

[END OF INTERVIEW.]

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