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Oral history interview with Philip Evergood, 1968 Dec. 3

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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a tape-recorded interview with Philip Evergood on December 3, 1968. The interview took place in Bridgewater, Connecticut, and was conducted by Forrest Selvig for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Interview

FORREST SELVIG: This is an interview with Philip Evergood in his house in Bridgewater, Connecticut. The date is December 3, 1968 and the interviewer is Forrest Selvig. Now we can start. And remember that things can be edited out and crossed out so you don't need to worry about that.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Okay.

FORREST SELVIG: I'd like to ask you first of all, Mr. Evergood, you were born in New York I think in 1901, weren't you?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: That's right. On 23rd Street, 188 West 23rd Street, which today is a great big loft building full of furniture, second-hand furniture for sale. I visited there not long ago. It was quite amusing.

FORREST SELVIG: But the house where you were born is all torn down?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: No, it's not torn down. It's just a big loft building full of second-hand furniture now. We had the studio on the top floor which was like a great big loft studio. And that's where I was born, in the loft studio.

FORREST SELVIG: At the age of eight you went to England?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Yes, I went to England.

FORREST SELVIG: How did this happen?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Well, it's an unusual sort of background and experience. My mother was English, very, very English and she had a background of London and schools in Paris and Germany and the sort of Victorian education that girls of the 1880's had. We had no great money or any great resources but her father had been quite a successful businessman. And when her little son got to be around the age when he could be shipped away to school she seemed to feel with this English background that her son ought to have the English schooling that was in her tradition, in her way of life. Probably it was the wrong thing. I have often thought it may have been.

FORREST SELVIG: Your father, however, was agreeable to this I gather.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Yes. My father was a completely different type. He was the product of a little Polish Jewish family which had run away from Poland just about the time of the Prussian War and had emigrated to England and then later to Australia where he was born. And he against a lot of opposition of his family – his name was Blashki – Evergood Blashki they called him – (Evergood was a translation from Immergut, which was his mother's name. So he was always called Evergood Blashki.) – he went to the art schools in Melbourne, to the Academy in Melbourne, and he knew some of the very best of the younger artists in Australia, who don't amount to very much in my humble opinion. But they were very serious people and good academicians. And he then set out on his own and developed an Impressionistic style of painting something like Sisley and Monet. And went out into the world and traveled to Samoa and to Tahiti. He met Robert Louis Stevenson in Samoa. He just wandered around on little freight vessels trying to get a feeling of life and nature. And he developed quite an interesting style. Later on I will show you, if you'd like, one or two examples of his work.

FORREST SELVIG: I'd like to see them.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: He was a sensitive artist, very sensitive. Not a bit like my mother, though. Completely different world. But he did agree to having me go to England and be sort of half under the wing of my mother's relatives. She had a brother whose name was George Perry who was a great engineer. He had raised he Aussuan Dam, designed the locks for the Assuan Dam. And he sort of took me under his wing and helped financially to allow me to go to school in England.

FORREST SELVIG: Was it your intent from the very beginning to be an artist?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: No, it was the last thing in the world I ever thought of.

MRS. EVERGOOD: He started out as a musician as a child.

FORREST SELVIG: You started out as a musician?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Well, in a very, very limited, youthful way. In other words, my mother wanted me to have some expression of art. So she took me to this beautiful teacher, a Madame Rabagliatti [phon. sp.] in New York who was a very domineering character and a very strong personality, who took me in hand. She was almost like a Svengali. She had a sort of a mystical, mesmeric, you might say, effect on me as a youngster of six years old. She sat me down at the piano and without going through the usual procedure of scales and learning how to read music she sat me down at the piano and made me play big pieces of Mendelssohn and go through them with me at the piano until I felt them and knew them.

FORREST SELVIG: That's fantastic. How old were you then?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: I was only six.

MRS. EVERGOOD: He played at Carnegie Hall.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: And so when she gave a concert at Carnegie Hall I was asked to participate as one of her little students. And I played for an hour, say, on one of the smaller stages of Carnegie Hall. I had a feeling – put it that way – that's all you can say – just had a feeling for music. And really my playing was almost like an adult, the feeling of the strength of the power of the playing and the emotion that was put into it I'm told was quite strong. So that if I had the right continuation of the right teachers and the right discipline I might have been a musician as well as an artist. I don't know.

FORREST SELVIG: You say that being an artist was the farthest thing from your mind?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Yes.

FORREST SELVIG: Why was that?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Well, I was a little child crawling about the studio on my hands and knees, crawling through my father's frames and around his pictures on the floor and watching him paint. And of course I was interested in this man with the lovely, juicy paint on his palette, don't you know, and painting these things; and sometimes he'd give me a brush and say to me, "Would you like to work on my painting?" And I might say, when I was six or eight years old, "Yes, I think it needs a boat, a ship in that sea." So he'd say, "Go ahead. Paint it in, boy." I mean that's about the limit of my feeling that I would ever be an artist.

FORREST SELVIG: Now you went to England at the age of eight – and you started school –

PHILIP EVERGOOD: At little private schools where I was terribly restricted so far as any feeling of art was concerned, or music. The teachers of piano were so dull that I soon lost my interest in the piano and gave it up.

FORREST SELVIG: But, in other words, your interest at first in England continued to be in music?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Well, forced to be interested in music. But I wasn't interested in the kind of music that I was being presented with, which was the disciplinary side of the thing which I probably needed all along desperately. But emotionally and from the feeling of my existence I kicked against it, kicked against the pricks, as it were. And didn't want to sit down and have to learn how to read notes and practice scales for hours and hours. I was thinking of my Madame Rabagliatti [phon. sp.] who taught me something that I could get my teeth into and really emote with in my little way.

FORREST SELVIG: When you were growing up in New York with your parents, I gather that they were rather permissive – they weren't strong disciplinarians?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: No, they weren't. They were loving, just loving, that's all. My father was one of the most loving, loving affectionate people that you could ever know. And my mother was just about the same but she was soft and dreamy; very very much the Burn-Jones dreamy and loving type. And that's what she gave me.

FORREST SELVIG: But then when you went to England you found it to be stricter?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Oh! When I went to England it was like having my right arm cut off, severed from all this warmth and love. I was lost. I used to cry at night in those dormitories and hated going back to school and hated being torn away from my mother.

FORREST SELVIG: Tell me now you started off in boarding schools right away?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Yes, I did. Right away.

FORREST SELVIG: And your relatives in England, were they –

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Well, they were pretty cold; sweet and kind but looked upon me a little bit as a foreign sort of – a little foreign element there with the Polish father and the father that couldn't make a good living for my mother. They didn't like that. But they were kind and nice and sweet. And my Uncle George, the engineer, was a very lovely man. But there was a coldness there. Especially later when he married a French countess. That broke the whole tie completely, so far as I was concerned. That was later in a more crucial, critical period when I did want to go in for art and she, the wife, had looked at my work – Countess Brie was her name – the Countess Brie, and she was very, very French and knowledgeable and knew all about Cezanne and Renoir and Degas and she looked at my early beginnings and felt that it was very sad that I with my lack of maturity could hope ever to be an artist.

MRS. EVERGOOD: They wanted him to be a lawyer.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Well, they wanted me to be various things, either a lawyer or an engineer and follow along in my uncle's footsteps and become possibly apprenticed to him, and so on. But a lot of water had gone under the bridge before this crucial period took place.

FORREST SELVIG: Let's go on through with the schooling. The family in England, your relatives in England, of any of the arts at all they accepted music apparently?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Well, they might have accepted music if I had shown any great talent as a musician. I don't know. But I was, awfully green, I had just had the inspirational thing of Madame Rabagliatti [phon. sp.] and I could sit down at the piano and play, yes; but I had no real background or foundation to be able to read music or develop myself at all. So that I couldn't call myself a musician.

FORREST SELVIG: I see. So then the first school you were in was simply a preparation for Eton, I gather?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Well, it was actually a preparation for the Navy. It was a preparatory school for people who wanted to become officers in the British Navy. And there were all sorts of rumors of wars and things at that time. It was, say, by then about 1911 or 1912 with all kinds of disturbances and rumors that there might be a world war. And all the young boys of twelve, thirteen and fourteen wanted to get into the Navy or wanted to be patriotic or wanted to be, you know, –

FORREST SELVIG: Yes, but you were an American citizen.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Yes, I was an American citizen. But that didn't mean anything because my mother was a British citizen.

FORREST SELVIG: And then this meant that you had dual citizenship, is that it?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Well, I simply was my mother's son and she was an Englishwoman.

FORREST SELVIG: I see. As far as your family in England was concerned. I see.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: She had an English passport and when she traveled I traveled under her passport; that was all. Which I later had to change when I wanted to come back to America in about 1922 or some time in there. I had to write a letter to the State Department and explain the whole thing, that my mother was ill in America and I wanted to claim my American citizenship through birth. And they immediately issued me an American passport and granted me American citizenship. But that didn't come into it at this particular early stage. This business of becoming an English naval officer was just a whim, you might say, of my mother's: That here was something to start with; perhaps he could be a naval officer. That was all it amounted to.

FORREST SELVIG: I see. You were an only child?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: I was an only child.

FORREST SELVIG: So in England you were preparing –

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Preparing for exams to get into Osborne, the junior naval college. It was Osborne for young boys of thirteen and fourteen; and Dartmouth which was for eighteen, nineteen-year-old officers, midshipmen who were really ready to go on ships. Osborne was a preparatory officers' training school for younger boys who could just learn the ropes and learn – go through their studies of mathematics and French and a few languages and become good officers.

FORREST SELVIG: What did your father think of his plan?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Well, I imagine that my father just went along with anything my mother wanted. He didn't have much to say about it. He just was a sweet, lovely man who minded his own business and went along with his painting and didn't want anyone to bother him, and didn't want to have to make any money or make a living. He just wanted to be supported in any way he could be. My mother had a tiny little income left to her by her father. Something that amounted to we'll say two thousand a year. And that satisfied my father. He just wanted to be left alone to dream. He was a dreamer.

FORREST SELVIG: Did your father sell his paintings? Did he have a gallery?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Oh, he sold, say, fifty paintings in his life. He sold a few canvases to the Gould's and to Murray Butler, the President of Columbia; he sold a canvas to him. But the amount of money my father made out of painting wouldn't keep you or me for a month.

MRS. EVERGOOD: You got peritonitis. You were in bed for a year.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: That we don't have to go into at the moment.

FORREST SELVIG: That was before the Naval business.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Yes. At one of these private schools a neglectful matron wouldn't let me see a doctor when I was in great pain in the stomach. And I had a burst appendix which put me in the hospital, set me back for a year with this after many operations. And that sort of ended my hope of a Navy career or of anything else at that time.

FORREST SELVIG: But you yourself at one point were interested in being a naval officer?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Oh, just to the extent of the conceit of a young boy wearing a uniform I suppose of a naval officer. But nothing much more serious than that.

FORREST SELVIG: Well then what decided you to go to Eton?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Well, when this peritonitis took place and I was invalided out of any more tries for the Navy, my mother, who was a very strong Anglophile, you might say, and a great lover of the traditions of her ancestors and her England, she thought around and said well if he can't be a naval officer what's the next best thing. And she decided that I ought to go to Eton. And people said how is he going to get into Eton? You have to have your own name down for ten, fifteen years and take your turn before you can even begin to try to enter Eton. So my mother just got on a train and went down to Windsor and took a taxi to Eton and got a list of the house masters and picked out one and went to him and said I want my boy to come to Eton, and told him the story of her life and mine. She convinced one very nice man, nice house tutor that he should take me. So the little boy was put on a train and sent down to Windsor where I had to write a little exam in French and Latin and algebra. And happened to pass the exam, and got into Eton.

FORREST SELVIG: How old were you then?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Oh, I was thirteen.

FORREST SELVIG: Well, tell me about your religious background. Was religion a very important par of your life?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: No, religion was never a very important part, I must say, of our family. My father had an Orthodox Jewish background . . . his father was a very, very religious man – Philip Blashki. He was terribly Orthodox and religious. And that's one of the reasons they didn't want my father to go in for art because of the –

FORREST SELVIG: Proscription against . . .

PHILIP EVERGOOD: That's right. Against the graven image. But my father never took religion seriously at all. He was never ashamed of being a Jew. He was proud of being a Jew. But he couldn't be bothered with any of the Hebraic symbols and formulas and ceremonies connected with religion. He wasn't that type. He was rather a wild person in that he was like a fawn. He was wild. He just liked to roam in he fields and among the rocks. He didn't mind my mother sending me to schools where I had to go to the Episcopalian services and study the Bible. But he wasn't interested in the ceremony of religion at all and didn't care what happened to me in that way.

FORREST SELVIG: I assume your mother was Church of England.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Yes, she was.

FORREST SELVIG: She was very Anglophile.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Yes, she was Church of England and her grandfather had been a minister.

FORREST SELVIG: That's a very interesting combination. Well now, at Eton you started out in the house of, as you say, a very kind young man.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: A beautiful person, yes. His name was Heygate. A. C. G. Heygate. He was an unusual scholar of Oxford. And his wife was a very sensitive and beautiful woman who loved art.

FORREST SELVIG: Would this be the first time that you got into an environment where art was appreciated?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: I think so. Because he used to put on competitions for drawing and come around to the little rooms of the young students who were trying to paint and trying to draw and to compete for these little art prizes hat he gave.

FORREST SELVIG: So they had art prizes? They stimulated, they supported art there?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Yes. Oh, they did support art there. In fact, his son, the son of Heygate took professional lessons from a professional painter in the own and took it very seriously and became, I was told, quite a well-known English watercolorist who was a member of the Royal Watercolor Society and so on.

FORREST SELVIG: So this was the first time you were in an atmosphere that was encouraging to art?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Yes. Except for my father, of course, who was the painter.

FORREST SELVIG: Yes, indeed. What about your English relatives then? How did they feel about this?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: They felt terrible about it. This sweet man, Uncle George, the engineer thought it was terrible that I would think about going in for art and not getting down to the business of making a living and helping my mother with a job.

FORREST SELVIG: So in other words, he felt that this was, shall we say –

PHILIP EVERGOOD: A waste of time.

FORREST SELVIG: This must have caused some difficulty for you, didn't it? I mean in your own mind.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: I think it did. Especially when his wife Celine de Brie, the countess, told me, "My dear man, let's face it. You have no talent at all. I have been brought up in the atmosphere of art in Paris since I was a young girl. I know the work of Degas and Cezanne and all these famous people. I know them. And, my dear sweet boy, you might as well know it, you have no talent at all. So why don't you change and do something else?"

FORREST SELVIG: But I presume that your parents at home, on the other hand, did support this idea? Your mother and your father.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: My mother – anything I could do, just a little bit of a sketch or a bit of drawing my mother would encourage. She would see beautiful qualities in it, or what I was trying for. And my father who was also an artist would say, "Well, my boy, that has qualities but you need more discipline." Oh he would give me good serious advice. "You need more discipline. You need to study the old masters and you need to really learn something about third dimension in your drawing. Your things are just flat and you're just very much a child. You must try to study deeper and study the old masers, study Giorgione and Titian and these people and try to develop yourself.

FORREST SELVIG: At Eton were these art activities a part of the curriculum?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: No, they were completely extracurricular. They were just done in your spare time in the evening.

FORREST SELVIG: And in fact encouraged by the house maser?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: That's right. And his wife, who was an awfully sensitive person. She would come sometimes with him and sometimes alone and rap on the door and say, "this is Mrs. Heygate coming in. May I see what you've been doing, what you've been drawing lately," and give me wonderful encouragement.

FORREST SELVIG: This must have been delightful.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: It was delightful.

FORREST SELVIG: Did you have trips to art galleries while you were at Eton? Did you go out to see any of these old masters?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: No. Except when I happened on a vacation to be visiting my mother in London. And she would take me by the hand and take me, say, to the National Gallery or the British Museum or take me to some of these galleries and show me the Frans Hals and the different old masters. She did that occasionally. But beyond that I had no contact with art galleries or seeing any great works of art.

FORREST SELVIG: But at Eton in general you were really preparing for Oxford or Cambridge?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Yes, that's it. That's right. I got to Cambridge afer a terrible struggle, because I was quite backward I think in languages. I had to take a trip to Belgium to study French, sweat up on French in order to pass the entrance examination into Cambridge. When that was all over I went to Cambridge. Then I became very lazy and hated my studies. And didn't have the right personal supervision that showed me how to study. I other words, I was in my little diggings, my little room on the outskirts of the college and I didn't know how to study. I had this big English Tripos exam which I was aiming for which meant knowing and awful lot about – well, Shakespeare and really an awful lot about the subject, being able to even quote lines and really have the subject completely in your brain. I wasn't that kind of a man. I wasn't that kind of mentality. I couldn't discipline myself to sit down and sweat it out.

FORREST SELVIG: What college were you in there?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Trinity Hall, which is a small college but a very good one and an old one. It specializes in law.

FORREST SELVIG: So you were still presumably preparing to be a lawyer?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Well, that was on the outskirts maybe of my possibilities in life. But when after taking two or three of the exams I found out that I wasn't up to it, that I hadn't been a good student, I was lazy, I was more interested in dabbling around with a pencil and paper, and more interested in drawing and painting – at that stage I began to be more than anything else. So that's when the critical time came, when I saw that I was a failure as a scholar and as a student, I went to see this wonderful old man, Dr. Henry Bond, who was the so-called master of the college. He was about 85, I would say, with a white beard, and in this great, big, glorious study sitting at a desk. He invited me in and made me comfortable and told me to relax and sit down and tell him my problems. And I just frankly told him what I've told you; that I felt that I was not in that vein of life, that I had different ideas, that I felt that I could only express myself properly in life by something creative and doing something in the field of creative art. And he overwhelmed me by his generosity and his kindness. He said, "Well, my dear man, I've been through your papers and looked at what you're trying to do and what and what you've been trying to do in your study of the English Classics and I just don't think you're cut out for it. So that my advice to you would be to leave the college and go in for art."

FORREST SELVIG: I see. Did you graduate from Cambridge?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: No. I had been there two years.

FORREST SELVIG: Before we leave Cambridge, though, let me ask you – did you go to Fitzwilliam? I suppose you must have.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Of course I did. And got a lot of inspiration out of that.

FORREST SELVIG: And you must have done a lot of drawing of what do they call it? – the backs – the oar men.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Yes, I did. But unfortunately I spent too much time on the backs myself in punts dreaming and in rowing on the river. I rowed for my college and spent much too much time doing that sort of thing.

FORREST SELVIG: Cambridge is a marvelous place I would say to dream in.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Yes, it is.

FORREST SELVIG: Was Rupert Brooke there then? Or he was before you, I think.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Well, I think he was before me. Or after me.

FORREST SELVIG: Let's see, he was killed in the First World War. He must have graduated from Cambridge before. But he lived in Granchester, didn't he?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: I don't know. Of course I know how great he is and I've read his poetry. But I don't know whether he was – he may have been after me.

FORREST SELVIG: Well, let's see, when were you at Cambridge?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: I was at Cambridge about 1918 which was just about the close of World War I.

FORREST SELVIG: Oh, he was killed in the war so he must have been before you. At Cambridge did you have any associations with other students who were also –

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Interested in art? No. None.

FORREST SELVIG: There just weren't any, is that it?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: There weren't any that I ran into. Possibly if I had been a more sociable person and got around more and made friends easily I probably would have met a lot of wonderful young men who were interested in art. But I was at that time a very timid, introspective, perhaps, person and I didn't get around much.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Well, I met – yes, Sidney Heape who was interested in art but not to the extent that you mean. He was just a talented young boy who drew an awful lot and came into my room and sat with me and we'd draw together but that was about it. He had no knowledge of art or couldn't teach me or anything or couldn't inspire me to go to see great works of art or anything, do you see. He was just a good friend who happened to be just about in the stage I was.

FORREST SELVIG: So then after you'd been in Cambridge for two years you decided to go to the Slade School – is that right?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Yes. In fact Bond helped me to get in the Slade School. He was a friend of Henry Tonks. And he said I think you ought to try to get in the Slade School, and I am a friend of Henry Tonks', who was then the head of the Slade School, of the art department of the Slade School – Henry Tonks had been a surgeon, as you probably know – a famous surgeon and had given up his surgery to be a painter and a draftsman. And he ended up as head of the Slade School. And he was a very, very impressive, frightening sort of personality, about six foot four, tall and lean, and fiery-eyed. And my father was a friend of Havard Thomas, a sculptor who had been for years in Italy restoring the broken down sculptures in Pompeii, etc. He was a very beautiful sculptor himself, and very great in his knowledge of techniques of the Greeks and the Italians – how they cast and how they made their sculptures. And my father knew him. My father wrote him a letter – he came forward at that moment after Henry Bond had spoken to my father and mother and explained the situation to them and said that he would back the idea of my going in for art, that he felt all I was cut out for was painting. He wrote to my father. And my father wrote a letter to Havard Thomas who invited me to his studio. I brought a bunch of my drawings in for his appraisal or disappraisal. And Thomas was exceedingly sympathetic and beautiful. He sat down and looked at my drawings and he gave me a lot of encouragement. He said, "I'm taking you up on the bus today to see Henry Tonks.

Havard Thomas was completely opposite sort of person from Tonks. He was rotund, round, pink-cheeked, with a little mustache; he looked something like Balzac. And he took me by the hand and took me out to Tonks at the Slade. And going in through the great doorway of this big institution was an awesome experience. I had my little portfolio with my little imaginative Biblical drawings and things that I had done. And Thomas gave me the confidence to face the great Tonks. He rapped on Tonk's study door and ushered me in. And Tonks said, "Sit down. Open your portfolio. Don't be afraid. Show me what you've got." And I did. And Tonks looked at my drawings very seriously. I had been told to bring not only imaginative figure drawings but also some careful drawings of hands and faces and eyes and ears to show whether I had any ability to draw from life. And Tonks was very kind. He thought for a while. And then he said, "Well, my dear man, I see an awful lot of young people's work and you cant draw and you might as well know it. But you have one quality which I like. You can make me laugh. So I will take you in the Slade." And I said, "What do I do?" He said, "What do you do? You go out to the desk and you get a drawing board and you get a piece of paper and you start to work." And that was the beginning.

FORREST SELVIG: Now your English family were still – even though they were disapproving of your art career – they were still financing this – right?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Well, they were back of me. That's all I can say. They hadn't got much to finance with. But they were back of me. My mother was giving me, I think it was about forty or fifty dollars a month to pay for my food and board in a little artist's studio and share the food with the artist's wife. And that was about the financing.

FORREST SELVIG: So it was very tight, in other words?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Very tight.

FORREST SELVIG: Of course I've done a bit of research before I came up here. Tonks apparently was quite insistent on draftsmanship.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Yes, he was.

FORREST SELVIG: At one point, I read, he insisted that you sharpen the pencils to a needle point.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Yes.

FORREST SELVIG: And that you not wear out the point while you were drawing.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: That's right. In other words, he was such a supreme draftsman that he could take a pointed sharpened pencil and draw figures and put the modeling in and the shading in and then come down with he needle point where he wanted to for the details of the eyes and the nose. But it was all done in such a masterly fashion like a surgeon would, you see, that he'd been before. It was done just like – you've seen a surgeon tie knots, haven't you, in an operation?

FORREST SELVIG: And he was one of your teachers there?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Yes.

FORREST SELVIG: Do they start off first with drawing?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Firs they put you in the morgue, which was – casts of the great masters, Michelangelo and the Greeks – and you had to show some talent at copying those figures, those Greek statues, and show some concentration or ability to concentrate and seriously finish a drawing before you were invited to go downstairs to the life class where you drew from the model.

FORREST SELVIG: Was it very formally organized? Or did they just move you along as you went? In other words, were there yearly classes? Or did you move from –

PHILIP EVERGOOD: You moved from nothing. You just drifted down there with your drawing board under your arm, found yourself a little stool which was sort of half an easel, half a stool, and put up your drawing board where you wanted to, whether you wanted to be right under the model, just under the model looking up at the foreshortened arms and legs, or whether you wanted to be at the end of the room looking at the model in its entirety; whatever you wanted was left up to you. And every week, say, or few days Tonks would come in very sympathetically and sensitively, draw up a stool and sit next to you and look at what you were doing and how you were doing it and saying perhaps, "You're cramping yourself too much," "You're getting your face too near to the paper, get away, learn to keep your pencil at arm's length and don't get so fussy and so . . .", and broad things like that. Then he'd take your pencil and maybe do a masterly drawing right next to yours. And then there were other little teachers. Wilkie was one.

FORREST SELVIG: Oh, yes.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Charlton and Wilkie. And there were other people that weren't . . . Wilson Steer, the painter, academician, was another.

FORREST SELVIG: But you weren't primarily drawing, however? You went on to all of the different things – right?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: I was working in the sculpture department downstairs with Havard Thomas.

FORREST SELVIG: Well, this meat that you were primarily drawing?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: I was drawing. I was drawing and I was learning how to make armatures, proper armatures because Havard Thomas always insisted that an armature is not a just a piece of bent lead like most sculptors use today, on a stick, some lead tubing that was bent as you went along. Havard Thomas insisted that you always made careful drawings and planned so that you sent your drawing to a blacksmith and a steel armature which was solidly entrenched, embedded in concrete or in a wood block. So that that went along hand in hand with the life class upstairs with Tonks, etc.

FORREST SELVIG: This was more sort of sculptural training rather than painting?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Yes, it really was.

MRS. EVERGOOD: There was no painting there at all?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: There was no painting there.

FORREST SELVIG: They offered painting, though, didn't they?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Yes, they did. They did offer painting. But I felt that I needed years of discipline in drawing before I wanted to be concerned with the lushness and the juiciness of paint. I felt I needed the discipline. And it wasn't till years later in France that I decided that now was the time for me to start to paint on my own and to buy my paints and to just fuss it through myself and teach myself painting.

FORREST SELVIG: How long then were you at the Slade altogether?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Two or three years; I cant remember the exact time.

FORREST SELVIG: And you were drawing and working in the sculpture section all this time?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Yes, I was.

FORREST SELVIG: And you never on your own attempted to paint or to do watercolors or anything like this?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Well, I was always doing my little imaginative Biblical studies such as The Prodigal Son, we'll say, or Daniel in the Lion's Den. I was always doing these things at home in the evening and with a little watercolor.

FORREST SELVIG: One thing I'd like to ask you is you've mentioned so often Biblical subjects. Is there any reason why they would have been Biblical subjects?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Except that they were a starting point for the imagination. They were a starting point. I wasn't interested at that period, we'll say, in doing, oh, people on a bus. I wasn't attuned, I wasn't interested in struggles at that period. I hadn't been exposed to any suffering. I wasn't interested in, as I was when I came back to America, in, oh, jungle dwellers.

FORREST SELVIG: But, you also had a great background in Shakespeare. I'm trying to get out why you choose the Bible rather than, say, Shakespeare. Or why it wasn't Shakespeare and the Bible?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Well, somehow Shakespeare would have made it too illustrative. I don't know why. I cant tell you why. Chaucer maybe might have been nearer to it for me. But I was frightened of the illustrative. I didn't want that. And I felt that the Bible when you take a subject like, oh, Shadrack, Meshach and Abednego in the fiery furnace you could take more liberties with that. Maybe it was that. I don't know.

FORREST SELVIG: You were at the Slade for two years, or two-and-a-half years?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Yes.

FORREST SELVIG: And then after that you came on back to New York I guess, didn't you?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Yes, I did. My mother was very ill and I think that was the time I came back to New York.

FORREST SELVIG: And you continued your studies at the Art Students League?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: I went to the Art Students League and joined the Von Schlegell class. He seemed to give more freedom and liberty than some of the other people who were teaching there at the time, like Bridgeman. They were a little bit too disciplinary. And I needed somebody who would let me sort of fumble it through myself. And Von Schlegell and Luks were the two men that did that. Luks played at teaching. He did clog dancing half the time and gave you a feeling of life, of real humanity and life. And that's what I needed, too, I'm sure.

FORREST SELVIG: When you came back to the Art Students League was that he first time you started with painting?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: I didn't start to paint at the Art Students League. I still continued my drawing. Don't forget I was always beginning to play with the idea of paint in my little room, my garret room or my loft or wherever I was, I was playing with the idea of paint. I would buy a few tubes of zinc white and a few bites of color and begin to play with the idea of painting. But I still felt that I was in a formative stage and that I needed more discipline as a draftsman.

FORREST SELVIG: Was Luks a particularly strong influence on you would you say?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Yes. Emotionally and humanly. Very much so. In fact I think that Luks probably was responsible for my being the kind of painter I am, a social painter.

FORREST SELVIG: I wanted to ask you that.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: I think he was. For instance, he used to come around and put his arm around your shoulders and say, "You're having a struggle here I see, my boy. Don't take it so damn seriously. Have a good night's sleep and a glass of wine and you'll be all right." That sort of thing.

FORREST SELVIG: Now tell me, when you were studying with Luks and at the Art Students League I presume you were drawing from a model – is that right?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: At the League, yes I was. Especially in Von Schegell's class. He had very, very – well, serious models who posed very, very beautifully like the apples of Cezanne, you know, that you could really draw. Whereas Luk's models were generally pretty much moving around. And the rather brilliant painters that were painting in the Luk's class didn't mind if they did move around because they could handle that.

FORREST SELVIG: What did they do? They'd catch a certain point and then they would –

PHILIP EVERGOOD: That's right.

FORREST SELVIG: Who were the other rather brilliant painters who were in Luk's class?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Well, I can't remember their names at this stage. It was a long while ago. But I do remember that there were some people who developed to be quite famous painters at that time in his class. Elizabeth Olds was always in the background as one of his students and his friends. But I don't know whether she actually was in the class that I was working in. I can't remember.

FORREST SELVIG: You think that it may have been Luks who got you interested in being a social painter? Did Luks expound a philosophy of social painting?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: No, not a bit. His philosophy was be happy, be free, if someone annoys you fight them. He was just a roughhouse boy. But that was healthy. Sort of fresh.

FORREST SELVIG: It must have been a liberating thing after your English experience.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Yes, it was. Very much so. And then of course at that time I began to meet some other wonderful people like John Sloan and Reginald Marsh, too, who also gave me a feeling of contemporary life.

FORREST SELVIG: How did they give you this feeling of contemporary life? – by showing you what they were doing?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Yes, they were painting contemporary life. And then we'd have a few drinks together and laugh and talk. And I began to grow up and see that life was a rather interesting broad thing, I guess. I don't know.

FORREST SELVIG: Did they have a social philosophy that unified them all?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: I don't know.

FORREST SELVIG: In other words, I may be wrong, but I would certainly characterize your English experience as being a rather genteel kind of thing.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Well, it wasn't too genteel really. In other words, I knew quite a lot of struggling young artists outside the Slade when I was there, you know, living in the outskirts of London, some in tenements, and so on. And I'd go to see their places and see their work and see what they were doing. So that sort of started the germ working.

FORREST SELVIG: I see. So, in other words, this prepared the ground for Luks, should we say?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Maybe.

FORREST SELVIG: Without you're being aware of it – am I right?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: That's it. Yes, I think you are right.

FORREST SELVIG: Because I would assume that up until now your social thoughts had been pretty much Establishment.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Well, I hadn't been really – I had never been one to follow my mother's background. I had the pull of my father on the opposite side of the table, who was a rather wild person; put it that way. A wild little man who had traveled all over the South seas, for instance, and visited Tahiti around the time that Gauguin was there. And met Robert Louis Stevenson in Samoa. And wandered around on cheap, smelly little freight vessels. So he was quite a free-living sort of an individual. And I think that that saved me. Honestly I do. It saved my life. You see, my father always encouraged me to take chances really in my work. And when he learned that I was with Luks he said, "Oh, Luks is a damned good painter. I'm glad you're with a man like hat. He's a human guy; he's a human man. I hope you get the spirit of life from him as well as learn a bit about painting." You see. Well, that was good, wasn't it.

FORREST SELVIG: It was great.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: My mother didn't know Luks from a hole in the wall. Or didn't know much about contemporary painting at all, except, oh, the English School, Sir John Lavery and John Singer Sargent and things of that sort. But I don't mean that she was just academically inclined, because she liked my early work and she encouraged me to take chances, too. But it was really my father who I think gave me the courage to do what I wanted o do. In about 1934 my father was in Australia (my mother had died and he had gone back to the land of his birth) and he asked me to send a show of my work out and he would present it to the public in Melbourne. Well, I took these canvases off the stretchers and rolled them and shipped them out to him. And he had them restretched and shown at a gallery in Melbourne, a very nice gallery, the Athenaeum Gallery. And some of them were quite violent.

FORREST SELVIG: How do you mean violent?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Well, I mean my Dance Marathon was one of them. Which really showed the violence of that age, of this beginning age that is so violent today.

FORREST SELVIG: Yes.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: People flopping around on their behinds on the floor tired out after 49 days of dancing.

FORREST SELVIG: To earn a thousand dollars.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: To earn a thousand dollars. And there was the skeleton's hand holding a thousand dollar bill in the corner. Things of that sort. Which might have shocked people at that time in Australia. But my father backed up my show. And there was one – Madonna of the Mines – that was in the show. Well, my father backed it up, backed it up, backed up my show and stood by me, in other words. Which was good, wasn't it?

FORREST SELVIG: Marvelous.

[INTERRUPTION]

Well, we were talking about Luks and about the fact that at least you felt under him a new world was open to you, and this is presumably the world of subjects of everyday life?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: That's right, yes.

FORREST SELVIG: Now when you were with Luks did you actually go out and start sketching people that you saw on street corners?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Well, I didn't methodically go out and try to become a social painter – you know what I mean – by going down to he Bowery like maybe Reginald Marsh used to, and draw elevated structures.

FORREST SELVIG: The Third Avenue El?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Yes. Elevated railway structures and tired men leaning against posts. I didn't consciously do that. But I was beginning to make a few sketches of a Bowery movie theater I remember, with a little face of a little yellow-haired girl at the ticket counter with her little face sticking out of a round hole in the glass and a big fat cop standing at the curb. I did make a few drawings of that nature at that period. But nothing very continuous or serious or planned. I'll tell you what – you've asked me a very critical question – the real urge to paint the America that I felt and smelled around only came when the Depression came and when people were actually sitting at the curbs with their tongues hanging out. That's what really brought me to life.

MRS. EVERGOOD: That was in 1932.

FORREST SELVIG: I see.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: That's what brought me to life. When I wandered down Christopher Street to the River and saw a hundred men in a shantytown built of old mattresses and bits of orange crates in the middle of winter with snow two feet on the ground and a little bit of a fire they were huddled around – that's what woke me up more than anything Luks could have done to me.

MRS. EVERGOOD: You'd bring them some gin or something and sit with them all night.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: That's right. And make drawings of them.

FORREST SELVIG: Did that happen after you'd gone back to Paris to the Academie Julian?

MRS. EVERGOOD: He had gone back to Paris and met me in Paris and had married me. That was 1931 or 1932.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Well –

MRS. EVERGOOD: I know, because I –

PHILIP EVERGOOD: I had a rambling life, of course, in the meantime. And I can't honestly remember whether it was that I went back to Paris –

MRS. EVERGOOD: You did.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: I say I can't remember honestly whether it was after Luks that I went back to Paris. And then I took a third class train carriage to Italy and went through Milan and saw the wonderful drawings of Leonardo and went to Venice, went like a hitchhiker from one town in Italy to another. Very poor I was but I managed to get through Italy on a shoestring. I can't remember whether that was – when that was. I think it was after I was with Luks.

MRS. EVERGOOD: It was after that.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: And then I met Julia again in Paris.

MRS. EVERGOOD: Again.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: I had met her years before. Then what? Do you want to take over, dear?

MRS. EVERGOOD: No. We went to Spain and in Spain saw beautiful paintings.

FORREST SELVIG: Did you feel that seeing the classic artists influenced you a great deal? You have said that El Greco, Velazquez and Goya made a strong impression on you.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Yes.

MRS. EVERGOOD: While in Spain he spent a month at the Prado.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Well, El Greco was my main interest when I went to Spain.

FORREST SELVIG: And which part of El Greco?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Well, his Christ Driving the Money Changers out of the Temple, we'll say. And his landscapes perhaps. Not especially his Annunciations of the Virgins. But of course his Burial of Count Orgaz which is one of the greatest paintings of the world I suppose.

FORREST SELVIG: Now after the Art Students League you went to the Academie Julian in Paris?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Yes, I did.

FORREST SELVIG: And you started painting there?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: No. I was still drawing. I was studying with Jean Paul Laurens. And Laurens was a prima donna who would waltz into the class once a week or two, stroll around with a big black cape on and look at a painting or a drawing, and shrug his shoulders, and say, "Je ne sais pas; je ne sais pas. Qu'est que ce? Qu'est que ce?" "What does I mean?" "I don't know." He wouldn't be telling you, "Look, man, it's got good qualities here and there but you'll improve it if you do something." There was nothing really constructive in his criticism. So I got bored. The most interesting thing about the Academie Julian when I was there were the dirty jokes of the students and the models and the girls and the beer tavern opposite where we would go a couple of times during the day and have a few beers. That's what interested me most.

MRS. EVERGOOD: And sleep all day.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Why do you say that?! – "Sleep all day." What do you mean? What do you mean, my dear?

MRS. EVERGOOD: You'd sleep all day and work all night in those days.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Well, I'm telling him something about the Academie Julian.

MRS. EVERGOOD: Okay.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: And I had a little room not far from the Rue du Dragon where Julian's Academie was then, in the Rue du Cherche Midi. And I had a couple of very fine friends. One's name was Siple. He was an American architect, a very brilliant draftsman and a very sensitive man, a man who could draw almost as beautifully as Whistler. I've never seen such a beautiful draftsman. He had a great influence on me. And we would import models to my little room in the Rue du Cherche Midi – little Negro girls and mothers and children. And we would draw and paint them. Well, that was really when I began to paint for the first time.

FORREST SELVIG: When was this, about?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Well, I would say it was about 1925 or 1926.

FORREST SELVIG: This was the great day of the American expatriates in Paris, wasn't it?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Yes, it was.

FORREST SELVIG: And this was also the time when Modigliani was there and all those other people.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Yes, that's right.

FORREST SELVIG: Did you know them?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Very few of them. I met Modigliani, yes; but not to say I really was a friend. Pascin was there. I met him. Eugene O'Neill was there, too. There were a lot of interesting people around. But I was on the perimeter. I was one of the little nobodies. So I didn't count for much in friendship with any of them.

FORREST SELVIG: Did you have any discussions about theories of art and so on among yourselves?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Yes, with Hiddingh and with this Siple. Discussions for hours and hours and hours. Siple gave me a world of knowledge because he was a great reader. He had read all about the lives of the old masters. He knew a tremendous lot about El Greco, for instance. And had anecdotes of their private lives and so on at his fingertips. We would go out to little restaurants and talk half the night about art.

FORREST SELVIG: What was the most important thing to you about your stay at the Academie Julian?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: The most important thing? Well, it's a very difficult questions to answer.

FORREST SELVIG: Well, one thing I've heard so much about is that you could go in and you could work by yourself; there was no instruction, was there?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: No.

FORREST SELVIG: And occasionally somebody like –

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Laurens.

FORREST SELVIG: – Laurens would come in and go through and presumably be making a critique. And that would be it.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Yes. That's right. But nothing much more. So that I can't say that much impressed me about the Academie Julian except the gaiety of the students, their ribald remarks, their naughty stories, and the pretty models that they would be kidding with and laughing with. That's honestly the most I got out of the Academie Julian. It sounds terrible, doesn't it?

FORREST SELVIG: But also you were in Paris, and you visited the museums?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Yes.

FORREST SELVIG: And you took trips around?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Yes, I was going to the Louvre, of course, and the other galleries all the time and really working. I was really working. I was making drawings. I was making paintings. And I was beginning to take off as an artist. I began to feel myself at that period as a professional artist for the first time.

FORREST SELVIG: So this is in 1925 or 1926 and you would have been 26 or 27 then?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: That's right. I was beginning to prepare for a one-man show at that time. Which I had in New York City in 1927.

MRS. EVERGOOD: It was in 1926 you were in Paris and you came back again in 1930.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: She confuses me for a moment. In 1927 I had my first one-man show at the Dudensing Gallery at 11 West 57th Street. It was a new gallery for young American painters at that time. Not Valentine Dudensing; but some other brother Dudensing who had founded this gallery. Joseph Pollet was one of the artists. Arnold Blanch was another of the artists in that stable at the time. That was in 1927.

MRS. EVERGOOD: That's when you went back – you came back to Paris about 1930. That's when I met you again.

FORREST SELVIG: You were married in Paris then in – ?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: No, we were married in New York in 1931.

FORREST SELVIG: And you're an actress?

MRS. EVERGOOD: That's right. And a dancer.

FORREST SELVIG: That's a marvelous combination of the arts.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Show him that beautiful picture of yourself.

MRS. EVERGOOD: That was done by Philip.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: When I first married her. She's got a lovely picture of herself there in a ballet costume.

FORREST SELVIG: (Looking at the picture) It's beautiful.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Isn't it beautiful.

MRS. EVERGOOD: Philip made this costume.

FORREST SELVIG: Oh, it's just beautiful. What troupe were you with?

MRS. EVERGOOD: I'd been with the Russian ballet – Monte Carlo Ballet Russe, and Diagheliv's Ballet, and Mordkin.

FORREST SELVIG: Oh, yes!

MRS. EVERGOOD: I was with the Mordkin for many years.

FORREST SELVIG: And you designed this costume for her?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Yes, I not only designed it but I made it. I dyed the silk myself and sewed it.

MRS. EVERGOOD: I danced at the Sorbonne at Pavlova's memorial and wore this costume.

FORREST SELVIG: Well, Paris at that time was very rich culturally, wasn't it?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Yes, it was.

MRS. EVERGOOD: And you could live there for nothing practically. I lived there for eight years on very little.

FORREST SELVIG: But at that time you weren't still – I mean you weren't yet beginning to think in social terms, as a social painter?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: No, I definitely wasn't. Of course, I had had some background of reading I suppose. I had probably read Zola, I had seen Hogarth. I had seen Daumier. I had seen Rowlandson, the great British draftsman. I was conscious of – well, he humor and the tragedy of the struggle of people. And when I first came back to America with people selling apples on the street corners and big strong men going around in rags not able to get

a job. And this incident I told you about of the jungle at the end of Christopher Street. I began to think a little and said to myself, well, what's this all about. Are you going on painting your centaurs and men and your Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego's? Or are you going to express life like Goya did, and like Daumier did? What use are you going to be? What use are you going to be to humanity if you can't be a little bit a part of your age?

MRS. EVERGOOD: We lived in a loft on Fourteenth Street. We had to go out and pick up wood to put in a big stove to heat it with.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Yes, I used to have a little trolley with roller skate wheels and would go out every night to the backs of big department stores like Hern's down there and pick up wooden boxes and bring them back to 17 East 14h Street where the loft was, carry them up, and build a nice big cozy fire to keep us warm.

MRS. EVERGOOD: My uncle was shocked.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Oh, that doesn't matter. That's not a part of our concern here. Well, down there you began to rub shoulders with all kinds of people – girls working in the five-and-ten cent store opposite, and a man with no legs or arms going by on his little trolley singing all day long with his little cup, singing, "All of me, why not take all of me." Finally, I was awful. I was really vilely awful. But it drove me mad so much hearing that from early morning till late in the evening – "All of me" – that I couldn't resist the temptation to open my window and call out, "I say, old fellow, I'm a struggling artist up here trying to concentrate. Will you be kind enough to change that tune to something else? Anything. But I can't stand ‘All of Me' anymore."

FORREST SELVIG: Did he change it?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: This is tragic. He changed it and he got no nickels in the cup. So he went back to it a few days later. But I felt like an awful heel at the time for losing my temper and asking him to change the tune.

FORREST SELVIG: How did you live then?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: You mean how did we eat?

FORREST SELVIG: Yes.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Well, Julia had a mother who had a job as a head of a little gallery of Indian art. She gave Julie a few pennies a week and then began to employ Julie as a secretary and bookkeeper. And finally she employed me as the house carpenter and window designer for the gallery of American Indian Art, which displayed a lot of very lovely early American things.

FORREST SELVIG: Were people buying Indian art at that time?

MRS. EVERGOOD: No. It was run by a very rich woman.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Who backed it. But people were buying.

MRS. EVERGOOD: She wanted to encourage the Indians.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: People were buying more things like beautiful Indian blankets than they were young struggling American painters. Because they knew the historic value of the rare old Indian blanket or the –

MRS. EVERGOOD: Navajo.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Navajo bracelets?

MRS. EVERGOOD: No, I was Navajo blankets.

FORREST SELVIG: Who was the woman, may I ask?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Miss White. Amelia White. She was a great philanthropist and I suppose still is.

MRS. EVERGOOD: She helped the Indians on the reservations.

FORREST SELVIG: During this time then you must have met many other artists in a similar situation?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Yes, I did.

MRS. EVERGOOD: That's when he met Sloan.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: But Sloan wasn't in his situation.

MRS. EVERGOOD: No. He was rich.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: He's asking me a question, my dear woman.

FORREST SELVIG: Did you know Jack Levine at that time?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: No. Jack Levine was off in Boston or getting ready to go into the Navy, I don't know what or where he was. I didn't know Jack Levine then. Since then I know him very, very well and we've become I think good friends. But in those days he was very young. Don't forget he is much younger than I am. He came out with that great Orchestra paining of his that's in the Metropolitan Museum, and that sort of put him on the map. I think; I think.

FORREST SELVIG: In those days, Mr. Evergood, the artists – and you've explained it: You felt that you should paint what the world was like . . .

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Yes.

FORREST SELVIG: . . . and this was a social message.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Yes.

FORREST SELVIG: And a great many other artists felt the same thing?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Yes, hey did.

FORREST SELVIG: Did you have a way of meeting each other in those days?

MRS. EVERGOOD: They'd always meet – the artists –

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Are you going to talk – carry on for me now?

MRS. EVERGOOD: No. No. Go on.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Because it's very difficult for me, sweetheart, at his stage when he's asking me questions and I have to use my brain and truly answer them to talk to two people. You asked me a question.

FORREST SELVIG: About the other artists like you.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Well, we met in the other artists' studios I presume. We wandered around Fourteenth Street. We met in cafeterias when we were having a meal. And a few of us joined clubs such as the John Reed Club and became sort of revolutionarily inclined. I don't say all of us but some of us. And I met John Sloan. And I met Luks, as I've told you.

FORREST SELVIG: Was Luks involved in this, too?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: No.

FORREST SELVIG: No, I thought he was not involved.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Luks was mostly concerned with Luks. And with his great big beautiful heart he loved everyone. Loved everything. Loved people. He had a great sense of humor. Did you ever hear the story of Luks walking through the Columbus Circle when they were painting these great big cigarette ads as big as a skyscraper, you know, with scaffolding and these scaffolds that can be lifted up and down with ropes, pulleys?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: No, I haven't heard that story.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Well, he looked up and here was a little tiny speck of a man on the side of his great big building painting the face of a smiling woman – big tremendous face, as big as this room the face was – smoking a cigarette or something with something like "Buy Lucky Strike Cigarettes" underneath. And Luks called up. He was struggling, this little fly up there, with an eye – with an eye probably ten feet long. And he couldn't get the eye. And Luks, little speck down below, called up, "Hey, man, hey! I'm an artist, a great artist. Do you want me to give you some help on that eye?" And the guy said, "Sure! Why sure!" And he let down the little scaffolding thing. And Luks got onto it. He took these brushes which were about a foot long and got up there and painted the eye.

FORREST SELVIG: That's amazing. I'd never heard that story.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Well, that's the kind of person Luks was, I guess.

MRS. EVERGOOD: Those were real days. Kuniyoshi –

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Yes, Kuniyoshi. He was wonderful.

MRS. EVERGOOD: Reginald Marsh.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Reginald Marsh was wonderful too. Reggie Marsh though was a little bit in a higher strata of the artistic society than we were, we'll say.

FORREST SELVIG: How do you mean that?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Well, he was independent. A man of independent means who could do what he wanted o. And he helped young artists. He was wonderful. He came to my studio and bought three or four paintings once. He was warm and very good to his fellow artists. But he was a man, oh, who was demanded in all the important shows of America – the Whitney Museum, the National Academy, and all were struggling for his work, competing for his work. And he had these big one-man shows at places like the Rehn Gallery. He was a little bit above our strata of life, financially and in fame, too. And Glintencamp, the wood engraver, was a wonderful person who was a great influence I think on me.

FORREST SELVIG: Did you do specific things for the John Reed Society?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: I never did anything very much for them. I did paint one picture called A Mine Tragedy for the John Reed Club. Which was exhibited there once. And I went to a few of their meetings. But I never really became a very loyal or – how shall I say? – regular attender of the John Reed meetings. They were a bit too – well, too much book work for me.

FORREST SELVIG: By "book work" what do you mean?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Oh, discussing theories, deep theories, perhaps Marxian theories which were a little too deep for me at the time perhaps. Or planning picket lines, marches, which I realized the importance of, yes, because I attended so many and participated later in so many things of that nature. Such as the 219 sit-in strike at WPA headquarters where we were all beaten up and jailed.

FORREST SELVIG: Oh, really?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Ruth Gikow was in that, too, so that came a little later for me. But at this particular stage the John Reed Club was a wonderful influence on me. I met some marvelous people there. Like Glitenkamp and Anton Refregier and so on. But I wasn't, we'll say, a regular house member who went around and listened to all the speeches and did very much. Except occasionally exhibiting a picture. But I was deep in sympathy with what they felt and – oh, I did my share of a little work.

FORREST SELVIG: But your own background – if you'll excuse my saying so – was certainly not proletarian?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: No. But, you know, whether the background was proletarian or not, there is a point sometimes in people's lives when something comes along to stir them up and change them a bit.

FORREST SELVIG: I agree with you but I'm sure that there would be other people with backgrounds similar to yours who would not have been stirred up.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Well, don't forget that my father was an extraordinary person in the free feeling of life and that he had broken away from an Orthodox Jewish background to become an artist. So there was some little germ there in me I feel that had perhaps a little feeling of revolt in it. I don't know. I have an awful lot of that in my nature, of revolt against oppression and against things that are depriving man of his little freedoms and liberties and so on. Perhaps my mother even had something to do with it because she was very, very broad minded and loved the Negro people. Things of that sort. And she had studied some of the Eastern religions, Buddhism and so on. I mean there were elements there in our family life that made this sort of transition favorable, shall I say, to me.

FORREST SELVIG: With your parents, with your mother and father did you discuss social problems and moral society and things like this?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: No. Except the fact that these poor downtrodden so-and-so's – I won't use the word I felt like using.

FORREST SELVIG: You mean sons of bitches?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Yes. Bastards I was going to say. These poor bastards being taken advantage of down South,

and the sharecroppers and all that was pretty sad in our society. Just broadly speaking that's all we ever discussed. My mother, my father, and myself. And they believed just he way I did that it was pretty disgraceful and pretty hard to cure the cancer, but that we all should try to cure the cancer. That's just about as far as it went.

FORREST SELVIG: You know, I think this is one of the startling differences between young artists who are starting now and the artists who were involved in things in the thirties.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Yes.

FORREST SELVIG: Is that the artist in the thirties tried to do something. Now it doesn't seem to me that there's so much going on today among the younger artists.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Well, I know what you mean.

FORREST SELVIG: They seem uninvolved.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: They have become involved in themselves too much. I am surprised at that because there isn't as much problem in existence today as there was then. In other words, they have little more chance to think and most of them have papa in he Middle West who owns a department store when they come to Greenwich Village. You know what I mean?

FORREST SELVIG: Sure I do.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: They're a little bit more secure than we were then. Am I talking too loud into the microphone?

FORREST SELVIG: It's fine.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Sometimes I'm criticized for talking too loud. And I wouldn't want to blur the tape or anything.

FORREST SELVIG: No, no, this will be fine.

MRS. EVERGOOD: The artists today are like the people of today. They're very mushy.

FORREST SELVIG: Mushy? Passive, perhaps.

MRS. EVERGOOD: Passive completely. No fight.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Well, I think there's a good deal more decadence today than there was then. I mean when I'm exposed at the age of thirty-five to a grand man like Glitenkamp, for instance, whose daughter was a very beautiful and famous dancer, and who hardly could pay for his food half his life. And when I'm exposed to people like John Sloan who have a great background of art experience for sixty years, we'll say, it's a little different than the opportunities that many of the young Greenwich Village painters that I meet today have. They seem to be more interested in themselves, in their senses, perhaps. I don't know. This sounds as though I'm preaching. But they seem to be quite concerned with their own selfish-nesses. Instead of being involved in their next-door neighbor's troubles they're more concerned with the way they bob their hair.

FORREST SELVIG: Do you suppose this has something to do with the times also? Because I do feel that an artist is also a creature of his time, in some aspects. And I think that our society today is a terribly different society from what it was in the thirties.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Yes.

FORREST SELVIG: I'm not talking now about opulence. I'm talking about goals of the society.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Yes. Well, what do you think is the direction that things are going in and what do you think should be done for all of us? I don't know.

[BREAK IN TAPING]

DECEMBER 4, 1968

FORREST SELVIG: This is the second interview with Philip Evergood in his house in Bridgewater, Connecticut. The date is December 4, 1968. And the interviewer is Forrest Selvig. I think I'll just make a little precis here of what we talked about yesterday.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Okay.

FORREST SELVIG: At that point we had gotten to 1932 when you and Mrs. Evergood were working in the Gallery of American Indian Art and you worked as a carpenter and put up shelves and display cases and so on. This was a means of –

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Of eating.

FORREST SELVIG: Yes. We talked a little bit yesterday about the people that you saw when you walked down – what was it – I've forgotten – was it Bleecker Street – and you saw those people at the end of the street living in huts made of mattresses and keeping themselves warm with small fires.

MRS. EVERGOOD: It wasn't Bleecker Street.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: It wasn't Bleecker Street. But you don't know the street, do you?

MRS. EVERGOOD: No.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: So then why discuss it, sweetheart?

FORREST SELVIG: But in any case you were quite impressed by the poverty of these people. Of course you were experiencing difficulty too.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: The frame shop is on the street, that same street. Christopher Street. And what more can I say about that. I was terribly impressed by these men without any shelter at all sitting huddled around a fire of broken orange crates that they had picked up on a pier right nearby, and just sitting there huddled in the cold with snow on the ground all around them.

FORREST SELVIG: And was it about this time when you began to paint these scenes?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Well, that particular night was a milestone in my life. I was terribly upset and depressed by their poverty. And I got up from the fire and walked home to 49 Seventh Avenue where we were living at the time and got a drawing board and a lot of paper and walked back and started to draw. Some of the best drawings that I ever made were done that night.

FORREST SELVIG: Did you work these drawings into a painting later?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Yes. Into many paintings. Because the material was there. Their faces. The characteristics of their different races and lives were all in their faces. They had funny names. They called each other not by he name of John or Jack but names like "Terrapin" and "Geetchie." For instance, Terrapin was called by that name because he had killed and eaten terrapins down South. And so on.

FORREST SELVIG: You got to know them then quite well, I gather?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Well, that night I got to know them quite well. Later on I walked to a package store and bought a bottle of gin and warmed them up a bit with some gin. And went on all night drawing until dawn. I felt that was a milestone in my life.

FORREST SELVIG: And from then on you continued your social protest paintings?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Yes, that's right. They came in very different forms, the social statements. For instance, one was just a pregnant girl, a factory worker on a stairway – it's now in the Hirshhorn Collection – hesitantly standing on a stairway, obviously pregnant, and with factory chimneys behind her. So that these statements came in different forms, very varied forms.

MRS. EVERGOOD: What about Lily and Sparrows?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Yes. If that can be called a social statement. I don't know. A little girl. I saw her in the window feeding sparrows, obviously a broken down tenement atmosphere, and this little child, you wondered whether she was going to topple out of the window there, with a crust of bread feeding the sparrows. And it touched me; that's all. The beauty of the little head touched me as much as the social background of the thing. And that is something that I would like to discuss or mention: That these social paintings that I've done I've always had to be inspired by the forms and the aesthetic quality of the expressions as well as just the plain –

MRS. EVERGOOD: Statement of facts.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Yes.

FORREST SELVIG: The pathos of the situation would draw you, too –

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Yes, I suppose that draws any artist to the social statement. Take Daumier's Railway Carriage. That pathos of the crowded atmosphere, the woman nursing her child right there crowded next to a lot of men in rough overcoats and funny-looking plug hats, top hats. And the human thing I suppose is what really drives the artist. It isn't only just the historian's interest in the social problem, or the psychologist's interest in it. It's the inspiration of the forms and the inspiration of the lights and the beauty of the moment, I suppose.

FORREST SELVIG: Was it about this time that you met Refregier?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Well, I would say no. I would say that I had known Refregier a good many years before this.

MRS. EVERGOOD: What about Through the Mill painting?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Well, Through the Mill –

MRS. EVERGOOD: It's in the Metropolitan.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: No, it's in the Whitney Museum, dear.

FORREST SELVIG: I was wondering about your associations with other artists who felt similarly to you who were also painting the social scene at this time.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Well, I was quite a good friend of Stuart Davis's at that time. And he certainly wasn't concerned with the social statement. We had many, many arguments, many quite violent arguments about how deeply the artist should be involved in the social statement. I always felt that my work in its vulgarity of color, we'll say, and its violence of color which I tried to get in many of my earlier paintings, I always felt that I had an affiliation with people like Stuart Davis. I don't think that Stuart Davis thought the same thing. I think he was a purist who just was abstract and didn't want to be thought of as anything else. But I always felt that I got quite a lift out of – well, people like Modigliani and Pascin, that I was a painter, not a purely social propagandist or social statement man, but rather more interested in trying to get an unusual slant of color and design into the social statement.

FORREST SELVIG: But you say that you and Stuart Davis had quite a number of arguments about this. Davis felt that an artist should make no social comment?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: No. He didn't feel that. He just felt that my work was completely estranged from his work. And that he went purely to things like jazz music for his inspiration and that he didn't want to be involved with – he was afraid of sentiment. He was afraid – a lot of artists have been afraid of making strong social statements because they wanted to avoid any taint of sentiment. Whereas I always felt that the very great artists like Goya and Daumier were not afraid of that.

FORREST SELVIG: That's right. Jack Levine lived for a while in the apartment above Stuart Davis's, and he told me he would hear Stuart Davis's jazz records playing while he was working.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Well, I think they're wonderful. They inspire me today. I have a wonderful collection of records by people like Leadbelly and Big Bill Brunsey; and Beshet who is a good friend of mine. And Sidney Beshet had a tailor shop in Harlem. And Julia and I and Charles Smith would often go – Charles Edward Smith was a very great friend of mine and a great historian of jazz. We would go and visit Beshet and he would sit down with an old broken down French clarinet with half the stops plugged up with bits of chewing gum stuck into the holes. He didn't need the full perfection of a new instrument with all the working parts. He just played with the reed under his tongue and he played. He didn't need anything but just the reed. And we would stay half the night sometimes listening to Beshet play.

FORREST SELVIG: I don't know whether I've asked you this before or not – about your relationship with Ben Shahn and Jack Levine and so on.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Well, I've known Levine ever since he was quite a young man. I have never been a very close buddy of Jack's. I've seen him on many occasions at parties. And I think we're pretty good friends. I am a tremendous admirer of his work. Especially his early work.

FORREST SELVIG: The Sacco-Vanzetti series I suppose?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Well, but that's Ben Shahn. You're speaking of Ben Shahn.

FORREST SELVIG: Oh, yes. Right.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Well, the groups of people in the streets, an old swayback horse with an old cart, which is one of my favorite early Levines. Ben Shahn I've known since the early thirties, have attended meetings, the founding of the Artists Union and so on, met him at meetings like that. Joe Jones also. He came from the West and was at many of those meetings during the WPA days when they were beginning to lay off workers. And that's what sort of sparked the founding of the Artists Union.

FORREST SELVIG: When did the Artists Union get started? Around 1932 or 1933, somewhere in there?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: I would say a little later than that.

MRS. EVERGOOD: About 1934 or 1935.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: That's right.

FORREST SELVIG: And was his based on the people who worked on the WPA Art Projects? Or was it not necessarily?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Well, it was a general movement of sympathetic artists, of artists sympathetic with the poor guys who were working on the Project and wanting to hold their jobs, and the horrible conditions of poverty and suffering all around at that time. And those who were luckier, such as Ben Shahn, who probably was doing commercial lithographs at the time to make a living – I don't know, he was not on the Project, but terribly sympathetic and close to the artists on the Project.

FORREST SELVIG: Were you on the Project?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Yes, I was on the Project.

FORREST SELVIG: And the artists who worked on the Project, did they also form some kind of social group that would meet and discuss problems and so on?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Yes. I would say so. Well, we were all constantly in and out of each other's studios and we'd have a drink and sit and talk.

FORREST SELVIG: But under the Arts Projects system there was no insistence on an artist following a particular style, was there?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: No, there wasn't. Any style you wished.

FORREST SELVIG: What about subject matter? Was this laid out in advance? Or was this also something one could choose?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Well, in general the Easel Project people, people who worked as easel painters were given complete freedom. They simply received their small check of $24 a week I think it was and they were given complete freedom of expression. That was the very good thing about it. They brought in paintings of people in the park, or workers on the wharves, or anything that struck their fancy; even a still life, or a cat sitting in a window. I mean anything that they felt that they could express themselves well with as artists. I know quite a good bit about this because for about a year I worked as managing supervisor of the New York Art Project for the easel division. So my job was to be a liaison man between the government project, the government people in Washington and the head New York office, of which Mrs. Audrey MacMahon was the head; and see that something was produced, see that they got the canvases there once a month or once every three weeks, that they brought a canvas in that was respectable done and craftsmanlike and not just any old sloppy thing. In other words, that they were taking it seriously.

FORREST SELVIG: What happened to the work that they brought in? Did it remain theirs, or did it become the property of the government?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: No, it didn't remain their's. It became the property of the government. But the sad part of that all was that the big wheels in Washington had no real interest in he work itself and these hundreds of paintings were just put in old warehouses and finally taken by different government officials o decorate their offices. And soon when hey got tired of hem they disappeared from their offices. This happened to one of my pictures that I painted for the PWPA; that was he Public Works of Art Project, which was founded just before the WPA for artists who were a little more established who – well, had exhibited at the Whitney Museum perhaps or knew somebody like John Sloan who could put in a word for them that they should be on this project. This was a better paid project. I think we received $40 or $43 a week. And Public Works of Art Project artists were given complete freedom. They stayed home in their studios and just did anything creative they wanted to, as long as they brought the picture – once a month we had to bring a picture in. There was no prescribed size or medium or anything else. It was just that he work had to be serious and good. Well, the picture that I did for this project was

called Railroad Men. The mayor of Norwalk, Connecticut liked the picture when it was in one of these government warehouses. I suppose he saw the picture and liked it and asked that it be sent to him to be hung on the wall of his office in Norwalk. This is the way it was told to me. And before he or anybody else knew it, the picture was gone. And it finally ended up in the sanitation department on the wall of one of the department's supervisors. I tried to locate the picture years later in order to have photographs made of it and trace it down because I liked it so much. I never could get any farther than the fact that it was handed over to the sanitation department and was gone. But ceratin people, clever people – I don't know how it was done – made a business of buying up a lot of the pictures from the government that were done on the WPA easel painting project. One man, a man who sold paints and hardware on Canal Street was very active in that. He bought up, say, two or three hundred of them and later on they've been selling for big, big prices. Tremendous profits were made by people who bought them up. But I don't know how it was done. I can't tell you how private citizens could buy pictures that were done for and owned by the government except that the government had no interest in them. That is the key to it all.

FORREST SELVIG: When did you start exhibiting in a commercial gallery?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Well, the first time that I really became connected with a commercial gallery was the Dudensing Gallery. I think I told you about that.

FORREST SELVIG: Oh, yes, that's right.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: In 1927 they gave me a one-man show. There was quite a number of famous American artists in that gallery.

FORREST SELVIG: I remember now. But I was wondering about in the thirties. People were not really buying paintings then, were they?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Well, there are always people who buy paintings at little fund-raising affairs. If they can get hem cheap enough you'll always find people, quite poor people, who buy paintings. It's astonishing but it's so. In my lifetime I've probably sold five hundred little paintings for various causes, I mean at various little auctions and things, affairs to raise money for this or that cause; or just at a gallery for a hundred dollars, a hundred and fifty dollars. But you can't live very well on the few sales you make at those prices. And of course drawings, hundreds and hundreds of drawings. People love drawings. You'd be surprised how many – well, sweatshop workers in the fur trade like art. It makes them happy. That's an extraordinary thing. And they sell – these paintings.

MRS. EVERGOOD: And then he went to Baron – the ACA Gallery where he sold plenty.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: I'm explaining something here about . . . he asked me do these pictures sell. Then I happened to run into Mr. Herman Baron who had founded the ACA Gallery on Eighth Street. It was a little loft over the Village Barn.

FORREST SELVIG: The Village Barn was a nightclub wasn't it?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: That's right. And you could hear the bass fiddles and he guitars going all the time and the pounding of feet underneath Baron's Gallery on Eighth Street. Well, I liked Baron. Baron liked my work because it had the kind of social impact that appealed to him. And these little workers in all the fields I just described used to come to the Gallery and buy. I sold hundreds of works over the years at prices that are so ridiculously low that if I could buy these pictures back today I could make a fortune. But I can't buy them back today. They've gone for $75 a piece, or $150. And today the same picture would be worth three or four thousand dollars. So that's what happened. But it is a very interesting thing that you brought up here: Do these artists sell their works? And the answer is that there's always some little man – trolley car driver, or a bus conductor, or somebody who will buy a work of art.

FORREST SELVIG: It's very different from the usual picture you have of the art patron who theoretically lives on Park or Fifth Avenue.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: That's right. Yes.

FORREST SELVIG: I assume hat the ACA Gallery was a very welcoming gallery. I mean that you felt welcome.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Well, the personality of the man himself.

MRS. EVERGOOD: He was an angel.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: He was a very sweet personality. That's all I can say. A sweet man.

FORREST SELVIG: There would be nothing snobbish about him that would frighten people away?

MRS. EVERGOOD: Not a bit! Oh, no.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: No. there would be a smile, warm bit of advice, anything, "How are you doing?" "How's the work going?" And of course when the crucial point of the sale came he was always willing to adjust the price to the pocketbook. He had to pay his rent. He artist had to live, I mean get something. And the patrons had to be happy.

FORREST SELVIG: When did things first start getting to be easier for you financially?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Well, I was laughing to myself about that. I don't know how easy they have got for me. Well, after I'd had about half a dozen one-man shows at the ACA Gallery and had built my prices from $100 or $150 apiece to $2,000 a piece, then things began to get better for me. And a part of this was – well, meeting some influential young people who were interested in art and who liked my work very much – such as Robert McDonald who had a gallery of rare prints; and a few very rich young men who were rather progressive in their views and who bought my work.

FORREST SELVIG: So, in other words, the ACA Gallery drew many different types of patrons when it was down in the Village?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Yes, it did. Not only in the Village, because from that loft over the Village Barn Baron moved to a house; I think he bought a house next to the old Whitney Museum on Eighth Street there. And that's when things began to tick. Because it was next to the Whitney Museum and all the people interested in art that visited the Whitney Museum would drop into the ACA Gallery next door. And they saw the work of , oh, Refregier I suppose and Robert Gwathmey and myself. And people began to buy. I can remember I made my first really big sale there. My Forebears Were Pioneers.

FORREST SELVIG: Oh, yes. I know that painting. Isn't that in a museum now?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: No. I think it's owned by the wife of the man that bought it. And I can't think of his name.

FORREST SELVIG: It's a woman sitting in a rocking chair in front of a –

PHILIP EVERGOOD: That's right. You can't think of the name of the buyer?

MRS. EVERGOOD: No, baby, I can't.

FORREST SELVIG: Well, we can find that out.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Well, he was a young man associated with one of the biggest advertising companies in the world who did all the advertising for Camel cigarettes and Lucky Strike cigarettes and so on. A very rich young man and married to a very beautiful young wife, a great horsewoman. They owned a house on East 62nd Street near Lexington Avenue, one of those lovely old houses. And he was assigned in the war – the early stages I suppose it was – of the war (he was an airman, a young airman) and he was assigned he job of ferrying the planes that were they were going to use in the war over the Atlantic and land them in England. These planes were not armed. They couldn't be armed.

FORREST SELVIG: This was before we were in the war?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: I think so, yes. He was shot down. A group of German Stuka planes ganged up on him when he was over the channel delivering a plane and shot him down and killed him.

FORREST SELVIG: This was your first big sale?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: This was my first big sale. Bu he rich young man and the people around him and around this Robert McDonald felt that I had something as an artist. And they were strong sort of young people and they saw something in my work. In other words, they were a little daring. They weren't a very stodgy and conservative group of people. They were rather liberal. And they liked a bit of spice. They liked a bit of pepper with their art.

MRS. EVERGOOD: John Davies Stam bought some.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Yes. John Davies Stam was another one.

FORREST SELVIG: What about the museums? When did you get your first big appreciation from museums?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: The first time I got in a museum of any consequence or size was when John Sloan bought a

painting of mine called The Old Wharf and presented it to the Brooklyn Museum. Later on as the years went by and as I began to be invited to exhibit at the Annuals in some of these museum, the Whitney and the Chicago Art Institute and others, sales developed from there.

MRS. EVERGOOD: And the Pennsylvania Academy.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: And the Pennsylvania Academy and so on. Sales began to come from that, from showing my work in the annual exhibitions that they put on.

FORREST SELVIG: During the Second World War were you involved at all with that, Mr. Evergood.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: No.

FORREST SELVIG: May I ask how it affected your life personally?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: The Second World War? Well, it didn't affect me personally. Except the horror of it all gave me nightmares. And the frightening figure of Hitler probably had an effect on my work. But actually I had no contact with the war or with anything to do with it.

FORREST SELVIG: The war, however, was a new subject for you in your work?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: I don't think I did very much with subjects of the war.

MRS. EVERGOOD: How about the raising of Lazarus? The New Lazarus?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Yes, I have made very strong statements against war in a broad way. Such as The New Lazarus at the Whitney Museum. Which shows the little dead soldier with the crown of thorns, like Christ, and the scars all over him like Christ, the mutilated being there, and veterans of conflict standing with the pierced hands to symbolize their suffering and what they had been through.

MRS. EVERGOOD: What about the children you painted walking home?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Yes. And Coming Home – I painted a group of little refugee children, a long line of a hundred or so of them, walking through a shell-pocked field and down a road with these great shell holes. And at the time when Hitler's army was being chased out of Russia I did a group of skeletons in Nazi uniforms with a brass band walking away, walking out of Russia while a few little peasant girls stood by and watched.

FORREST SELVIG: I remember that.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: But that really wasn't involved with World War II. It was just broadly involved with statements against war I would say.

FORREST SELVIG: Yes. Now since the Second World War with its development of abstract expressionism and so on, I wondered how you feel about that movement? That is, why did it start? Do you have any beliefs on this at all? – the development of abstract expressionism in American art. It was such a change from what had been done before the war.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Well, I think that it's a result of he horrible confusion and the horrible mixed-up turmoil that World War II led into and that psychologically it does reflect the times.

FORREST SELVIG: And yet established artists such as you and Ben Shahn and others have never developed into abstract expressionism. Very few at least have.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Well, just temporarily we weren't that kind of artist I suppose. I have always been interested in expressing ideas not from an illustrative standpoint but to me a painting with a great idea back of it is greater than a fine painting with nothing back of it.

FORREST SELVIG: Has there been any change in patronage since the war, or in appreciation by museums and so on of your work?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Well, I don't know whether it has to do with the war, but during a time of war so much confusion is going on that people are only concerned with the war, and when the war is over, with a sign of relief they turn to art, turn I suppose to something beautiful, or something to make themselves happy.

FORREST SELVIG: Well, how do you relate this then? When you say they turn toward something to make them happy do you mean that they don't want to be reminded of social problems? Is that what you mean?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: No. I don't mean they don want to be reminded of social problems, I mean they don't want to be reminded of war.

FORREST SELVIG: But I was wondering why it is that a school that was as vital and made such philosophical comments to our society as social realists or social painters as you call them, why there hasn't been a continuation of this among younger people?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Well, maybe younger people have too many papas who own department stores in the Middle West. I don't know.

FORREST SELVIG: Yes, but sill, going back to the men who were buying your paintings when the ACA Gallery was down in the Village, some of them were quite rich themselves and yet being rich didn't prevent them from buying social protest paintings.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: No. But you weren't talking about the buyer – you were talking about the painters. You were asking me why there are no social realist painters today.

FORREST SELVIG: Yes.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: And the only thing I could come up with or think of was the fact that there are too many of them in Greenwich Village dashing around with long hair who have rich papas in Milwaukee.

FORREST SELVIG: But don't you think this may be true of some of them but it's not true of all of them?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: No, it's not true of all of them but I can't answer for all of them. I can't answer for any of them, in fact. I may be wrong, but they seem to have an easier life than we did at the time that I married my wife in 1931. There was a struggle in the air. There was a camaraderie, a closeness there of integration between artists which made for a kind of social realist atmosphere.

FORREST SELVIG: When you say integration between artists you mean between artists and society? Or just between artists?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Between artists. They felt closer together. They could discuss these problems and influence each other more. They influenced each other more by being on these closer terms together. I don't mean that in artists' sections of New York today they don't huddle together and play guitar and have their social times together; I don't mean that. But there isn't the closeness of contact with people who are struggling that there was then. Of course it's an awfully deep subject and one that I'm really not capable of analyzing, not being a psychologist or knowing very much about these things.

FORREST SELVIG: I would say, if you'll excuse my disagreeing with you, Mr. Evergood, I think that you have been and are very much involved in our society.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Thank you.

FORREST SELVIG: And it would seem to me that you are in a very ideal position to make some surmise on this situation. You may not be a psychiatrist but –

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Well, it's very kind of you to say that and that's one of the nicest things that's been said to me for a long while.

FORREST SELVIG: Well, I think you are in a position to make a surmise, at least a very educated assumption, you know, an assumption of facts about it.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: I'm just wondering whether and how many social realists there are painting today. I don't know of any.

MRS. EVERGOOD: There's that Pop art; that's all there is.

FORREST SELVIG: I wouldn't think of Pop art really as being social realism. And I wouldn't deny the fact that many artists are obviously concerned about Vietnam, they're concerned about racial problems and so on. But the curious fact in my mind is that the very art by which they live and which is their major concern in life, presumably, is not used to express these thoughts.

MRS. EVERGOOD: They're afraid to use them.

FORREST SELVIG: Could they be afraid, do you think?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Well, you know, there are an awful lot of cowards in the world and lots of people are afraid, have been afraid – well, since I started to paint. Lots and lots of people are afraid to go near any strong statements. A Goya is not afraid; no, my goodness!

FORREST SELVIG: But at the same time personally these people have marched in parades, they've signed statements, they've in fact donated paintings to various auctions for the benefit of various things, for the Southern Christian Leadership Council – Martin Luther King's organization.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Yes.

FORREST SELVIG: They've done all this. But their art is not a medium for the expression of these beliefs.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Well, maybe they're not capable of it. You have to be rather – well, you have to be rather good, I might say, as a painter. Perhaps they're not good enough as painters to meet the challenge of a Goya and paint something against war.

MRS. EVERGOOD: They haven't had the right schooling.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Perhaps they're not great enough draftsmen. Perhaps they haven't developed their drawing enough. I don't know. You have to be rather a good draftsman to be a Breughel.

MRS. EVERGOOD: Or a Rembrandt.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Yes. And I don't think that many of them can draw very well. Not many of them. Well, you take who have we got, for the love of Pete? We've got Jack Levine, Ben Shahn. And I haven't seen much of their work in the last few years. I saw a very beautiful portrait of a Spanish man with a beard by Jack Levine in the Whitney Show a few years ago. But that wasn't a very strong social statement.

FORREST SELVIG: He got quite involved with the Goldwater campaign you may remember – Jack Levine.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Did he? I didn't remember.

FORREST SELVIG: He did a lot of anti-Goldwater posters.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: I didn't know that even. You see how ignorant I am.

MRS. EVERGOOD: You're living in the country.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: I'm a country boy.

MRS. EVERGOOD: You certainly are.

FORREST SELVIG: And then you have another painter like Andy Wyeth who apparently never has made a social statement.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: No. And I don't think he ever will, frankly.

FORREST SELVIG: Why is that?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Well, because he's too concerned with surface things, the belt buckle, and the crinkled blue jeans, and the blowing grass in the swamp, beautifully painted, every blade of grass. But nothing very strong ever comes out.

MRS. EVERGOOD: Peter Blume is better.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Now you're going to give me a lecture. I can hear that.

MRS. EVERGOOD: Okay. Peter Blume is a beautiful artist.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Blume is a very strong painter. Very strong painter. My goodness, his Eternal City – what he's crowded into that canvas.

FORREST SELVIG: That's the one with Mussolini in it, isn't it, with the jack-in-the-box?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Yes, the one with the Mussolini jack-in-the-box.

FORREST SELVIG: Right.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: My goodness, that is a powerful painting. And all the soldiers and people in the background, too. And the broken down columns of the Forum. The destruction. It says destruction. It says the worship of Christ which people go to to – well, give themselves hope and inspiration from all this destruction, you see. All that's in he painting. Do you remember a cave-like thing to the left with all kinds of jewels like a treasure trove and the crucified Christ in that cave with all the jewels. Quite an original idea. Oh, he is a painter – Blume.

FORREST SELVIG: But there are no followers to any of this group today. There are no young people painting this way.

MRS. EVERGOOD: They're too lazy.

FORREST SELVIG: That's what I find so surprising. Because they don't lack the perception that things need commenting on in our world. And they do it personally as people.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: They're too selfish. It's become a selfish age. That's what I meant really to imply when I sort of in a rather crude reference mentioned the daddy in Milwaukee who owned a department store. Believe me, I'm not against a man because his daddy owns a department store in Milwaukee. But I simply think that – well, they're not exposed to enough sandpaper.

FORREST SELVIG: I see. Not enough hard knocks, in other words.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: That's it.

MRS. EVERGOOD: They have an easy life and enjoy themselves. Philip never did. He had a hard life.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Well, I don't know whether I did really. In a way I was very fortunate, a terribly lucky little boy to have a mother who could give me $40 a month to travel around Europe and live in beaten down loft studios, yes, at 300 francs a month. But still the café au lait in the morning and the beefsteak at night was available. I was lucky, I guess; darned lucky.

MRS. EVERGOOD: He didn't have to go to an office every day.

FORREST SELVIG: I would say, Mr. Evergood, that there aren't many people who've had the opportunity to go to Eton and to Cambridge and the Slade School and so on. That part of it –

PHILIP EVERGOOD: That's right. Well, I'll tell you something: there's an advantage to it and there's a disadvantage to it. In other words, for the past three quarters of my life I think I've been fighting the disadvantages of it.

FORREST SELVIG: How do you mean?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Well, I mean that people in general don't like you if you have been to Eton and Cambridge.

FORREST SELVIG: They expect you to be a snob, I suppose – don't they?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Yes, they expect you to be a snob. Or they expect you to be a big fat toad – one or the other – who had it easy and therefore will kick him in the pants.

FORREST SELVIG: Yes. But they have only to meet you to know that that's not so.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: I don't know. Thank you for being so kind.

FORREST SELVIG: I mean that's rue. But it seems to me, though, that there must have been a moment in your life, if I may say so, when after Eton, Cambridge and the Slade School and the others, when suddenly – boom! I mean there was the world, you know.

MRS. EVERGOOD: There certainly was.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Yes. Well, maybe I had a nightmare. Maybe I was sleeping in a nice comfortable bed and suddenly woke up with a cramp in my leg and with sweat pouring off me, that I had to face life and make a living and make myself an integral part of the little society of the world, of the workers and the people who make life. And maybe that was harder for me to break away from the traditions and the ties that going to Eton and Cambridge and the Slade School bound me with. I don't know. I fortunately had the kind of a – I think we discussed this yesterday – a kind of revolt quality in my nature that makes me . . . Whenever anything is nice and pleasant and sweet and everything is going beautifully I always resent it. I always dislike people who are too comfortably off, who have too many papas with department stores in Milwaukee.

FORREST SELVIG: I wonder how many department stores there are in Milwaukee.

MRS. EVERGOOD: I don't know.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: I wonder.

FORREST SELVIG: No, but, you see, my question really is whether the –

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Incidentally, this is a very interesting part of the discussion.

MRS. EVERGOOD: He came from Harvard. That's a big stuck-up place.

FORREST SELVIG: Right. For instance, why did Franklin Roosevelt become the kind of man he did from such a comfortable background? And by implication why did somebody who had admittedly not a great deal of money but who had all he advantages of the finest education you could have throw in his lot with the people who are the least fortunate. Okay. I don't think it's explainable only from the point of view of being poor, if you'll excuse my saying so; I don't think it's explainable only from the fact that you yourself had to go out and work harder and everything. I think there's a matter of philosophy here too.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Yes. Well, I think I just brushed over the subject yesterday, mentioning my mother. I suppose you're influenced by your family. I mean if you have a father who is a missionary in China and who has gone out and helped people who were half starving and fought to give them food and to preach some word of hope and beauty to them, I suppose it affects you. Well, my mother was a very, very Socialistic person – put it that way. She suffered when she saw great poverty in slum conditions in London. It made her weep. When she was dying, thin, down to sixty pounds with cancer, in her early fifties – not very old – she used to walk out from the little apartment on Lexington Avenue, 814 Lexington Avenue (that's next to the Weyhe Gallery), that's where she died . . . She'd walk out of there and go to a little cafeteria alone. And before she'd been there five minutes she had all the truck drivers and all the workers in the neighborhood, the poor, the halt and the lame were all around her at her little table in the cafeteria talking. She was that kind of person. So maybe I got something from her in that way that made me interested in helping people who had this struggle. Maybe that was it. I don't know for sure. I'm just searching and trying to find out myself why. But with all this business of snobbism, you might say, in wanting her son to be a naval officer first and then to go to Eton she never let that son for a moment lose track of he fact that he was a human being who had a debt to society.

FORREST SELVIG: I see. Well, that's what I was trying to get at.

MRS. EVERGOOD: She was a beautiful woman.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: In other words, she was a loving, loving mother and a loving woman toward life and people. Well, my goodness, how can you escape? How can you escape that influence on you?

FORREST SELVIG: Yes. And your family was a happy family, too, so that –

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Oh, a wonderfully happy family. If you'd been unhappy you probably would have wanted to cast out any influence or associations with your parents. But you were a happy family and so there it was.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Yes. That's right. A loving family I might say. We were a very loving family. My father was a very temperamental person and not easy to get along with. He had a violent temper sometimes and was not always easy to get along with. I can remember not very long before my mother died, that we were sitting together. And I was working at a little etching in a corner of the room. And he came over and looked at it and sneered at the way I was drawing the face of an old man. And I felt that he was being a little hard on me, put it that way; so we had a terrible blow-up and I can remember taking the little etching plate and hurling it across the room and it stuck in the wall. But the next minute ha had his arm around me, don't you know, and trying to make me happy. It was a temperamental family but a loving family.

FORREST SELVIG: Did your father live to see your successes, your acceptance, and your wide successes or not?

MRS. EVERGOOD: Not really.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Well, the last time he saw my work or knew anything about it was when I had this show I told you about in Melbourne at the Athenaeum Gallery where he had for he first time in, let's say, fifteen, no twenty years had a chance to see my work. And – well, he was very kind about it. And there were a lot of controversial statements made about it in Australia. They thought I was crude and violent. Especially the picture called The Dance Marathon that we discussed yesterday. And my father defended my work very beautifully and wonderfully and showed that he had a little confidence in me anyway. Well, that was about the end of my contact with my father because he died in 1939. And that was before I really began to sell my work and before my work was acquired by people like Hirshhorn and collections like that. I really hadn't made very much

progress at the time my father died.

FORREST SELVIG: Hirshhorn bought seven of your paintings all at once, didn't he?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Yes, he did.

FORREST SELVIG: Was it out of the ACA Gallery show?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: No, no. That was at his house. I was very poor at this particular time – the date I can't remember – we'll guess and say it was 1938 or 1939. And I was very, very poor, down to my last nickel, the lowest we've ever been. And I person I knew and who Julia knew and who had been a former dancer had opened a frame shop called the Midtown Frame Shop. This man – his first name was Alex – opened a frame shop over he Midtown Gallery to make frames for the Midtown Gallery. And I happened to run into him and told him that I was pretty hard up. And he said, "Would you like a job in my frame shop?" So I said, "Sure. What will you pay?" He said, "Seventy-five cents an hour from 9:00 till 6:00." Alex was a very nice fellow. So I went to work in the frame shop. My job was the heaviest job in the frame shop. They were not allowed to use electric saws because of the building code. So all the mitering of these heavy molding, many of them in oak, had to be sawed, mitered by hand. And because I wasn't a skilled carver or had no special skills as a finisher of frames, it was my job to do the mitering. So here I was working at the Midtown Frame Shop. And one day during the afternoon a little man came in to order some frames. And Alex very kindly called me away from my task to introduce me to a great art collector, as a kindness. He said, "Mr. Hirshhorn, I would like you to meet the painter Phil Evergood." And after a short conversation Hirshhorn called me away into the next room. And he said, "Evergood, I've seen your work at the Whitney Annuals. I think you're a good painter. You shouldn't be giving your energies to this sort of thing. You should be at your easel." So he said, "Where do you live?"

MRS. EVERGOOD: We lived in Woodbury.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Yes. No – not Woodbury.

MRS. EVERGOOD: Out from New York.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: We lived on Log Island at the time in a little suburb. And Mr. Hirshhorn said to me, "Would it be convenient for you next Sunday to put ten of your canvases in a taxi cab – I will pay the fare – and drive them down to Number 1 Fifth Avenue where I have a penthouse apartment and bring them there and show me what your recent work is." I said, "I think it's wonderful. Thank you so much. I'll be there." So I got my pictures out and I put them in the best frames I could manage and went to 1 Fifth Avenue. And I was treated royally by the commissionaire who helped me with the pictures into the elevator and took me up. And there was Mr. Hirshhorn. And he grabbed the pictures out of the elevator excitedly and placed them around his beautiful great big penthouse living room and lined them up. And he went from one to another and said, "How much do you want for that?" And I probably said, "Two hundred dollars." And he went the rounds of all the pictures, "How much do you want for that?" And I may have said, "Five hundred."

MRS. EVERGOOD: Alex Lazook.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Alex Lazook.

FORREST SELVIG: Was the man who owned the frame shop?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Yes. So Mr. Hirshhorn went from one to another of these twenty or twenty-five pictures that were lined up. And I may have gotten a little bit braver after a little while and put the price of five hundred on a few of them. "Well," he said, puffing a cigar, and he offered me a glass of brandy, "Well, let's get to business, boy. I'll take that, that, that, that, that, that, that, that, that." And he bought – was it ten paintings?

MRS. EVERGOOD: He gave you three thousand dollars.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Ten paintings. And he went over to a desk and wrote me a check for $3,500.

MRS. EVERGOOD: It saved our lives.

FORREST SELVIG: Boy! What a celebration you must have had after that.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Yes.

MRS. EVERGOOD: I was so happy because Philip was worn out then.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: So you see what happens in life. The funny little accidents and incidents that change your life. Well, anyway, there's the story of how I met Hirshhorn and how Hirshhorn bought my work.

MRS. EVERGOOD: It saved our lives for a while.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: And then after that of course Hirshhorn was a patron. He had become a patron of mine. So he would invite us to his apartment for parties and he went to my shows and bought my work and was really very lovely. And in later years bought things like The New Lazarus and presented it to the Whitney Museum. And now he's got a lot of my paintings in his private collection and he's given them to the Smithsonian Institution I think. So that shows you how peculiar life is.

MRS. EVERGOOD: So Philip left the frame shop.

FORREST SELVIG: And from then on you didn't need to work in the frame shop?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Well, I gave up the job in the frame shop. But I wasn't in the gravy by any means then. With $3,500 I was out of danger for a while but I wasn't in the gravy and I had to try to rebuild a clientele around my work who would continue to buy my work.

MRS. EVERGOOD: Baron began to do that.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Baron began to do that gradually and built up, say, my sales value from, say, $200 to, say, $2,000. I don't know.

MRS. EVERGOOD: Baron helped –

PHILIP EVERGOOD: And put me on my feet. Baron really was so wonderful. He loved my work very much. And whenever I was in any kind of a financial jam he would always help me. He was a wonderful man.

MRS. EVERGOOD: He was an angel.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: He was a wonderful person – Herman Baron.

FORREST SELVIG: The ACA Gallery is still going but it's –

PHILIP EVERGOOD: It's now owned by Sidney Bergen who is the nephew of Baron. And they now have split the gallery in half and have a section of artists of the past or people who have died, such as Childe Hassam and others and I imagine that that is a great help to the sustaining of the ACA Gallery.

MRS. EVERGOOD: I don't like the ACA.

FORREST SELVIG: You had this big show at the Whitney.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: In 1960.

FORREST SELVIG: In 1960. And it traveled, as I remember. As I said, we had part of it out at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis. It had a great success. It must have had a great success here in New York, didn't it?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Well, an awful lot of people came to it. It didn't get very lively or active support from the newspaper critics. Canaday ignored the show completely. And hundreds of people who liked my work wrote to the "Times." And finally Canaday came to the show when it was half over and reviewed it, stating that there were so many protests that he sort felt obliged to review the show.

MRS. EVERGOOD: It was a very beautiful show.

FORREST SELVIG: Yes. I didn't see it here at the Whitney. But naturally I saw it.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: You saw it out there at the Walker. Yes, I think some of the pictures were exhibited at the Knox-Albright too.

FORREST SELVIG: And I think they must have gone on to California or St. Louis, too.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: They may have.

FORREST SELVIG: Because usually they did make that swing.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Yes. I can't remember all the museums it traveled to but it was on the road for quite a number of months.

FORREST SELVIG: Your work now, Mr. Evergood, is it concerned with our problems today, with our racial problems and Vietnam and so on?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Well, I did one picture recently called Execution which has to do with Vietnam. It's not a very specific statement about Vietnam. It's just a poor little bastard with these big military men in their shell helmets, you know, and their tommy guns with his arms behind his back tied, being pushed somewhere, that's all, just to show the things that happen to poor little people who are caught in a war; that's all. But it doesn't specifically point the finger and say this is Vietnam.

MRS. EVERGOOD: It's hard to say things against Vietnam.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: I painted one picture called – I have a photograph of it there – you can't see it very well – called Dead Dove of Peace that I sent – I was asked by a group of artists who were building some kind of a tower.

FORREST SELVIG: Oh, in California.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: In California.

FORREST SELVIG: I know about that.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Do you? And they asked me if I would send something. So I painted this Dead Dove of Peace. Every picture had to be the same size, 24 by 24, I remember, so that it could be fitted into a scheme of planning in this exhibition hall. I don't know what happened to the picture. Somebody told me they burned the whole thing down. Do you know what happened?

FORREST SELVIG: No, I don't.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: They knocked it all down.

FORREST SELVIG: Who knocked it down – the artists themselves?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: No, the people who didn't like a protest against Vietnam.

MRS. EVERGOOD: They knocked it all down. It was destroyed completely.

FORREST SELVIG: Of course that is more likely to happen in Los Angeles and Chicago and those places. This was in Los Angeles, I remember.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Bu the pictures were all destroyed. I lost my picture.

MRS. EVERGOOD: They were put in a cellar and sold.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: They were?

MRS. EVERGOOD: Yes, they were.

FORREST SELVIG: For the benefit of –

MRS. EVERGOOD: They were sold.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: For propaganda? I don't know.

MRS. EVERGOOD: They were sold, baby. But the whole building was completely destroyed.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Someone told me that somebody put a match to it and it went up in flames.

MRS. EVERGOOD: No, no.

FORREST SELVIG: I don't think it was a building. I think it was a spire, it was a tower, wasn't it?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: It was a tower made out of wood and canvas – nothing solid.

MRS. EVERGOOD: It was destroyed but they did save some of the paintings.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Well, I didn't hear about that. I never heard from my painting again.

FORREST SELVIG: This is in Los Angeles?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Yes, that's right. Then I did that drawing back there on the wall called Madonna of the Thorns. Which was sent out as a Christmas card to people saying "End the war in Vietnam." That's about all I have done in relation to that.

FORREST SELVIG: We have more or less been probing into this question all the way along in these two days, but I think I'll ask it again of you, (and I know the answer) but I should ask you about the role of the artist in society: How do you feel about the role of the artist in society?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Well, I think that the artist should be concerned with aesthetics and quality first. He should be a fine constructor of a canvas and his paint quality should be entrancing, intriguing to look at. He should not just be a crude sort of presenter of his subject. I think the subtler he is the more profound he is the more lasting his work will be and the more powerful effect it will have on people. I don't think that everybody, every painter with social ideas has that same feeling quite. Some of them have; some of them haven't. I've always believed that if you want to say something very lasting and powerfully social you've got to be a Goya. You've got to be able to paint well.

MRS. EVERGOOD: Or write well like Balzac.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Yes. That's right. Or write well. Like Balzac or Hemingway, if you like. Hemingway's potency in what he said about the Spanish war, for instance, lies not only in his terrific fervor and his terrific emotional love of people, and love of justice; not only that but the poetic quality of the presentation. The artistic quality of the presentation I think is terribly important.

FORREST SELVIG: Should the artist always make a social statement?

MRS. EVERGOOD: No.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Well, if I –

MRS. EVERGOOD: I know what you're going to say.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Oh!! Let me talk, dear. If I paint a wonderful little dog like Carpaccio, if I paint a wonderful little dog sitting down on the ground with his poor little face, his pathetic little face and his liveliness, I think I'm painting something social.

MRS. EVERGOOD: I'm showing him your nudes.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: I think I'm painting something social.

MRS. EVERGOOD: You know those nudes you painted –

PHILIP EVERGOOD: You know two people can't answer these complicated questions completely together. You ought to be given the floor and give your views later.

MRS. EVERGOOD: I'm showing him a painting that you did.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: What painting?

MRS. EVERGOOD: You show it to him.

FORREST SELVIG: This one.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Well, why bring that out?

MRS. EVERGOOD: That's not social painting.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Then why bring it out? He's asking me: Should all artists' work be social. I say that all good art that deals with human beings and with objects of beauty in life, such as that little dog, is social painting to the extent that it is human. Human painting is social painting. But these great monumental social statements, I don't think every artist is expected to make these great statements that, oh, Delacroix made, we'll say, about he Revolution, these great heroic statements. I don't think everybody is minded that way, is fitted for it.

FORREST SELVIG: You were talking about Stuart Davis just a while ago. Stuart Davis had a different concept I'm sure.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Well, Stuart Davis's concept of being a social painter is to express jazz. Which is a social expression. Jazz is very moving. Some of these records of mine of Big Bill Broonzey and Leadbelly and Jelly Roll Morton are very moving and down to the struggles of life – put it that way.

FORREST SELVIG: Now, for instance, Jack Levine thinks of his painting as a means of getting a social message across.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Yes.

FORREST SELVIG: Now clearly when I say a social message I mean social protest message really. But I take it that you do not mean this? When you say "social painting" you mean it can include social protest but not necessarily?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Well, I think of anybody living today in America I have painted more social protest paintings than anyone else. I may be wrong. Because Jack Levine has done his share. And Ben Shahn certainly has, too. But I have devoted nine-tenths of my life to painting really social protest paintings, such as American Tragedy, the battle between the company police at the Republic Steel works in Gary, Indiana – you remember, when so many of the workers and their wives were shot down. I think I painted as many of that kind of violent statements of social protest as anybody else.

MRS. EVERGOOD: And Black Lace Handkerchief.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: And Black Lace Handkerchief – a heart of lace with a little Negro boy hanged in he center of it and all the politicians waving the American flag and talking with their mouths open all around; that's sort of violent social protest, isn't it?

FORREST SELVIG: Sure it is.

MRS. EVERGOOD: One of the paintings that we've talked about is about a town –

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Little Rock.

MRS. EVERGOOD: Little Rock is beautiful.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Little Rock, yes. Yes, that was a very violent social statement. Then I did another one called The Hundredth Psalm, of a Negro hanging from a tree with a smoldering fire just going out and the Ku Klux Klanners dancing around playing fiddles. Well, I think that sort of thing is violent social protest statement. But I don't think that I only devote my life to painting violent social statements like that.

FORREST SELVIG: No, you don't.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: I think that like in music or like in any interesting art there has to be a relief. You can't just keep that tempo, that terrific tempo of tragedy or horror always there. There has to be a relief, there has to be a little bit of the scent of roses somewhere, too. Do you see what I mean?

FORREST SELVIG: Sure.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: There has to be the contrast. There has to be the little girl, the obviously spoiled, pouting little girl in a beautiful print dress with her little umbrella opening her door and going out and looking, saying What's The Weather Going To Be? Well, that's a social statement, too, if you want to make it one.

FORREST SELVIG: Yes.

MRS. EVERGOOD: It's a social statement. It sold for a lot of money.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: But it's not a violet social statement. Which I think Levine was referring to.

FORREST SELVIG: Yes, he was.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Well, he did something about Bismarck. He had something about a big monumental painting these German generals and people I suppose who were connected with Kaiser Wilhelm. He painted one very strong painting about that. Did you see it?

FORREST SELVIG: I don't remember that, no.

MRS. EVERGOOD: He changed a bit one time. He went back to he old –

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Don't make descriptions of other artists here!

FORREST SELVIG: Yes, it is all social painting. It's all involvement with humanity in one way or another, isn't it?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Well, if you paint a picture of an old man, a beautiful old man with a beard and tired eyes you're painting something social. Actually if you paint a group of country folk having a feast like Breughel did it's social painting, too. But then when you get down to paintings like The Massacre of the Innocents by Breughel when Holland was occupied by the Spanish and you have people smashing doors down and bringing out infants

and cutting them in half with swords then you're doing a very brave kind of social statement. That's real protest. On a very risky scale, too. Because he might have had his head chopped off for doing it.

FORREST SELVIG: Well, I think we're very much completed, Mr. Evergood. Can you think of anything that we haven't covered?

PHILIP EVERGOOD: No. I think you have done a wonderful hob in covering the whole subject and bringing me out in the best way possible to say something about these things. I suppose when we've thought it over, when we've mulled it over in about a week or a month or so we may think of things that we forgot to say.

FORREST SELVIG: We could add them, you know, if you wish.

PHILIP EVERGOOD: Yes.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

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