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Oral history interview with Charles Rand Penney, 1981 Aug. 14-16

Funding for the digital preservation of this interview was provided by a grant from the Save America's Treasures Program of the National Park Service.

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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with Charles R. Penney on August 13, 1981. The interview took place in Lockport, New York, and was conducted by Robert Brown for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. This interview is part of the Archives of American Art Oral History Program.

This transcript has been lightly edited for readability by the Archives of American Art. The reader should bear in mind that they are reading a transcript of spoken, rather than written, prose.

Interview

ROBERT BROWN: This is an interview in Lockport, New York, August 14, 1981, with Charles Rand Penney. And it's Robert Brown, the interviewer.

[Audio break.]

ROBERT BROWN: Well, Mr. Penney, we know you today primarily as a collector, very extensively, of art. I wonder if you could think back, say even as a youth, or a child. Were there interests, were there things in your family that may have led to this ultimate passion of yours for collecting? What about as a child? Were you encouraged in this type of thing?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: I think there were influences. I have often thought about this. I was fortunate enough to be brought up in a home which had nice objects about it. I would not say that the furnishings were like Winterthur, but there was nice furniture. And my mother had an interest in antiques.

And when we motored, for example, leaving Buffalo and going to Connecticut, we would stop at various antique places, and she would buy. My father would go in and haggle over the price, and she would buy. And I was just a little squirt, and I would go along, and I was interested. And for Christmas, or for a birthday, I would try and get her something along those lines of—she was interested in ceramics, and she had corner knick—knack cabinets in the dining room, and she would have small, miniature animals there. And I would try and acquire an animal, or something like that.

And I think being brought up in this environment, I wasn't aware of this, but maybe by osmosis it sank into me. For instance, right behind you is a highboy that was not in the family at all. I acquired that about 15 years ago. But in our summer home at Niagara—on—the—Lake, there was a highboy that I admired as a child. We had a large, Colonial house with a winding staircase. And at the interim landing, there was a highboy, which I liked very, very much. My mother acquired that, I believe, in the south someplace—as I say, I was very young—with the help of another lady, Mrs. Philip Wickser in Buffalo, who had a very extensive collection. And I always liked that.

So, when it came to divide the family furniture, we went around, my two sisters and myself, and my sister had first choice and she chose that. And I always—I didn't say anything, because I didn't realize that she had admired it as much as I had. But, as a result, I think that sank through over all the years. And since then, I have been fortunate enough to acquire this one and another one in another location.

ROBERT BROWN: Did your mother ever talk about things that she liked? Would she say to you, "This is very nice because," or say, "I like that very much?"

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Oh, I think the—things like this would get discussed. You know, for instance, in the area that we have just been in, you might have noticed that there is a sideboard there. Again, in the Canadian house, she was trying to redo a dining room set. She had a very modest dining room set when my mother and father were married. And over the years, she had hoped, had she lived long enough, to be able to go around that dining room.

She first started buying large Audubon prints. And now, since her death, several of these Audubon prints have come to me. Then, as a wedding/anniversary present, my father gave her the sideboard that I now have.

ROBERT BROWN: Well, that's an example of Sheraton Hepplewhite style, as I recall.

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Right. Yes, right. Yes.

ROBERT BROWN: Yes.

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Right.

ROBERT BROWN: Your father, then, was actively interested as well, was he?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Well, he went along with her. He liked to share these interests, as well as her—she was a musician—as well as her musical interests.

ROBERT BROWN: Was she an active performer?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Yes, yes. She studied—it's rather interesting, because I am very much involved, as you know, in Rochester. They were married in 1922. And she commuted in—after that—1922 and 1923 to Rochester to the Eastman School, which was just beginning then. And somewhere packed in my files I have the name of the pianist that she studied with.

Later, she studied at Yale Music School. A classmate of my father's at Yale was Bruce Simons, who was dean of the Yale Music School. She studied with Bruce, and she also studied with Hindemith, when he was at Yale. Yes.

ROBERT BROWN: So she was a very—

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Played very well.

ROBERT BROWN: Her music was a great—a large part of your childhood, then.

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Oh, yes. Yes, right.

ROBERT BROWN: Was your father—you say he'd gone to Yale. Was he trained at all in the arts, or was his a business career, or—

CHARLES R. PENNEY: He was an attorney, yes. Yes, he was—Yale undergraduate, Harvard law school, and then was attorney and chairman of the Port Authority in Buffalo, very prominent in civic things. Yes.

ROBERT BROWN: Now, were they involved in art associations, or anything of that sort there? Because you—in Buffalo there is a—

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Yes.

ROBERT BROWN:—rather old artist group which became, eventually, the Albright gallery.

CHARLES R. PENNEY: They—not to my knowledge. They might have been. I suppose that would bear checking out. I haven't seen the list of people.

The interesting thing is that after they were married, they rented an apartment. Then they bought a house near the Albright estate. Then they built a townhouse in 1926, which is still standing, on the Albright estate on what were the—Mr. Albright's chicken coops. And, as a boy, I remember playing in the Albright mansion. It was then vacated, and the garage door would often be open. And there was a turntable in there for turning around the cars. You don't see that very much.

ROBERT BROWN: No.

CHARLES R. PENNEY: And several friends, we would go—well, it was a slow spin, they move very slow. But they were well aware of this. They were—my father was well aware of the Pan—American exposition in 1901. He was born in 1894, but he claims, at the age of 7 years, remembering the 1901.

I think what he possibly remembered better was that Grandfather Penney—my grandfather, Thomas Penney—was the district attorney at the time McKinley was assassinated, and tried the assassinator, Czolgosz, for that. And, of course, he was convicted for that. And so that figured in the family, too.

ROBERT BROWN: Oh, sure.

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Yes. But going back again into the art, I don't know about the early art circles. I have recently been asked by Anthony Banin, who is a reviewer in Buffalo, who is putting together a photography show—he is also very much involved in photography—a show which involves the earlier artists. And he asked me whether I knew some of them, and if I had any suggestions. That show will open at the Albright—Knox Art Gallery, I think, within the year. And then it will travel to the Eastman House in Rochester.

But I don't know—one of my recollections was that when I was in school—it was in the late 1930s or the early 1940s, I remember my mother saying, "Isn't it marvelous that Shorty Knox," meaning the present Mr. Knox,

Seymour H. Knox, Jr., who is in his eighties, "has established, with his sisters, a contemporary room."

Now, Seymour Knox and my uncle, who was a prominent banker, never got along too well, because he was always off playing polo. But he came along and developed an interest in art. And from that contemporary room, which is still there in the older section, has sprung his interest, of course, and his contributions to—

ROBERT BROWN: Sure. Your uncle didn't approve of his playing around, rather than being a more serious—

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Well, my uncle was a different type of person. My uncle was crippled by polio. But, despite all this, went on to marry and raise a family, and become a successful banker, and established the Marine Midland Group throughout New York State, which my grandfather had originally begun by acquiring some of the early Marine Banks.

But Uncle George was a Wharton School graduate, and worked, and worked hard, and was a success, whereas I suppose he could have just played around. I mean, he wasn't—he had some money of his own. But Seymour Knox, at that point, was off in Akin [ph] playing polo at a summer place in, you know, East Aurora.

But since then, Seymour Knox, of course, has done a lot in the art field, and was president of the University of Buffalo, and many other—and the New York State Council of the Arts, and so forth.

ROBERT BROWN: Now, in your home, then, there was your mother's music, there was your father, and you, interested in your mother's collecting of antiques and ceramics.

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Right.

ROBERT BROWN: And then your father is a prominent lawyer. Was discussion in your home—was there a good deal of discussion, dinner table conversation of serious topics, and—or what was it like?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Well, it was a mixed bag. We—my family—were very hospitable, and they enjoyed people, and particularly maybe people that had had a few hard knocks in life, they'd lost a wife or a husband, or there had been some misfortune. And Sunday, or particularly in the summer, when we were over in Canada, they were frequently asked—and then they had a number of friends that would come and stay.

So, it would range maybe from the serious to the fun. I think that we used to laugh as kids. My mother would always tend to be on the serious side. And she would engage the more serious in conversation at her end of the table, and my father was always a great kidder, and would like to talk a lot. He would be at the other side, the other end, and have people with a good sense of humor.

ROBERT BROWN: Now, as a boy, what were you—were there hints as to what they wanted you to do, or were they steering you toward any sort of career?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: That was the marvelous thing. They didn't. They were very careful, and it had been a great—I was very confused by this, because—I am not patting my own back, but I was a good student, cum laude and honors and all this. And I felt, at that time, when I was growing up, and with my family's background, the only two ways to go were to become a lawyer or go into banking.

Then, in World War II, I came out with the GI Bill of Rights. I wanted to stand on my own two feet. I thought, "Well, I will get myself through." So I had enough to finish up, and I didn't really know what I wanted to do. So I went to Philadelphia, and there was a testing bureau of some sort in those days, and I went under all these tests for two or three days. And they came out and said, "Well, this is wonderful. You have all these abilities, and we think it's great."

And I said, "But I came here to find out one definite ability." And they said, "Well, we can't suggest that." I said, "Well, then it's just been a waste of time and money." I said, "Can't you please?" So they said, "Well, we're very reticent."

And I can see that now, in looking back. If they say, "Well, you would make a good doctor," you went into medicine and it didn't work out, then they might be blamed, might even be sued, I don't know. But I said, "Well, could you please suggest something?" And they said, "Well, with your abilities, we would suggest city planning."

Well, at that time, my father was very active in city planning in Buffalo. And later I became active in Baltimore in city planning associations, later in Buffalo. But I knew that you really couldn't support yourself in city planning. City planning directors were earning a very modest wage. So I just—

ROBERT BROWN: Administrative work in those days?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: It would be—

ROBERT BROWN: City design, as well?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Well, it was more administrative. I think that that's what I was thinking of. I mean, now, as I look back, I certainly would do exactly what I did. I would go to college, and I would get a law degree. I wish I had more degrees. I wish I had a medical degree. I wish I had a CPA degree. I wish I were an architect. I wish I were an orchestra conductor. There are so many fascinating things.

But—and I can see how you can earn a living now, and—well, like yourself, doing what you're doing. In those days I don't think that there—I wasn't aware of those things. You can—there are so many museum positions, you know, and it's a wide field.

ROBERT BROWN: So, what—you had been in the service, what, for several years during World War—

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Three—and—a—half years, yes.

ROBERT BROWN: Was that a very tough time, or was that a very critical experience for you?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: You mean—

ROBERT BROWN: I mean in the service.

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Well, I think it was. I had graduated from prep school and then decided to go to Yale. And after—we entered Yale—I entered Yale with my class in September. Pearl Harbor happened in December. We didn't know where we were going. We didn't know whether we would be able to get through college or not. And then they started pulling a few people out. Then the Army established what they call the ASTP program, the Army Specialized Training Program. And it appeared that if you joined that, you would be able to finish out and then go into service. So we joined. Then the next thing we knew, they were going to take ASTP people.

When I saw this happening, just having a freshman year of college and without any specialty, I thought I'd better develop a specialty. And I had done very well in French. I won the French prize at prep school and breezed through French in the first year. I also had breezed through in German in prep school, and was able to take advanced German at Yale, and study Die MeisterSinger with one of the Kiffith [ph] brothers. And that was very enjoyable. But I thought, well, there are a lot of people that speak those two languages. So I jumped into—we called them Jungle Joe Kennedy—or was it Jungle Jim Kennedy—who taught Japanese. And so I studied Japanese.

Well, then, when the Army came along and took us into the Army, they gave us tests. And it came out very much like that Philadelphia experience, that you have these abilities. And there were two ways to go, into engineering or into languages. I didn't think it through very well, and I immediately signed up for the language thing. And then I had second thoughts after I'd signed up, so I went back to the officer and I said, "I think I would rather go into engineering." And he said, "Look, we've got a lot of people that are going into engineering. You stay with the languages."

So, after basic training in small arms at—it's outside of Washington. Fort Ord was where we went in, in Boston. But I'm trying to think—

ROBERT BROWN: Fort Belvoir, maybe, or—

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Aberdeen Proving Grounds.

ROBERT BROWN: Oh.

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Yes. And that—

ROBERT BROWN: That's in Maryland, yes.

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Yes, I guess it's in Maryland. Yes, right. See, I had a West Point uncle who was in Washington at the time, and I used to go down in Washington and visit his family.

But after that, they did decide to send us in the ASTP back to college. And I ended up at the University of Pennsylvania. I mean, they didn't send me back to Yale, but I was just glad to get back to a college, to study. So, being in the language program at the University of Pennsylvania, they said, "Okay. Now, you fellows have a chance of taking these languages."

We could have gone into French and to German. I could have carried on in Japanese by going out to Boulder City in Colorado. But I finally decided on Chinese, because China was our alley at that time, and it would have kept me in the east, at the University of Pennsylvania. So, I took Chinese studies. And possibly—it's rather strange, as one thinks back. We had a Harvard professor by the name of Dr. Gardner [ph], who helped coordinate the

program with another very prominent Sinologist by the name of Dirk Bada [ph], from the University of Pennsylvania.

But Dr. Gardner would come from Harvard every week, and he had a very strong interest in Oriental art. And ours was a broad program. We not only learned to speak the language, but an appreciation—I think they called it area studies—of the people and what they wore, what they ate, and their art. And he emphasized the art.

Maybe that was a bit of a turn—off. People say, "Why don't you ever collect Chinese art?" I do have a few things. Chinese art then, and still is, very expensive. I have a few scrolls. But things like ceramics are very expensive, and bronzes. And we saw so many pictures of bronzes, and the University of Pennsylvania has a large bronze collection that—I sort of shudder when I see exhibitions of bronzes. They're beautiful, but—anyway, that was—

ROBERT BROWN: So then you—how long was that course in Chinese studies?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: That was a little over a year before the Army typically didn't know what to do, and they started to close down on these programs. And before we knew it, we were being shipped to Fort Riley, Kansas, to learn how to ride horses and pack up mules. Well, I knew how to ride horses. We had had horses. My uncle was a West Point man who had—I think he'd been on the American jumping team. And so I had learned how to ride both ways, both the American style and the military style.

But I went in with our group and didn't say anything, because we were with a good group. And we learned how to ride horses, first bareback, on the remounts, which were terrible old plugs. And then I had never had the experience with mules, on how to pack mules and go over rimrocks. And that was sort of a horrifying experience, because mules are very difficult and stubborn to work with.

And then, they were going to ship us out to the Philippines to Merrill's Marauders. They were using mules in the Philippines and they were using mules in Italy. And I had a cousin who had been pulled out of Princeton who was in the mountain troops with mules in Italy. But we weren't going over there. So we thought, well, this is just awful. And—

ROBERT BROWN: Because you had Chinese, which would have actually come in handy.

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Well, if we had been in the Philippines, I don't think so.

ROBERT BROWN: No, but if you'd gone on with Merrill's Marauders.

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Well, possibly, yes. But—

ROBERT BROWN: So, were you shipped out?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Well, we finally—Vinegar Joe Stilwell had come back and was in California. A few people went to him and said, "What can be done to get us to China, instead of there?" And he said, "Well, I think it's too late," but he tried. And while we went—they put us on a troop ship, and it got in the middle of the Pacific. And I guess that part of the war was over with. And so we ended up in India, in Calcutta, and they didn't know what to do with us. So they put us in the MP. They sent us to school to become MPs.

And then, they split us up from there, and a few of us convoyed a shipment of trucks for the railroad going from Calcutta up into Burma, where the Burma road began. And from there, we were flown over the hump, which was an interesting experience, into Kunming, China. Well, at that point, I was—

ROBERT BROWN: In what way was it interesting? Excuse me.

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Well, I—it was interesting to me, because I never expected to get out of the service and the war alive. Every day that I live is—I call a dividend day. I thought sure I would be shot. And many of my friends were—classmates, and so forth. So I am a lucky guy.

But what was interesting was it was sort of terrifying. They took us in when it was dark, like at midnight, and gave us a briefing when we were to fly over the hump on all the expediency if the plane were shot down, even on fishing—it was over land, but there might be streams—and how to take care of yourself, and not to reveal this and reveal that, and so forth. So I really thought we would never make it. But they flew us in the dark, and we did make it into China. So—

ROBERT BROWN: And so there you could make use, finally, of your—

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Well, no. Not so, really. In Kunming, we were MPs. And the Americans were stationed in these hostels, as they called them. They would be like warlords, and be like sort of a medieval fiefdom. They would have the buildings inside, and then the walls around it. And through the walls there would be gates. And

there would be an American guard on one side of the gate, and then there would be a Chinese counterpart on the other side of the gate.

And, of course, we drew duty at all hours. I mean, the graveyard shift was generally—I really liked it the best. I would take Shakespeare's sonnets, and memorize them. And then I would talk to the Chinese guard in Chinese. They spoke Mandarin, fortunately, which is what we were taught.

And after this went on for a long, long time, one morning a Jeep came through. And there was a man, American, wearing "U.S.," instead of the insignia, on his collar. And he went through, and we saluted, because we didn't know what the rank was, but we knew it was officer status. And he suddenly came back in his Jeep, and he says, "Did I hear you talking to that guard?" And I said, "Yes, I am." He says, "Well, were you're talking Chinese." And I said, "Well, yes, I am. I am talking Chinese." He said, "Well, why are you here?" And I said, "Well, that's what I would like to know. I don't know why I am here."

Well, that man turned out to be the head of the counterintelligence detachment there. Well, after that, everything happened. I was discovered. He immediately said, "Well, this has got to be rectified. Would you like a job in my detachment?" I said, "Anything. Anything to improve my lot."

Well, then there were two other agencies in the area. The OSS was in the area—and OSS, as you may know, was headed up by General Donovan, and he was very strong in the European theater, whereas General MacArthur headed up, of course, over there in the Far East. And Donovan and MacArthur, from what I heard, never got along very well together. And OSS was a weaker, or smaller unit, counterintelligence—wise.

Well, then there was a third one, called CID, which was the Criminal Investigation Division. And that would be, like, sort of spying, or whatever you want to say, on your own fellow—and I thought, "Well, no, I prefer to do counterintelligence." So I did go with counterintelligence, and it was very interesting, and I stayed with counterintelligence through the war, and had very interesting experiences after that, being the first into Shanghai and letting our pilots out of prison, rounding up the Japanese, and sending them back.

And, of course, Tokyo was just rubble, and the Dai—ichi building was still standing, and we used to watch General MacArthur—who I got to know personally through my relative, Jim Rand who hired him at Sperry Rand. And then I felt frustrated and—well, I was able to get transferred to another theater, because they felt highly enough of me, and that took me to Okinawa briefly—there was no fighting in Okinawa—to Japan.

And then, I volunteered for service to Korea, after they had sent us to further schooling in Tokyo. My thinking there was nobody wanted to go up to Korea, but I thought, "Okay, if I get to Korea, there might be a chance of going up around through the north of the 38th parallel and coming down to Peking. I mean, my dream, as I think anybody who has studied Chinese, was to get to Peking and see the ancient city.

Well, of course, we got to Seoul, and the Russians were on the 38th parallel, and there was no chance of going north. So I was out in the field, and had a most interesting experience. I didn't speak Korean. I got to know a little bit. But I had my own interpreter, Kim [ph], who was a marvelous person, and my own Jeep. And it was a fantastic experience until—

ROBERT BROWN: Your job was sort of a liaison with our forces and the natives.—

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Well, again, mostly with the natives we would go—I was in several outfits, one in Pusan, which is in the southeastern part, on the water, and the other was on the southwestern part, Panjou [ph].

And every town in Korea at that time—I suppose it's still the same in the smaller towns—has a number one man. And he's, of course, the most prosperous citizen, and supposedly knows everything and everybody. And we would always get to know him, and he would be very helpful to us, in informing us and helping us in our work.

ROBERT BROWN: Is that more or less what you had done in China, too, before the war ended?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Yes.

ROBERT BROWN: You would go along to talk with the local authorities, interpret people, and—

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Well, it was intelligence. And we would wear whatever kind of a uniform was necessary. I think one time I was dressed as a sailor, and one time as a civilian. It was cloak and dagger, I guess you'd call it.

ROBERT BROWN: You were still then trying to ferret out the Japanese or the Japanese sympathizers?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Yes. Intelligence work, right.

ROBERT BROWN: So you found that work very gratifying?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Oh, yes, yes, yes, yes. I loved the Chinese people. I really enjoyed China very much. And you see, my generation of people that have studied Chinese were very—it's a lost generation. They were very badly hurt.

Now, fortunately, I knew when I came back after World War II that my job was to go either into banking or into law. I was an only son. We had a family law firm in Buffalo. And I tried several things. I went into industry, and then I finally decided to go to law school, did well, and really probably would have stayed in Baltimore. I was awarded a clerkship there, and had many offers. But I came back to Buffalo to go into the family firm.

But my contemporaries who had been in the service—and I still keep in touch with some of them—have had a very hard time. One of them, Glenn Baxter, would be of interest to you. Glenn was older than I was. He was a music critic for the Tulsa, Oklahoma newspaper. And Glenn, after World War II, switched to Japanese. And he was General Raischauer's number one man. So when Raischauer became ambassador to Japan, Glenn headed up—what is the school at Harvard, is it the Enging [ph]?

ROBERT BROWN: Mm—hmm. [Affirmative.]

CHARLES R. PENNEY: And he headed that up. Glenn now—I saw him after that archives dinner not too long ago. He lives not far from where the archives office is. And he is about to retire.

ROBERT BROWN: These people, because of the McCarthy era?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Well, no, just that China was closed, you see, with the Communists.

ROBERT BROWN: Oh.

CHARLES R. PENNEY: You know, another friend of mine, Hugh O'Neil, was with the State Department for a while, but he never could do anything in China. And Hugh is now working for the Cancer Association in New York City.

ROBERT BROWN: So their careers rather withered—

CHARLES R. PENNEY: They withered. They had to find other things, yes, yes.

ROBERT BROWN: Well—

CHARLES R. PENNEY: China was closed because of the Communist thing, which has just recently opened up. But you see, now they're too old. We're all in our fifties. And there is another maybe two generations that have come. I have a niece who is in her twenties who has studied Chinese. And those people are interested. So I thought of going back and living in China. There is a great need to teach English. But I think at my age it's sort of futile. I mean, I have to think a little bit selfishly of myself, and the other interests.

ROBERT BROWN: You resigned from the service then, when, 1946 or something?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: No, I didn't resign. I went into the Reserves. And when I was back, practicing law in Buffalo, I was in military intelligence, and I—at that point I think I finally—I don't know, I completed several years in—well, maybe I did resign, I can't remember. But I was a lieutenant then, and—

ROBERT BROWN: But you went back to school then in 1946, or so?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Yes, I went back to Yale, and—

ROBERT BROWN: Yale?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: And completed—yes, in Chinese studies. My degree is in Chinese studies. And then I worked for a year after that. And then I went to the University of Virginia Law School in 1949, and graduated from there in 1951.

ROBERT BROWN: And then you practiced law for a number of years?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Yes.

ROBERT BROWN: In Buffalo?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: In Buffalo, yes, yes.

ROBERT BROWN: Also in Baltimore.

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Well, I was clerking. I took the Baltimore bars and passed them, became a member of the

Baltimore bar, and then came to Buffalo and of course took the New York State bar, and became a member of the New York State bar. But I never actually practiced in Baltimore.

ROBERT BROWN: But in Buffalo you were active in the law for a number of years?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Yes, yes, yes, yes.

ROBERT BROWN: Well, now, it's during that time, in the 1950s, that you began collecting? You had collected as a young man, though, hadn't you? You have mentioned collecting—

CHARLES R. PENNEY: There were a few things—

ROBERT BROWN: A local photographer, and—

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Well, I—

ROBERT BROWN:—things like that.

CHARLES R. PENNEY: I peg it back to an early painting—and I still have it—that Bob Blair, who is alive still—I think he's in his late sixties or seventies—gave me of a warrior. It's a sketch, rather small, I think maybe six by eight, of a warrior with a big sword, and then sort of a dog and a few other things sketched in.

But Bob—this was in the 1930s— Bob was concerned about the rise of Naziism and Hitler in Germany. This was before war had broken out. And this came out in his work. And I still have that. And he says that's a very key thing, because a lot of his work in that period is gone. But he gave me that, and so I really peg my collecting back to that. That was the start.

ROBERT BROWN: What was this, a painting, or a—

CHARLES R. PENNEY: It was a little watercolor, a little watercolor.

ROBERT BROWN: And it was sort of a protest painting of a warrior?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Well, maybe you would say it was a protest. They didn't have protests the way they do now—

ROBERT BROWN: No.

CHARLES R. PENNEY:—but it was on his mind, this thing. Bob is a very marvelous sort of peaceful person. It's rather interesting. His father and my grandfather were law partners at one time. And his family had a large farm in New Hampshire, I believe. I think his mother just died at age 90, and I think Bob has a little house up there. But he's a very peaceful man who lives out in the country. His wife is a painter, his children are painters and photographers.

ROBERT BROWN: And your family—you had known him fairly well when you were a young man?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Yes, yes, right. Yes. And my mother had studied with him. I never had studied with him. I really have not studied art to any great extent.

Going through this confusion of what you were going to do when I got out of the service, when I got back to college I had one year not really knowing what to do. I thought I would take courses in philosophy. And one of the courses I took was on the philosophy of art, given by a professor who came from Princeton by the name of Green. And I think I have his book. I've forgotten what his first name is. But we had to compose scrap books and things like—it was very interesting.

ROBERT BROWN: So you had this one painting from the 1930s.

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Right.

ROBERT BROWN: And you did take this philosophy of art course, then, in the late—in the 1940s. Did you—were you collecting at all otherwise, when you were at law school or at Yale?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Well, I collected a few things at law school. There was a print man who I never knew in Charlottesville by the name of Don Swann. In fact, I have given some of his prints to the university gallery just a few years ago. He did prints of Jefferson's—they don't say "campus" there, they say "grounds." And these are the pavilions, where the masters lived. And really, very nice prints. They had a little gallery. It's still quite small, but a very nice one. So, I did collect a few things like that.

ROBERT BROWN: Possibly simply souvenirs of Charlottesville, or were you—

CHARLES R. PENNEY: I suppose so. It might be. I have the University of Virginia set of china. My family had the Yale set of china, and that kind of thing, yes. Yes.

ROBERT BROWN: When did you begin—well, as you went into the 1950s, did you gradually begin to collect more, or—

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Well, what happened was—

ROBERT BROWN: What happened?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: As I mentioned, I came back to Buffalo after my year in Baltimore, and started to practice law. And I was interested in art. There is a man about my contemporary by the name of Larry Griffis, who was—his father was a prominent business man, or vice president of Van Raalt, the textile people. They made silk stockings over in Niagara Street.

And Larry was one of, I think, two or three brothers that I knew. And each one of those brothers slowly left the business and went into a different art form. One went into acting and, I don't know, one went into dance, one went into modeling. And Larry was the only one that sort of stayed with the business. And he got interested and started doing murals on the wall at the silk stocking factory, and then had a show. It's one of the colleges in Buffalo. And I bought a painting of his. Now, he has since become quite a sculptor. And his painting is rather interesting. This would be back in the early 1950s. I could afford that, because it wasn't too expensive.

I went at that time also to the members gallery of the—it was then called the Albright Art Gallery, the Knox name had not been into it. And I remember renting a painting of an artist by the name of Martha Visser't Hooft. Martha Visser't Hooft is still going strong in Buffalo. She's in her seventies. And I knew the family very well. They were a prominent Buffalo family. Her husband was Dutch and her own family, the Hamlin family—you may be aware of this—Mr. Hamlin collected many things which he gave to the Buffalo Museum of Science, one of which is a very important collection of jade. And that recently went down to New York. That's just a sideline.

But, anyway, I rented this painting. And at that time I didn't have much money. Lawyers' salaries are very modest. I think you were lucky if you earned between $2,000 and $3,000 a year. And this painting, I think, cost several hundreds of dollars. And I thought, "Well, I know Martha pretty well." I had been an usher in her daughter's wedding. I was very naive, and I called her up one day and asked if she could do anything on the price.

And the boom was sort of lowered. She said, "Well, I will have to consult my dealer in New York." Well, this all sounded very confusing to me. But her dealer in New York was Martha Jackson, who I'm sure you've heard of. Martha Jackson, of course, was—came from Buffalo. She was a member—she was Martha Kellogg, a prominent Buffalo family, and she had had several marriages. The Jackson was a lawyer who—they were later divorced. But she went down to New York, and of course was a good friend of the Buffalo scene. And Martha Visser't Hooft, I guess, did have some of her paintings in the Jackson Gallery.

So, the price didn't come down at all. It stayed right there. So, Penney was out of luck. But Mrs. Visser't Hooft was very nice, and she said, "There is going to be a show of my paintings at a little small restaurant called Coffee Encores, and the watercolors that I have just done out in New Mexico, in Santa Fe. And maybe you would like to come and see that."

Well, so I did. And I bought a watercolor, which I still have. I think I could afford it then. It was $85. And Martha, of course, has come along and done very well.

ROBERT BROWN: What was there in her work that appealed to you at that time?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: It was rather abstract. And maybe I was getting a little bit in—without realizing it. I didn't know anything, and I didn't have much of an art background. I certainly didn't have an art history background at all. But it was a very sort of an abstract expression of the New Mexican scene, which I didn't know at that time. I have since been to New Mexico and Santa Fe. I have seen the Mesas and seen the deserts, and all of that.

ROBERT BROWN: Do you suppose the colors appealed?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: It could have been the colors, yes. Yes, right, yes.

ROBERT BROWN: So Martha Visser't Hooft's was among the first things you—

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Among the first in the 1950s, yes. And then—

ROBERT BROWN: Were these for your home, or would that be for your office?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: It would be for both, yes. Then, what I found that I could afford—and it's interesting, you know, I've just written a letter today about one of these artists— where artworks that were in the western New York shows that were held annually at the Albright Gallery. And I bought a Jack Wolsky painting.

Now, I have never met Jack Wolsky, but he's in Rochester. And he's a very fine artist, and teaches at Lockport, along with WendellCastle recently has taught and Albert Paley and Bill Stewart. Another artist I bought—and I got to know quite well—in Fredonia, a Larry Erbsheit. And that leads to another thing. I have loaned his—both Wolsky's and Erbsheit's paintings were prize winners in this western New York show. And I think they were—I could swing them, financially. They were maybe in the $100 range, or $150, or something like that.

ROBERT BROWN: Were these abstract, too, or—

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Wolsky's was quite realistic. Wolsky's was of a football field with a rather raised thing that he developed for the lights of—the floodlights around the—he played football and he taught out at, I think, Colorado College, or something like that before he came east. But they were quite realistic, yes.

And the one that I mentioned that I was writing a letter about was—out at one of those western New York shows in 1964 I bought a painting of—an oil—of Raymon Santiago, and I paid $50 for it. And it wasn't a prize winner, I just liked it. And since then, Raymon Santiago comes from Rochester, and his prices are just astronomical. And [Inaudible.] several years ago I said to somebody I didn't know what to do with that. And I was sort of kidding. I said, "I think I should give it to the Goodwill or something. I paid $50."

"You paid $50 for that? Well, it's probably worth hundreds of dollars now. It gets up into the five or six figures." But, I mean, that's sort of the exciting thing about some of these artists really developing and growing.

ROBERT BROWN: And you were looking at this in the beginning of the 1950s.

CHARLES R. PENNEY: In the 1950s, yes, I was—

ROBERT BROWN: You must have been—stood out then a bit, in Buffalo, if you were buying some prize winners and the like. Were you active in the Albright Gallery at that time? Were you—

CHARLES R. PENNEY: I—yes. When I came back to Buffalo, as I mentioned earlier, my family were very civically minded. There were three things I did. I plunked down $300: $100 to join, as a life member the Buffalo Museum of Science; $100 to join as a life member the Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society; and $100 to become a life member of the Albright Art Gallery.

I remember my mother coming to me and saying, "Well, isn't that being a bit lavish, at the salary you're getting?" And I said, "Well, I feel rather strongly about these institutions." Unfortunately, things have worked very much in reverse. I don't regret this, I would support any good art institution, but the Albright has been a real problem. I have shown no recognition, and it has been a very difficult situation, not only for myself—and I don't mean to knock it, but it's the plain truth—and to the artists in the area.

Maybe I have stood out a bit, because I have supported the local artists, whereas the Albright never has.

ROBERT BROWN: It did in the 1950s? It was still, to some extent, then? It had those western New York shows?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: It had the western New York shows. I don't know when Gordon Smith came to the Albright. I remember—it was in the 1950s, because I remember meeting him, and his wife was alive at the time. I would classify him as a Caspar Milquetoast type. I am not alone in this. Other people who have met him said they didn't understand him. Very nice gentleman, don't get me wrong, and a very—he knew his art. He came from the—I think it was Manchester, New Hampshire.

But he was looking for a patron, and he found that in Seymour Knox, who had become interested in that contemporary room, before he came. And he found in Knox the man who could support, money—wise, this. And anybody else who was interested, they just didn't pay any attention to. So, it was a very difficult thing.

ROBERT BROWN: You mean—did Knox begin to take over? I mean, began to dictate?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Well, it is pretty much—it is a one—man show, there is no question, which—I tread—it's been a very difficult row for me to hoe. I don't believe in attacking people. I like to build up people. I'd rather not attack a person, I'd rather just move away, which is just what I did. I moved away from the scene.

Of course, as I say, I was a life member. And the local art societies made me an honorary member. I'm an honorary member of the Patterson Society, the Buffalo Artists. I've been—even though I was an honorary

member, they insisted that I be an officer, and I was.

But what I mean is in moving away I had to teach myself. And through beginning to collect Burchfield, I learned of the Cleveland Museum of Art's interest in Burchfield, particularly the print and drawing department. And that led me to Cleveland.

And I met this marvelous lady—she's still alive—Leona Prosserr. She was the curator, I think. I'm not sure of her exact title, I think it was curator of the department. There was a man before, and I cannot remember his name. But it was with her. And she encouraged me. She was just absolutely marvelous, and I think I've given her credit in the—I know I've given her credit in the Burchfield catalog for her help, as I have John Clancy and as I have Jim Goodman, who at that time—excuse me—

(End of tape 1, side A.)

ROBERT BROWN:—first become aware of Burchfield here, in the Buffalo area?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Yes.

ROBERT BROWN: Had you met him, or just seen more and more of his work?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: No, I hadn't met him. But of course he knew the name. And my mother had bought a small Burchfield watercolor which I now have in my collection.

Going back to Bob Blair, my mother—the artist, you know, that did the warrior painting—my mother had studied with Blair. And Burchfield had a show of watercolors in a gallery that was on the corner of Elmwood and Utica Street—the building is now gone—in Buffalo. And Blair urged my mother to go over there and see the show. And then he urged her—he tells me this; my mother is dead now, so I didn't hear this from her—but he tells me that he encouraged her to buy this watercolor. I forgot the exact name, it's something like the *Song of the Telegraph*, or *Poles*, or whatever.

But it is a small painting of which Burchfield did a larger painting that John Marin owned. And I never knew John Marin, but that leads to another story, my first Marin and my getting to know Edith Halpert so well. John Marin thought highly enough of Burchfield that he owned a large one that went to John Marin, Jr., who I did get to know, and know now, who at that time worked for Edith Halpert. And then John Marin, I think, went with—I don't know what he's doing. But he still owns that.

And it's very interesting to see these two in exhibitions, hanging side by side. So that goes back—you want to get—

ROBERT BROWN:—very vivid to you. Was it the one that your mother had gotten?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Well, it was there, hanging on the wall. But what happened was—so much is in timing; it just happened this way. In the late 1950s, when my mother passed away, I came into—I became more affluent. I inherited some money. And Jim Goodman, who I didn't know at all then—he was not much younger, but a few years younger than I am—he and his first wife, Merlie [ph], Merlie Darlick [ph] Goodman, had a gallery in a garage apartment, apparently.

Jim, at that time—his business, I think, was like in gum ball machines, or something like that. But he had—

ROBERT BROWN: This was in Buffalo?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: In Buffalo. And Jim had no formal art education. I don't think he had been—he didn't even go to college. But Merlie had. She came from a very artistic family.

And then, from there, they opened a very small one—room gallery in Buffalo, in the Park Lane Hotel. And their first show was a show of Burchfield drawings. And that was my introduction to Burchfield drawings. I had never seen one. And, really, I didn't know much about drawings, you know. I thought, well, pictures—art is art.

But also, Burchfield did a special drawing for that show, which he gave, I think—or maybe he sold, I don't know—to the Goodmans, which later, the Goodmans, when they were leaving Buffalo, sold to me, which is now in my collection. But I bought about three or four drawings out of that show. And, you see, that led to Jim telling me about Cleveland because it was, again, getting back to Cleveland.

Leona Prosserr, in her marvelous way, had found, in visiting Charlie Burchfield in West Seneca, that in his studio behind his house he had pigeon holes. I guess it was like a desk, say here, with 12 pigeon holes for the 12 months of the year. And in each one of those 12 months, he would have—like we're in the month of August now—he would have his August drawings over the years from practically the first year, when he started his artwork.

And, like, he would be—this—if he were alive now, he would be working on an August painting. And you know how he reworked those things over the years. And he would get those drawings out over the years.

And I guess, somehow, Leona said, "I've got to have those for a show in Cleveland." And he was very reluctant, but she did have a show in Cleveland. And I, of course, did not know Leona, I did not know the Cleveland scene. I did not see the show. I now have a catalog of it. But she put out a marvelous show of the drawings, and also of his prints.

ROBERT BROWN: So this was before Goodman had his show?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: This is before Goodman had his show.

ROBERT BROWN: So Goodman suggested you go see her, or—

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Go to Cleveland, yes, yes.

ROBERT BROWN: And so, what—

CHARLES R. PENNEY: And—what happened?

ROBERT BROWN: What did you do? You went there, and met with her?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: I went there, and I met her. And, as I say, she was a lovely person. We hit it off very well, developed a long friendship. And she said, "Well, you know we have an organization called The Cleveland Print Club," and she encouraged me to join. At that time, I think there may have been a few vacancies. Anyway, I was able to join.

And then, the Cleveland Print Club every year has a presentation print, as you may know. And this goes way back—my memory, without going to my books is a little hazy, but I think the print club had its 50th anniversary about 7 years ago. So, they have had selections—I think the most important one is a Matisse print, which is now very expensive, if you can find one. But I was able to acquire back presentation prints, of which one was Charlie Burchfield's lithograph, *Summer Benediction*, which had been a presentation print in the 1950s. It was one of three lithographs that he did.

And I enjoyed my membership there, and I got to know the people very well in the Print Club. They had print workshops in Cleveland. We went to Detroit. I traveled with them, both in the United States—we went to Europe and studied in the print rooms in Amsterdam and in London and in Paris. And I learned so much there.

ROBERT BROWN: And these were fellow collectors, for the most part?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: They were collectors. But, for the most part, they were modest collectors. But they collected well. There was one man who I became a very good friend of, a Mr. Steinberg. He and Lillian, his wife, they had no children. And he had a very good eye. And I don't know whether you know, Lichtenstein came from Cleveland before he became, you know, very famous for his pop art in New York.

But this man had quite a few of Lichtenstein drawings and all. And he could foresee. And he has many, many prints. Lived very modestly in a one—bedroom apartment, and we were out—when I went there, we were on our knees, pulling print boxes out from under the bed. I mean, that's what—well, I have since learned. I store things under beds.

ROBERT BROWN: Well, what did you learn, say, from Mr. Steinberg, do you recall? What was developing in you at that time, say in the late 1950s?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Well, I think what I learned from him particularly was the range of what collecting could be, and how you could do it if you were smart. I mean, I felt that I had a little money, but I didn't have that much money. And I couldn't buy art the way Joel Hirshhorn or Paul Mellon—anyway, if I were smart enough, I could still do things, you know, and hopefully do it well on a more modest scale.

What I also learned, though, were from the workshops. I remember they—Cleveland ran a bus over to Detroit, and there was a workshop where Warrington Colescott, Michael Ponce de Leon and Mitch Coen [ph] all talked. And their print methods are all different. And I think they brought their presses, or whatever.

And I got to know—well, I think I had a Warrington Colescott print. I bought that at the Associated American Artists in New York. I'm not sure whether I had a Michael Ponce de Leon, but I got to know him and later visited his studio on Washington Square, which was very interesting, in New York, and purchased several other things.

Mitch Coen, I am sorry to say, I don't have a print of his. I wish I did, because his sister is now in Buffalo. And her

husband is head of the Architectural and Environmental Design Department at the University of Buffalo, and came from Washington. He's a great friend of the print man—I'm trying to think of his name—who is in Washington.

Well, anyway, this is just digressing too much. But I don't happen to have, and I should have—

ROBERT BROWN: But you were getting pretty darn thorough grounding—

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Yes.

ROBERT BROWN:—in various print media.

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Right.

ROBERT BROWN: At that time.

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Right, yes. And the Cleveland Art Institute, too, we would go over there and we would see people working on the stones, and we would study the difference, you know, the different mediums, yes.

ROBERT BROWN: And were you beginning to think, when you think back that far, that you wanted to acquire a wide variety of things, or were you specializing? You had already this great interest in Burchfield.

CHARLES R. PENNEY: No. As I think back now, if someone had said to me many years ago, "You are going to have the art collection like you have now," I would say, "Well, you're crazy." These things just grew. I guess maybe I'm a bit of a perfectionist, and I like to follow a thing through. Like I never thought I could have the Burchfield collection that I have now.

I remember when I bought those drawings, when the Goodman Gallery had its first show, I just said to Jim one day, I said, "Well, is there somebody who collects Burchfields, or who has a large Burchfield collection?" And he said, "Oh, yes, there is. There is a man in Detroit by the name of Lawrence Fleischman, who has a large collection." Well, I never thought that I would have a collection equal to his. Of course, he has gotten out of a lot of those. And I guess I do have probably the largest private collection of Burchfields. In fact, Mr. Fleischman, I guess, would like to have mine for sale in his gallery. I don't know. But—

ROBERT BROWN: What was it, do you suppose, at that time, in Burchfield which appealed to you?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: It is the fantasy of it. The—well, the basicness of his work. I really enjoy nature. I found it a little hard at first to understand what he was doing, I mean, the motion in the trees and in the birds, and things coming out of windows and skies. And then, I grew to understand it, and I got to know him a bit. And I saw other Burchfields, and I read the fantasy in it, and how he was influenced by, particularly, Sibelius, and things like that.

ROBERT BROWN: Musical rhythms, and—

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Right, right.

ROBERT BROWN: Storms, conflict.

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Right.

ROBERT BROWN: What was he like talking with? You say you got to know him a bit.

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Yes.

ROBERT BROWN: What was he like to be with?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Well, he was a very modest man, I think very shy. And his wife was a marvelous person. She was his buffer. She was always with him, and protected him from people. I went out a number of times to his home in West Seneca, a very modest home. But fortunately—and he told me this, and John Clancy did—through myself he was able to live a little better. I was buying things over a period of time, and that meant that in his later years he had a steady income.

And he enjoyed music, as you may know, so much. Well, when he was, of course, first married, he was struggling. He was with the Birge Wallpaper Company, and then he was able to go off on his own through Edward Rook down in Utica, encouraging him to have a show in New York, and he was able to sell things and become a full—time artist.

But things like Victor Records were just prohibitive to—you know, to buy. Maybe he would buy an occasional one. I don't know if he had a car at that point at all. But when I came along he drove a nice Buick car, he had a very fine recording machine in his front living room. But, as I say, he lived very humbly in the same house out there that he had lived in for many years, with a small little wooden studio out behind.

ROBERT BROWN: Would he talk to you very much about what he was trying to express, or—

CHARLES R. PENNEY: A little bit. He would make remarks. And I would ask him questions. That is—I would try and, of course, get drawings from him for any of the major works that I had. Like, when I acquired *Solitude*, I asked him if he had any drawings for that. And he did. And that's where I have the—how many—there are 38 drawings. It really is an amazing study thing.

And he let me—he didn't give them to me; I was never given anything. I mean, I paid. And I—of course, it all went around the horn, so to speak. If I would see him in his home in West Seneca—which wasn't very often—and I found he had drawings, those drawings would have to go down to New York to John Clancy and be priced. And then they would come back to me up here. Yes.

ROBERT BROWN: Was he a bit reluctant to pull out those drawings, as Leona Prosser had found in the beginning?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Not in that case, fortunately, because he had great confidence in me. He liked me, what I was doing. I had this in the few letters that I have from him. And he was glad to know that I had some of his major works. And I think he knew that they would be well cared for, and that they should go along with the watercolor.

ROBERT BROWN: He wasn't—was he—he was not reluctant to part with things? Or was he a bit of a—

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Well, getting back to the drawings, I would say he was reluctant to part with those drawings that he kept in the cubbyholes, because I would say—you might say, "Charlie, what if your studio caught fire?" Because it was a wooden building. Or if somebody stole them. But he would say, "Well, I need them, to work with them, you see."

ROBERT BROWN: He would look at them again and again?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Again and again, yes.

ROBERT BROWN: Those—

R. PENNEY: But some drawings did come out. Jim Goodman would get some from him and have them in his gallery. John Clancy, every so often, would have a few. Jim Goodman really tried to get—and did get. He liked Jim. Jim is a very likeable person, and he did give Jim—and in turn, I acquired—I think I have almost 40 drawings. I just like them. Some are study drawings, some are just drawings on their own. Stand on their own.

ROBERT BROWN: And then paintings, too?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Oh, and the painting, yes, yes. I started, as I mentioned, with the drawings. And then, of course, the watercolors I thought I would never be able to afford. But I was. I was able to buy over a period of time, as I mentioned—

ROBERT BROWN: Well, did you buy mainly from Jim Goodman or from Rehn Gallery.

CHARLES R. PENNEY: A few, but I would say more from John Clancy at the Rehn Gallery at New York, yes. John had the major things. He was Burchfield's dealer, really, yes, although Burchfield liked Goodman, he would let Goodman have some things to sell.

But they would—what went on there, it was a very fine relationship that had been built on over the years between John Clancy and Charlie Burchfield. It was an annual routine. John Clancy and his wife would come up from New York and they never flew, they always went by train. And they would come and stay with the Burchfields, with Bertha and Charlie. And John would go into the studio with Charlie, and look at paintings that he had been working on. And Charlie would say, "Well, John, what do you think about this? Do you think it's ready for New York?" And John might say, "Well, yes, sure, fine." And then it would go to New York for a show, or to be sold. Or, John might say, "Well, no, I think you better work on that a bit." And sometimes they would be worked on for years, you know.

But it was that marvelous rapport, Burchfield having the respect he had for Clancy, and of course, Clancy having the respect for Burchfield that was many, many years.

ROBERT BROWN: Was Clancy a very decisive person?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: I'm not sure what the word decisive means, or—

ROBERT BROWN: What was he like?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Oh, Clancy, he is a marvelous man. Clancy, of course, in the Rehn Gallery, was the assistant to Frank Rehn, who I never knew. And then, when Rehn died, Clancy carried it on. And it was, I guess, an avant garde gallery. But when I came along, the three big artists that John Clancy handled were Charlie Burchfield, Edward Hopper, and Reginald Marsh. And Hopper was still alive, I think. I can't remember when Marsh died. I'm not sure whether—

ROBERT BROWN: The early 1950s.

CHARLES R. PENNEY: It was in the early 1950s? I think he had died. And Burchfield, of course, was still alive. And he was so close to all his artists, and Clancy would just like to talk about them. He was a very soft spoken, very marvelous man to do business with, nothing high pressure. But he knew his art, and knew how to handle the artists. Yes.

ROBERT BROWN: Did he know how to develop you, as a collector? Did he have a role in that? Did he advise you?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Actually, I think—I don't know, maybe this is being unfair. But I would think not. I had—I always went to him. I would go to New York. And it really—in the early stages, it was sort of fun. And I had become more affluent, and I liked Burchfield. And I would buy Burchfield.

I wasn't thinking, well, I was going to build a huge collection. That was never in my mind. I would just buy. I would say, "Well, gee, what have you got?" Or he might say, "Oh, yes, it seems to me I've got something back here. You want to come back?" And then he would pull a few things off the rack. And I would say, "Well, is that available?" And, "How much is it?" And, "Can we work out—can I spread the payments?" And he would say, "Yes," and it would come up.

There were many times when I would urge him, and I would write him, "Are there drawings for this?" You know, he would never say, "Well, I have drawings for this. Are you interested?" That would never happened.

Jim Goodman, in his nice way, was very good with John Clancy. And Jim would say to me occasionally, "Well, Clancy has something over there that I think should go in your collection. Why don't you go over and see it?"

John Clancy was never that aggressive. It was always me going there. But then he would pull things—he never concealed anything, but he would forget. And I would say, "Well"—sometimes to myself, "Well, doesn't he know I'm really interested or not?"

ROBERT BROWN: He was not aggressive. He was laid back. I mean, he did not push them, or he would forget them. You were—

CHARLES R. PENNEY: I would say that he would not be like an Ivan Karp—maybe this is unfair—an Ivan Karp type, or a Leo Castelli, who really promoted—I don't think I am being unfair, I met them both. But they promoted the pop artists, and so forth. I can't ever see John Clancy doing it that way, really.

He has had a lot of artists in his stable that are still there, and they show, and I don't think they go very—they're sort of there, they're good artists, but—

ROBERT BROWN: What was Goodman like to buy from and all? You became close friends. Did

he—

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Jim—

ROBERT BROWN:—was self taught, he was learning.

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Yes. Jim really liked art. And he—I don't know what his real interest is now, whether it's still the same, but he—at the early stages, he really liked sculpture. And I can remember him saying to me, "You're not ready for it. You've got to develop more." So I—in the early stages, I never bought sculpture. Now sculpture is really my most favorite thing.

ROBERT BROWN: What do you suppose he meant by that, that you weren't ready for it?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: I'm not sure. Maybe it's the third dimensional object. And, of course, sculpture is very

complicated. I think I learned, when I had my home in Olcott, on placing sculpture. I would spend days, and I'd keep coming back—maybe even years—even in the house, I would be sitting there alone or something, having a drink or something, and looking and saying, "That would look a lot better over there." I think it's much more complicated. But I enjoy the third dimension.

But Jim and I worked very well. As I say, I think it was just a lucky matter of timing. He was starting out, and I was just becoming interested, and I did have some money to buy things. He was a very fine person to deal with. He, too, would spread me like John Clancy did, in my payments over a period of time. He, more than John Clancy, would direct me. And, you know, he would say, "Well, I think that that really is a drawing."

Then, I remember when it came to acquiring *Solitude*, there had been a show, and there was one painting that I liked very much, and I think I decided to buy that.

ROBERT BROWN: This was a New York show?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: This was in Buffalo, I think at the Burchfield Center, which had just started up. And I can remember Merlie Goodman calling me on the phone and saying, "Charlie, we have been talking about this, and we think that you really should buy Solitude. It's maybe something a little bit difficult to live with, but we think it's one of Burchfield's most important works."

ROBERT BROWN: This was someone who advised you—

CHARLES R. PENNEY: This was Jim Goodman's wife, yes.

ROBERT BROWN: Yes, right.

CHARLES R. PENNEY: And so, I valued their judgement, I thought about it. And, as it turned out, I did buy that and, of course, the drawings. And then I was able to acquire two more pictures out of that show eventually. I mean, it's just short of a miracle—I mean, miracles have come true—by paying over a period of time.

ROBERT BROWN: Now, this was at the Charles Burchfield Center?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: The Center in Buffalo, New York, right.

ROBERT BROWN: Now, this was set up a year before he died.

CHARLES R. PENNEY: No, just a few months. It opened—

ROBERT BROWN: How did that happen to come into being? Was there someone particularly enthusiastic about him?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Well, there is a Mrs. Edna Lindemann, who had been a director of another gallery there, and I guess had known Burchfield and had liked his work. And I think what she was trying to do was—had hoped for, possibly, his work, or that he would leave things or give things to the Burchfield Center. And it was opened in December of 1966, and Burchfield died a month later. I think it was January 1967. So he really left nothing there. But they did have shows of work.

ROBERT BROWN: Yes.

CHARLES R. PENNEY: And they were shows of these—like I mentioned, *Solitude*, that were on loan from John Clancy at the Rehn Gallery in New York City.

ROBERT BROWN: Had she—had Edna Lindemann known Burchfield fairly well?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: I'm sure she knew of him, and then she got to know him. Yes, yes, right. Yes.

ROBERT BROWN: But have you ever talked with her about what her idea was, really?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Yes, I have been on that board. We have had a falling out. I do not like some of the things that have gone on there. Of course, they would like to have my collection, but that is out of the question now.

She wanted Burchfield's, of course, and now she has tried—she has gone in the direction of—I think they call it a western New York forum for art, and she has brought in, under the umbrella of what I did many years before—I collected upstate New York people. She—they, I think, are concentrating on western New York. I have expanded that, and collected in the Rochester area, and sort of downstate, yes.

ROBERT BROWN: Yes.

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Yes.

ROBERT BROWN: So they have really been a little formalist in what they thought they would do over the years? They started out, they hoped they would be a Burchfield, a major Burchfield—

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Yes. It's called the Charles Burchfield Center—

ROBERT BROWN: But they—failing that, she has now spread out—

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Expanded, yes.

ROBERT BROWN: Oh.

CHARLES R. PENNEY: They have gotten, as I understand it, more Burchfields. There was a threatened lawsuit, and there was a settlement with the Burchfield Foundation. There have been some gifts, there have been some purchases. As I say, I have been out of that. There has been a falling out, and I have been out of that scene for several years. But I guess they have built, yes.

ROBERT BROWN: Was she a very aggressive sort of person?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Yes, she certainly is. Yes. She is rather difficult. This is not—again, I don't like to talk this way.

ROBERT BROWN: You mentioned now you were already—by then were you getting to know some of the other New York dealers?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Yes, yes.

ROBERT BROWN: Clancy at Rehn.

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Yes.

ROBERT BROWN: By the late 1950s or early 1960s you were—

CHARLES R. PENNEY: I—

ROBERT BROWN: Were you going down there steadily?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Yes.

ROBERT BROWN: Beginning to look around a lot more?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: There were—I was going all over the country, actually. Well, I was doing two things. As I say, I was getting nowhere in Buffalo, so I was becoming active in other communities. And I started to join other museums—like I mentioned, Cleveland. I joined the—it was then called, I think, the Art Gallery of Toronto. It's now called the Art Gallery of Ontario.

Through Cleveland, I met Ulfert Wilke, who had just gone out to the University of Iowa, and became very close to the University of Iowa. I now own some of Ulfert Wilke's work. I became interested in Emil Ganso, who went out there and died after a very short period. Was succeeded by Mauricio Lasanske, took his place. If it hadn't been for Ganso dying, probably Lasanske would never have ended up there. I mean, it's very interesting. And—

ROBERT BROWN: These are three men that you got to know, or their work struck you, and—

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Well, Ganso had died in the 1940s.

ROBERT BROWN: Yes.

CHARLES R. PENNEY: That's another interesting story. My exposure to Ganso was a Sears Roebuck Vincent Price exhibition and sale in Buffalo. And I have never met Vincent Price, we've just recently corresponded. And I bought a Ganso drawing, which—I've recently given a large Ganso collection to the University of Iowa, and that was the first thing.

And through Cleveland, that led me to the Weyhe [ph] Gallery in New York, because Ganso had been with the Weyhe. I got to know Erhard Weyhe when he was alive, and there was a Ms. Dickenson [ph] there that Leona Prosser recommended very highly. She ran the gallery. Since then she has left, and I understand she has died.

ROBERT BROWN: Weyhe—what did you—did you begin to buy other things through—

CHARLES R. PENNEY: I bought a lot of Gansos there, I bought a lot of Ganso prints. And as I say, I have given—I don't know, is it 20 or 30—Ganso prints to—I still have in the print catalog a number of prints in my own collection. I bought them, and then I got interested in other things that Weyhe had.

Weyhe was, as you know, a really far out gallery that Sammy Caldner [ph] exhibited at, and of course Carl Grosser worked there, you know, before he went on to Philadelphia.

ROBERT BROWN: Could we get back for a moment—

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Yes.

ROBERT BROWN: Volka [ph].

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Wilke.

ROBERT BROWN: Wilke, you got to—Wilke, you got to know him—

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Yes.

ROBERT BROWN:—in Cleveland first?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: No. What happened, I got—I met him first in New York. It was rather interesting. I was with the Cleveland Print Club in New York, and it was a Sunday brunch. Former Clevelanders had an apartment on Fifth Avenue, and they were very generous, and hosted our group for a brunch, and Ulfert was there. And he is really a remarkable man. And I was introduced to him, and he was on his way out to the University of Iowa. And he said, "Oh, would you be interested in coming out to the opening of our new gallery?

And Abramovitz, the architect, Harrison and Robbins, had done a gallery for them. This was back in the 1960s. And you know Abramovitz had done Lincoln Center. And I went out to the opening. And—

ROBERT BROWN: He was a very captivating person, was he?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Wilke?

ROBERT BROWN: Wilke.

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Oh, Ulfert is an amazing man. He's just remarkable. And one of his closest friends is George Rickey. And George was there. And I got to know George out in Iowa, and later visited George down in Chatham, and have acquired George Rickey pieces, and that kind of thing. So, one thing leads to another.

But Ulfert was out in Iowa, and I became very interested in Iowa, and what they were trying to do. And—

ROBERT BROWN: What were they up to at that point?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Well, they had a rather modest collection, and it still is modest. But what had happened there was there was a lawyer in Iowa City, or in that area, who had a collection I think mostly of French Impressionists or something. But the collection, I guess monetarily, was worth $1 million or $2 million or something.

And so, he said, "Okay, University of Iowa. I will give my collection if you will build a gallery." So, amazing in an academic town, they raised the money to build a gallery. And, as I mentioned Abramovitz was the—and it's a very lovely thing. I mean, there is a court down in the middle—maybe you've been there—with a large Pol Bury sculpture that's all mechanical and just sprays water, and things move. Yes.

ROBERT BROWN: So your connection began then?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Well, yes. Again, that began then. And, as I say, one thing seems to lead to another. Ulfert said, "I am having a show of my own work in Columbus, Ohio." Well, okay. That was, I think, a year or so later.

ROBERT BROWN: This was in the early 1960s still, or mid—1960s?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Yes, I would say mid—1960s. So I went to Columbus, Ohio. And he sure enough had a show. And out of the show I bought a large oil of his, and a print of his. But then I met this couple that are art collectors of—I can't think of their names, but she is a member of the Lazarus family that owned a department store there. They're awfully nice people. Her present husband is a doctor.

And Ulfert had helped them form a collection, I think mostly of German Expressionists. And they had a nice reception there. And at the reception was a friend, a bit younger than I am, who had grown up in the Buffalo

area, who was then working in Columbus. He was—I think, had taken over a grandfather's business, whatever it was. And this chap was very interested in the decorative arts. And they had a gallery there of Staffordshire blue. And I said, "Well, Paul, I collect Staffordshires. It's a little bit different, it's the portrait figures."

Well, so one thing leads to another, and I said, "I would be glad to loan you them some time." Well, several years later, Paul came with the curator, and they selected a show, had a nice catalog, and I gave them a bit of that Staffordshire.

ROBERT BROWN: You had already been collecting these portrait figures?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: I had been collecting them for quite a while, yes.

ROBERT BROWN: Is that just sort of a minor interest of yours?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Well, at the time I collected it, I think it was rather a major one.

ROBERT BROWN: What was your aim with those, to collect a representative—make a representative collection?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Well, that just sort of grew. As I mentioned, going back, my family had the home with the dining room with the corner cabinets. And my mother collected mostly animals. And some of them were Staffordshire animals.

I can remember in some of my early world travels shortly after World War II, I was on a bicycle trip. And at that time, a lot of the big estates, things were being sold out of them, because England was so destitute after World War II. And I can remember buying a pair of Staffordshire dogs and tying them to the back of my bicycle, and I brought them back to America, and I gave them to my mother. Now, since her death, they have come back to me.

But I had had my sort of fill of animals. And I have always been interested in history. And the figures, as you may know, were done in Queen Victoria's time. And they did, of course, all the royalty, I mean, Queen Victoria and the royal family, the children. Then they went on to actors, all kinds of military people. And this fascinated me, because it was sort of like stamp collecting in my early days. It was another way—and to me, maybe an easier, more interesting way—of learning history, at the same time collecting something that's rather interesting, learning about porcelains, than just picking up a book and reading something that might be quite dry.

So, I did collect that. And then that just grew. And—

ROBERT BROWN: It's practically a folk art, isn't it?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: I would say yes, I think that's a very good word. It is really a folk art. It was—there were potters that did them in their homes, and they were very—they were chimney ornaments. And when I was buying them, I bought them at a very reasonable price. Now, of course, they have soared, like everything else.

ROBERT BROWN: So you think—what I was trying to pinpoint there, maybe there was a latent interest all along in folk art and possibly primitive art?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: That could be. I hadn't—

ROBERT BROWN: Really—

CHARLES R. PENNEY:—traced it back that far. Yes.

ROBERT BROWN: Manifestations—

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Yes, I think—yes. I think that possibly could be, yes.

ROBERT BROWN: Were there particular people from whom you collected these figures, or would you get to England periodically and find them in shops?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Well, you see, we are, in this area, so near Canada. And my family had a home in Canada, and I was in Toronto. And these were British. And there tended to be more there, although some of the early ones I bought in Buffalo that came out of a Buffalo estate. But for the most part, I was buying in Canada.

There was one marvelous elderly lady on Bloor Street, which is one of the main streets in downtown Toronto, with an antique shop. And she was quite interested that I was so taken by these. And she would do drawings of these pieces and send them to me in the mail, and I would be over there, and I would buy them.

And then there were other places like, of course, Niagara—on—the—Lake or St. Catherines, that I would buy. And I found that on my trips to Cleveland there was a dealer in Youngstown, Ohio—and I think I was going to the gallery there—what's his name, Joe—I'm trying to think—

ROBERT BROWN: Butler?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Joe Butler, yes. I was going to the Butler Institute, and always looking for antique places. And there was a very good dealer there who had quite a lot, and I would buy.

So, you would find in different areas—now you don't see those anywhere in any shows, and very rarely are they offered. And if you see them, they are very high.

I have—you mentioned auctions. I have, in England several years ago—it was either Christie's or Sotheby's—bought at auction. They have good pieces, but they're terribly expensive. In fact, they were sending to this country—I know this women's organization on Madison Avenue, they had an antique shop there, and they would send things over. Then they would ask to have them sent back to England, because they could get better prices over there.

ROBERT BROWN: By getting people to buy them back.

CHARLES R. PENNEY: They're buying back, yes.

ROBERT BROWN: You mentioned a little earlier Erhard Weyhe, the Weyhe Gallery.

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Yes.

ROBERT BROWN: Did you get to know him fairly well?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Yes, yes.

ROBERT BROWN: What was he like?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Well, he was a remarkable man. He was very distinguished, very soft spoken, tall. And it would be so interesting. I don't know if you've been in the Weyhe Gallery, but it's just crammed with books on the first floor, and you go up on the second floor and there is the gallery, and the shelves are crammed with boxes and everything. And I don't see how they ever get any order out of it.

But I would say, "Gee, Mr. Weyhe, I wonder if you have a—whatever it would be, 1935 or 1938 Museum of Modern Art catalog, in which they gave a show of Burchfield," and he says, "Well, now, let me think. I think I do." And then you would climb up to about the third floor, and you would get down on your knees, and behind a radiator or something there would be a stack of things. And, sure enough, there would be a catalog.

He, of course, lived in that building on the top floor, and had a farm in Nova Scotia. But he was there all winter, and just lived in that building.

ROBERT BROWN: And you bought—began buying some artwork there, the Ganso—

CHARLES R. PENNEY: I bought the Ganso prints, yes, right. Yes, yes. And I have since, over the years, bought many different prints, Peggy Bacon, Wanda Gág, Louis Lazowick, Kenneth Hayes Miller . But that is now run by Mrs. Dennis, who is a lovely person, who is Mr. Weyhe's daughter.

And the granddaughter was—Mrs. Dennis's daughter—had, up until recently, been down in—running a book shop. But she has since left. She has married and moved out of the area.

ROBERT BROWN: Was Weyhe sort of the dealer whowould steer you or advise you much, or was he sort of like Clancy?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Oh, no.

ROBERT BROWN:—Clancy, you—

CHARLES R. PENNEY: No, no. He was just there.

ROBERT BROWN: You would have to press him?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Yes, yes. No, Ms. Dickenson [ph] would, or Mrs. Dennis now, in a very nice way, would ever so often say, "Well, I think you ought to look at this," or something. You know, she is—she doesn't need to sell.

ROBERT BROWN: No.

CHARLES R. PENNEY: And she knows I don't need to buy. But they would certainly have things, or I would go in and I would comment on—like, I bought a John Flannagan bronze from Jim Goodman. He might have gotten it from the Weyhe Gallery years ago.

But of course, Weyhe Gallery has handled Flannagan's works. And I think, from what I know about Flannagan, the more important sculpture are the stone sculptures. And there still are things there. And I will say Mrs. Dennis would be very nice and bring out a few more pieces.

Or, like, the head of John Marin—who did that? Somebody—she has a portrait study, I think, of Marin.

ROBERT BROWN: The Weyhes, then, had close relationships with certain artists and their families, or estates?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Well, you know, from what I know, and from what I have read, it was—he was the avant garde gallery—

ROBERT BROWN: In the 1930s, say, or—

CHARLES R. PENNEY: In the 1920s and 1930s.

ROBERT BROWN: The 1920s and 1930s.

CHARLES R. PENNEY: And you see, that was the amazing thing about Emil Ganso. I was—first of all, liked his work. And then I became so fascinated in the man himself, who came over as an immigrant. Well, we all descend from immigrants, but he had come over, and he worked as a baker, baking bread and things, in New Jersey. And he had this love of art. And I think he was really self—taught.

And then, somehow he got over to Manhattan, and came into that gallery, and it was Carl Zigrosser, who was working there, that really thought that he was great, and was able to put him on a full—time basis, and he was able to sell art and give up his baking work. But he just worked himself to death, and burned himself out, and died in his early forties.

ROBERT BROWN: Really?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Yes, it was a great loss, because he used many different aspects of the print technique that, of course, now have become pretty well known, but for that period were quite far out.

But he really went out to Iowa to teach painting. And you see, it was quite amazing that he should become a professor with no background at all, you know?

ROBERT BROWN: What was the attraction of Iowa, do you suppose, for him in the 1940s?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Well, of course, Iowa has had such a noted arts school, and I suppose they just gave him a job. You know, Thomas Hart Benton and Grant Wood, and people like that have all been there. It's been such a fantastic—and of course, Raciel Ezanski [ph] has been there, as I mentioned, since Ganso's death.

ROBERT BROWN: In the mid—1960s were you beginning to realize that you were getting pretty deep into collecting?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Well, I have—either fortunately or unfortunately—many interests. And in the 1960s, I liked to sail. That's why—in this area. And I had bought a keelboat. I have sailed all my life on Lake Ontario, and grew up with a Snipe Centerboard. My father had a cruiser. I bought a keelboat. It was a Dutch—made fiberglass boat, which—in 1961—which, in 1961, fiberglass was still quite new and rather scary—if that's the right word—to boat owners. I mean, the Coast Guard was using it, but they said, "Well, you hit a wave, and it's just going to disintegrate."

But I had bought this boat, and brought it up through the inland waterway, the canal system, and had it at Olcott, where I later bought the house. So I was into boats. I was racing boats. I later had two boats. I kept one in Toronto, and I was commuting between Toronto and Olcott, and racing, and I had a gang over there, that crew with me.

And so, there were several directions. I thought, "Okay, I've got to go"—the last boat I had was—it was 31—it was an Alberg 30, a Canadian boat that I kept and I later sold to a dentist over there. But I thought, "You've got to go bigger if you're going into boats, and you can't do your art thing." And then I thought, "Well, no, I think I'd better stick with the art," so I gave up the boat. So you sort of move from one thing to another, you see.

ROBERT BROWN: You think the boats—you were getting a little bored, maybe, with the boats?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Well, no. I've always enjoyed sailing. I think sailing is a tremendous challenge, and there is nothing like it. There were many aspects. You have to get bigger. Boats are very expensive. Anything you do on a boat that's called "marine," like a winch or something, is just about double or triple the cost—sails, and all that. So, maybe if you could afford it, there is that.

I am a single person. I don't have a family. And you have to have good people around you in order to race. It's very difficult to get good people that know how to fly a spinnaker. If I had a bigger boat, I felt I would have to probably have at least one full—time paid crew member, if I could do that. Then I might get into the southern ocean racing circuit. I was taking celestial navigation. I have never been in a salt water ocean race, but I—Chet Larkin [ph], who is a Buffalo man, has navigated all the important races. He has never owned a boat, but I thought, well, maybe I will get—if I studied with him, I might get him to that.

Then I also felt that I entertained a lot of, well, land—lover friends. And they get on a boat and they say, "Whoopee, push away, let's have a beer," and that. Well, you know, there is a lot more to it. You've got to have them under control, and you've got the safety of the rules of the road, and you've got to have life preservers, you know. And it's a lot easier to just have them come and look at your art than to come—but there are all those facets. A boat is a responsibility always. It's just like a second—

ROBERT BROWN: Your art wasn't so obviously a responsibility.

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Well, it—

ROBERT BROWN: It was more pleasure, wasn't it?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: It's a responsibility, of course—

ROBERT BROWN: Yes.

CHARLES R. PENNEY:—in storage, and all that.

ROBERT BROWN: Yes.

CHARLES R. PENNEY: But you have to change directions. At one point in my life I was into sports cars, and I was rallying all around the country. I started to race at Watkins Glen. And then you figure, "Well, now, wait a minute." You're going to want a bigger car and a faster car. Before you know it, you're probably going to pile yourself up, and wreck yourself, and kill yourself, you know. So, you have—directions sometimes get a hold of you, I think I've found.

ROBERT BROWN: And the law, how was that? Was that just sort of your underpinning at that point?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Well, the law—I enjoyed the practice of law.

ROBERT BROWN: Yes?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: It—

ROBERT BROWN: Very flexible, in terms of your hours and—

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Yes. The law is a jealous mistress, as they always say. It's very demanding if you're going to be good. Lawyers work hard. A good lawyer has to work hard.

ROBERT BROWN: Were you specializing in particular things?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Yes, yes. I was getting so. I opened my own office, and I represented the cancer hospital in Buffalo, which led me into a lot of—well, not a lot, but some—medical legal problems, which were most interesting, and I was developing a specialty there.

I was also developing a financial sort of specialty. As younger lawyers, a few of us would go over to the bankruptcy court, and the referee would hand out the bankruptcies, or the reorganizations to you, and you would get a fee of $5 or something. It was the experience of doing this. And that was a very interesting field, repossessions, and all this—finance law.

ROBERT BROWN: So that was still into the 1960s, you were still very actively—

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Yes. I think I was beginning to phase it out, I guess, really.

ROBERT BROWN: Oh.

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Because in 1961, I established my own foundation, the Charles Rand Penney Foundation.

ROBERT BROWN: Now, this was as a collector?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Yes, yes, yes, yes, right.

(End of tape 1, side B.)

ROBERT BROWN: The continuation of the interview. This is August 16, 1981, in Rochester, New York.

Well, Mr. Penney, you have said, regarding your foundation, that it might help, in quoting you from the catalog of it—it's 1975—that it might help provide cultural exposure for those whose aesthetic experience has been limited. And when you set it up in 1963, you—the basic mandate was to further art education through the visual arts.

This is still fairly early in your collecting, but already you're sensing a use for the collection, and a responsibility at that point, were you?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Yes, yes.

ROBERT BROWN: Was it a—was this brought about by anyone's suggestion to you? Or how did this come about, that you create a foundation?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Well, I felt that in creating the foundation there were several thrusts on how to use the art for educational purposes. It started out rather strongly because of my coming in contact and meeting on a trip abroad with Mrs. Nancy Kefauver, who is the widow of the late senator, Estes Kefauver.

And on this trip she was the director of the art in the embassy program for the State Department, had been appointed to this position by John Kennedy, who she apparently knew well, and she was going to different embassies to see what they could use in the way of art to use in, I think, their public spaces, their office spaces, not—I don't think—in the embassy homes, as such, but in the office space. And I was fascinated with this.

And we hit it off very well, and she asked me if I could help her. And she first invited me to serve on her board or committee, whatever it was, to help her on the eastern seaboard. Well, I was flattered by this, but I felt that I had a— more of a responsibility to get my foundation going. But I still wanted to help her, so I said, "Well, yes, I will loan artwork, from the foundation to your program."

And, as such, over the years, artworks, consisting mainly of prints in my foundation, would go to Washington. And I guess they had some central location. There were other people like myself. Museums would send things in. And then Mr. and Mrs. Ambassador from whatever country would come in and make selections from this grouping, and they would go out. Art in this program would go out for two years. And, in my own case, requests would sometimes come back, "Well, would you extend the loan for another two years," which I always did.

Well, while this was progressing, and I was very pleased to cooperate with this program, I thought, "Well, you are an American, and you live here, and this is an American foundation. You should do something locally." And I felt really—in sort of the rural areas, where I lived in Olcott, which is in Niagara County, and is a farming community. So, I would loan to whatever organizations would be interested. It was a lot of work, because I used to have to truck them in my station wagon and hang them. But they would go to, like, high schools.

And then, of course, the problem would be, well, where could you display them, because of security? And in some instances, the high school principal or some of the art teachers would be imaginative. And I recall the principal at New Fane saying, "Well, let's take some of the trophies out of the trophy cases," that were all glass and locked up in the hall, "and we can put smaller things in there. And then you can put other things in the library, and there is a librarian here. And when the librarian is gone, the place is locked up."

So, that was the second thrust, on the local scene. Then, through—

ROBERT BROWN: How much—did you get a nice reaction fairly quickly on this?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Oh, very much so, because—for instance, again, in New Fane, which is the township of which Olcott is a part, the art teacher would say, "Well, our students have never seen a piece of sculpture. They don't even know what it is."

And I would say, "Well, haven't they been to the Albright—Knox Art Gallery in Buffalo?" Which would be, like, 35 miles away. "Oh, no, no, they haven't," she would reply. And I would say, "Well, don't you ever get a bus and

take them in?" "Well, we can't afford to bus them in."

So, by loaning sculpture, there was exposure to sculpture. By loaning prints, they saw prints. And then I would be invited from time to time to maybe sit in their classroom and give a little talk to explain—

ROBERT BROWN: What kinds of things would you stress when you gave talks?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Well, it was very interesting, because I didn't know what they were concerned with. Some were concerned with the image. Well, what does it mean, if it was an abstraction? And then you would get into what is abstract art. Or color. Or sometimes the question—I don't think it would be as sophisticated as, "Well, what about the medium," I mean, "What is an etching?" Or, "What is a lithograph," or, you know, that kind of thing.

ROBERT BROWN: In sculpture, what seemed to appeal to them? What sort of things were you putting on display, abstract things, figural things?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Yes. Well, a little of both. I think the fact that they could touch them and feel them—and I would let them do this. One teacher wanted me to loan the two large Henry Moores that I had in my personal collection that take about three or four men and dollies to move. And that was impossible. But I think it was actually just seeing a three dimensional object, and realizing that it was an art form.

ROBERT BROWN: [Inaudible.]

[Audio break.]

ROBERT BROWN: We were talking about some of the—some examples of the kind of sculpture, for example, that you might have taken out to the schools in rural New York.

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Well, there was a—I think you would call it a portfolio of things—smaller sculpture pieces in a box. And, as I remember, there was sort of a water faucet hose sculpture piece by Jim Dine. This caused sort of amusement, you know.

ROBERT BROWN: I bet it did.

CHARLES R. PENNEY: A lot of different—

ROBERT BROWN: Did they believe it was art, or—

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Well, this was the interesting thing. You try and explain. And then, like a Claes Oldenberg, *The Baked Potato*, which was a large baked potato made in sort of a fiberglass material on a plate, and they would say, "That's art?" You know, "It's [Inaudible.]."

But of course, I think if you explain that—maybe some of them had heard about *The Big Hamburger*, and things like that, there had been a considerable amount of publicity—then they could understand that, and relate to that kind of thing.

Another piece was a hanging mobile by Alexander Calder. And you could explain that he was the man that made sculpture move. And they were sort of intrigued by that. And you would sort of touch it or blow at it, and it would move around, and the different colors would form different shapes.

The David Smith sculpture was a little bit different, maybe a little bit too sophisticated. They—you know, you—I think they wouldn't realize how important David Smith was. But the fact that it was a painted piece, and it was made out of old parts and welded together, was—

ROBERT BROWN: I suppose these students didn't have any preconceptions, really, did they?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: No, no.

ROBERT BROWN: Did they ask very basic questions?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Well, actually, they didn't ask too many questions. I think they really listened more. So in one or two instances, a teacher would ask for a page or a half a page, just their comments. And it was very interesting, particularly among the younger children.

That was another thing that I learned in this work. I got to know quite a few school teachers. And I was naive at first. I thought that this kind of art education should be aimed at students that were in their teens. And they, for the most part, discouraged me and said, "Oh, no. Aim for children a lot younger." And so that's what I did do.

ROBERT BROWN: Why do you think they chose younger children, for the most part?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: I suppose they were just unsophisticated, and open, and willing to accept it. And their comments were marvelous. I have pasted them in my foundation scrapbooks, which are now in the archives of the Memorial Art Gallery.

ROBERT BROWN: Can you remember any of those?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Not too much, except I think there was a little Japanese—American girl that thought they were pretty colors, and that kind of thing. But marvelous comments, for the most part. Very naive, very simplistic.

ROBERT BROWN: Now you have a lot of photographs in the foundation, as well. Would these be shown?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Well, actually, I didn't have too many photographs of—what happened there was in this foundation, which was a very modest foundation, because I was buying things on, really, a shoestring—and that's why it was composed primarily of prints, rather than big, splashy sculpture pieces or paintings—as we went along, photography began to come into the scene. And I thought, well, this would be a good aspect to introduce into the foundation, particularly out here in the rural areas.

So, what I did was the New York State Council of the Arts has a division called "CAPS," Creative Artists [Public Service]—I'm not sure what the P and the S stand—program, something like that—and they have given, over the years, grants to photographers. So, I went to CAPS and I asked who the photographers that they had awarded grants to were over the years. And I wrote each one of those photographers, saying that I was trying to put together for my foundation a collection of photographic artwork, and would they be interested. And if so, their work would be purchased. Now, the money came mostly from me. A little came from CAPS. But the money for the purchase was mostly from me.

It was a very difficult job, because I must say that I find photographers even more difficult to deal with than artists are. I had a hard time rounding them up. Some of them are out of the country, of course, filming. And so I had to give up on them. Some I never did meet, or I had to just leave it up to them, what they wanted to send to put in the collection.

But there were, oh, I guess maybe two dozen that were in that. And then I was referred to Nathan Lyons, here in Rochester, the Visual Studies Workshop, who had worked very closely with CAPS. And from him I purchased the CAPS photography portfolio, which has about a dozen—and—a—half very fine artists in that portfolio.

So, that was the extent of photography. Had the foundation gone on, I think probably I would have added more photography, and had there been money available, would have gone into older, more established photographers, which would have added a lot.

ROBERT BROWN: But one—now, one thrust of the foundation was educational. The other was to patronize artists of this part of western New York?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Yes, it was—yes. Not primarily, but that has always been my interest, to support Upstate New York artists. And a lot of them are represented in the foundation, as they are in my personal collection.

But, of course, then there are artists that are American artists and international artists, too, as well. It is a broad spectrum.

ROBERT BROWN: The foundation showed in schools, and you gave talks. What were some of its other activities? Did you have exhibitions in art museums?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Well, yes. Well, for instance, GANYS, the Gallery Association of New York State, circulated a print show. They also circulated a show of the photographs. And GANYS is a very fine New York State organization, and different institutions can sign up for the show. So they went around.

Then I remember I met somebody from a Texas museum, and he asked if he could borrow some things for down there. And I thought that was very good. Always receptive to anything that was good, and where the prints could be displayed well, and there was security, and lighting was all right.

ROBERT BROWN: For the foundation, since it was partly educational, [Inaudible.] more broadly than you think you might have just for a personal collection?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: No, I wouldn't say that. Because I think my personal collection is quite broad. I started buying prints—because, as I've said, I was operating really on a shoestring—from an organization called IGAS. If I remember this, it stands for International Graphic Arts Society.

ROBERT BROWN: Society, mm—hmm.

CHARLES R. PENNEY: And I did this at the suggestion of the Cleveland Museum. Leona Prosser, I think, had mentioned that, and said they have good prints at a reasonable price. And they certainly did, they had some very fine artists, and it was very reasonable. Then I think that later went out of business.

But I bought prints all over, and I tried to have as broad a base as possible with the money that was at hand.

ROBERT BROWN: Well, you continued the foundation until the mid—1970s?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: The foundation was dissolved in 1975, and the foundation collection was given to the Memorial Art Gallery. It consisted primarily, or mainly, of prints. There were some sculptures, nearly 400 art objects. It, supposedly, is the largest gift of art given at one time to the Memorial Art Gallery.

And I felt this had to be done, because I was a one—man show, and I felt I couldn't keep up the pace of running the foundation, and that I had to get together with some other art organization. And this worked out very well. It filled the gap in the Memorial Art Gallery's collection, and they were very receptive to the gift. And it has worked out very well.

ROBERT BROWN: We talked a bit about the Memorial Art Gallery, and you said that—earlier to me—that you particularly were attracted to museums with a flair, which I guess is with some distinctive strength or direction. I think—is that what you mean by that?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Well, I'm not sure. I've always been attracted to museums, because I believe in the learning process. And I have been interested in many different kinds of museums, whether they're historical—I have been president on the board of the Niagara County Historical Society and a member of the Rochester Historical Society, a life member of the [Inaudible.] County. That's historical—I am interested in old car museums. I enjoy the old car museum that Mr. Harrah had out in Reno, and they have one down in San Antonio, and things like that.

ROBERT BROWN: Well, how did you get attracted, do you think, to the Memorial Art Gallery in Rochester? I know you have mentioned there was some feeling of—regarding the Albright, that you no longer wanted to be involved there. Did you turn, therefore, to the other prominent art gallery in—

CHARLES R. PENNEY: I had to, unfortunately. Things had not worked out on the Buffalo art scene. And I felt that I was that much interested that I would become a member of other art galleries and learn. I had had no formal education. So, I did join the Memorial Art Gallery here, in Rochester. I joined the Art Gallery of Ontario, in Toronto.

And, of course, I joined the Cleveland Museum of Art. I joined the art gallery out in Indianapolis. I joined—became very active out at the University of Iowa museum. And, of course, all the New York art galleries—the Museum of Modern Art I have been a member of for many years, the Metropolitan Museum and the Morgan Library, places like that. But—

ROBERT BROWN: The Memorial Art Gallery became very important to you, did it?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Well, it was near where I lived. And the key man, who had a great influence in my life, was Harris Pryor. Harris I did not know at that time. The Herdles had been very active. Of course, Mr. Herdle had been the first director of the museum, and I never knew him. He had died. And Gertrude Herdle Moore was—succeeded her father as director, and her sister, Isabel Herdle, was curator. And I did get to know them later. But when Gertrude retired, they were looking for a new director, apparently. And Harris got the job.

Now, at that time, I was a director—on the board of directors—of the American Federation of Arts in New York. Harris had been director of the American Federation of Arts. And I guess when he got to Rochester and knew that I was somewhat active in the New York scene, and knew a lot of the people, he thought possibly of—"Here is a man that maybe I can interest in the Memorial Art Gallery."

And he invited me to serve on the art committee of the Memorial Art Gallery, and I went on the art committee. And I think it has been one of the most interesting committees that I have ever served on. Maury Forman , whose family—and he was president of the Forman Department Store—was a marvelous chairman, a real gentleman with a knowledge of art. And he has given to the Memorial Art Gallery. And we had very interesting people on the committee.

But, in addition to that, it was—we sat there, and we had to pass on what was being offered to the art gallery, either for purchase or in the way of gift. And I suppose, selfishly, I was always learning. And that intrigued me.

ROBERT BROWN: What was Harris Pryor like to work with?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Well, Harris was a remarkable person. And it was a tragedy that he died of cancer. He had a very soft, mild manner, but a very interesting background. He had been in the Navy—I believe it was the Navy—in service in World War II, and I think had been in business, and somehow had gotten into the art field. So he had an interesting background, a varied background.

And I think his strong factor—he was so good with people, he seemed to know what to do at the right time, the tactful thing to do, in a very humble way. And I think that—at least that got across to me, and I'm sure got across to others, because he had a host of friends in the art world.

ROBERT BROWN: What was his approach when you first got on to the art committee? Was there any direction that the gallery was going to take? Because, after all, it had been in the Herdle family, essentially, or at least under their direction, for 40 or so years at that point.

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Well, one wonders what the direction ever has been, or what it even is now. That is something I am searching—I have been searching for in my relation to the gallery. Maybe that's unfair.

When Harris came to the gallery, the gallery had a drive for a new addition. And he saw that through. And that was, I think, in 1968 or 1969, that that was open. Directions are very hard, I think, for a gallery such as the Memorial Art Gallery, because it is a general museum, and with certain limited funds.

The Herdles had certainly bought very well, and with very, very limited funds. And the Medieval collection is exceptional for a gallery its size. We are, right now, weak on contemporary art and in many areas, as galleries comparable to. We would like, of course, to fill all these directions. And I think right now the gallery has a very good direction in making plans to expand, to expand into Cutler Union, which will give us more exhibition space, and to have galleries for contemporary art, to have a gallery just for prints. And, of course, we need more endowment funds to add this.

ROBERT BROWN: Were you particularly—do you recall being particularly involved in any major purchases, or gifts coming to the gallery?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Well—

ROBERT BROWN: I know you have given things from your own collection.

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Myself.

ROBERT BROWN: But with Harris Pryor, for example, were there any highlights in—

CHARLES R. PENNEY: I, of course, would sit on the art committee, and we would pass on things to be recommended to the board. Then, later, they invited me to be on the board. And I sat on the board and passed those.

And I am certainly familiar—I wouldn't say that I was a key person, but I am familiar with the discussion about certain gifts that the women's council would give, and it's a very dynamic group of ladies, and they raised money and always make a marvelous gift. They've just given a marvelous large Helen Frankenthaler oil this year. But I wouldn't say that—I am just aware of this, you know.

ROBERT BROWN: So, Harris Pryor, was he someone you got to know fairly closely?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Yes, yes, yes.

ROBERT BROWN: How would you characterize him? You mentioned him being soft spoken, and he had—

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Well, as I say, he was a man—

ROBERT BROWN: If he hadn't died, did he have plans he would talk about for the long future?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: I never got involved in them. I knew what his interests were, and I was intrigued by his interest in primitive tribal art. I think he built that up a lot. And on several occasions I would come, and he would have a few pieces in his office, or somebody was there, and he would motion me to come in and he would want me to see this, or to meet the person that was offering the piece to the gallery.

ROBERT BROWN: But, at any rate, you eventually then swung toward Memorial Art Gallery. I mean—

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Yes.

ROBERT BROWN:—it's become more and more of interest to you.

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Yes, yes.

ROBERT BROWN: It had—

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Yes, I have a very strong commitment to the Memorial Art Gallery. I think it's a very fine gallery, exceptional, and really sort of unsung.

I think a few years ago, when selections from the gallery's collection went down to New York and was exhibited at a benefit at Willisty's [ph] Gallery and was there for several weeks, people in the New York area, I think, were surprised. It's—I don't know whether you'd use the word a "sleeper," in a way.

ROBERT BROWN: You've said earlier the Herdles had bought wisely.

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Yes, yes, very wisely. Yes, yes.

ROBERT BROWN: The new addition, you've seen how it's worked or not worked now for 10 or 12 years. Is it how—how is it? What are its limitations? What did it give the gallery that it didn't have before, apart from a lot more square footage?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Right. Well, it gave the gallery more office space. I mean, the staff had more office space, and the education department had more office space. There is an auditorium which it has, and of course a gallery such as that needs badly. It gave additional exhibition galleries.

But we still need more exhibition galleries. And we need more office space. I mean, things have just grown. The collection has grown, the staff has grown. We need a place for a creative workshop, which is rented from the Eastman School, which has occupied Cutler Union. And hopefully these things will be resolved, if we can—

ROBERT BROWN: Cutler Union is the big building adjacent—

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Right, yes.

ROBERT BROWN: How does the—in your experience, does the art gallery fit into the Rochester community?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Very well—

ROBERT BROWN: Both the cultural community and the general population.

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Oh, it's a key in the whole scene. Rochester, to me, is a unique community. That's why I now have this apartment here, and spend a good part of each week here. And I am a member of many other of the art and cultural institutions here.

I have seen in the press, Rochester referred to as Museum City. I have also seen it referred to as Photo City, or Flower City. But if you go and list some of the marvelous institutions—just a block away, the Margaret Woodbury Strong Museum will be opening soon. Of course, the Museum and Science Center is a great institution. The George Eastman House of International Photography is, of course, world—widely known. The Rochester Historical Society. The Genesee Country Museum. Probably left some other things out.

ROBERT BROWN: But you find—

CHARLES R. PENNEY: The Landmark Society for Historic Preservation. And the museum is all tied in, and works very closely with these other museums, yes.

ROBERT BROWN: If you were to compare it, say, to Buffalo, which is a much larger, or somewhat larger city—

CHARLES R. PENNEY: I think it's much more actively, culturally. Buffalo, where I was born—and I'm a life member of the Albright—Knox Art Gallery and the Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society and the Buffalo Museum of Science, those are fine institutions. But I think that there are more in Rochester.

The citizens of Rochester tend to be more white collar. The industry is such that it's a more technical industry, whereas Buffalo has had heavy industry. It's had heavy manufacturing, it's had Bethlehem steel, a lot of steel mills. And recently, Buffalo has had a terrible economic decline. Most headquarters have moved away from the area. It has just been announced in the last few weeks that the largest unemployment in the state, 11.3 or 11.4, it's rather sad—

ROBERT BROWN: It's not the kind of—it was never the kind of community where a very large percentage of the population would be at all involved in any of the cultural institutions.

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Well, I wonder if this isn't true of almost any city, though. Yes, it's very—

ROBERT BROWN: Rochester would have a higher percentage, because of the blue collar employment, the—

CHARLES R. PENNEY: The white collar.

ROBERT BROWN: The white collar, white collar.

CHARLES R. PENNEY: I would say so, yes. I say that—I would say so. I would say so. But I think in any city it's always a small nucleus that are working for the culture, whether it be—and I forgot to mention in Rochester the Geva Theater, and they're trying very hard to get a new theater built in the new cultural area.

That's another thing I failed to mention. The citizens of Rochester are building around the Eastman Theater, hopefully, a cultural district, which will be remarkable. And the Eastman School of Music has made the decision to stay in the downtown area and not move out to the river area—the river campus of the University of Rochester.

ROBERT BROWN: Which is somewhat south of the downtown.

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Right.

ROBERT BROWN: It would further dissipate things.

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Right.

ROBERT BROWN: Perhaps we could go back now a bit and talk about some individual pieces that you consider to have been highlights of your collecting. And then, perhaps after that, talk about various areas where you have collected quite broadly.

You had told me earlier that you felt particularly important to your collection was work by David Smith. And when did you—how did you come about that? Through him, or—

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Well, David Smith is a remarkable American sculptor. And years ago, when I was buying quite actively for the foundation and for the collection, I would be in New York, going around to the galleries.

And the Marlborough Gallery at that time was headed up by a man—by Stephen Weil. Stephen Weil has an interesting background, rather similar to mine. He is a lawyer. And at that time, as I say, he had been director of the Marlborough. And then later he was an administrative officer for the Whitney Museum. And now he is the number two man at the Hirshhorn Museum, and has written a book on the legal aspects of the art world.

Anyway, Stephen, at the Marlborough, took me down into one of the storage areas and showed me these David Smith sculptures. Well, previous to that time, I had been down to a Carnegie International show, where I bought my William Wiley painting—this is in Pittsburgh. And I was—didn't know as much then as I do now—not that I know that much now—but they had in that Carnegie International a one—man show of the cubi's of David Smith. And I didn't really pay much attention. I wish I had. At that time I think, monetarily, they were selling for $20,000 to $40,000 to $60,000, which was a lot of money to me then—it is now. But when you consider what the prices of his—those works would be now—

ROBERT BROWN: This was in the early 1960s, mid—1960s?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Yes. It might possibly have been in the late 1960s. But anyway, I didn't do anything.

So, Stephen really sort of pushed me. He said, "I really think you should get one of these Smiths." Now, what I have is a *Big Diamond*. It's—the date, I believe, is in the 1950s. It's one of his earlier painted pieces. And I did buy that for the foundation. I think it cost about $8,500 at that time. It is worth much more now. And that was part of the gift that came from my foundation to the Memorial Art Gallery.

Then, like all these things, I try and get drawings for the work, if they are available. I had never seen a David Smith drawing. But one day, when I was in Marlborough, I asked one of the dealers there if they had a drawing for it. And he said, "No, but we have another drawing, and would you be interested in that?" So I bought another David Smith drawing, which I am very happy to have in the collection.

But as the years went by—and just recently, within the last year—the David Smith estate—David Smith, of course, is dead now; he died in an automobile accident—but the estate is now handled by Nurdlers [ph]. And the Whitney Museum had a show of David Smith drawings. And I can't remember the curator who curated the show, but he has written a book, which I have in my library, on drawings. And I walked into that drawing show—it was on the third or the fourth floor of the Whitney—and I just looked across the room, and I saw—I said, "My gosh,

that must be a drawing for *Big Diamond*." Well, sure enough, it was.

So, I came back to the Memorial Art Gallery, and said, "Gee, there is a drawing for *Big Diamond* in New York." Well, then we inquired about that. First we were told that that was available and could be purchased. Then we were told it wasn't available. Well, it wasn't available. But later on, Nurdlers had a drawing show, and there was a drawing there. And then the Memorial Art Gallery did acquire a drawing, and that drawing has recently come to Rochester.

ROBERT BROWN: It was a drawing for *Big Diamond*?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: For *Big Diamond*, yes, yes. And in Gallery Notes several months ago, *Big Diamond* was pictured, and alongside it was pictured the drawing, yes.

ROBERT BROWN: Was it—did something attract you to David Smith after Stephen Weil told you you should buy it?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Well, I was becoming interested—

ROBERT BROWN: [Inaudible] aspects?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: I was becoming interested in sculpture. And it's just like—in that same room there were some early Beverley Pepper sculptures, and I really wish I had bought one. These were quite small. Because, later, I did buy Beverley Pepper, and I did buy two pieces, one large one—which I have just recently given to Rochester—and one smaller one, that I have in my collection. But they were for one period. And also, I bought a Beverley Pepper drawing of that.

But I was becoming, I think, just generally interested in sculpture, which I hadn't really acquired for the collection, or the foundation at an earlier time. I was more involved in prints, watercolors, and paintings.

ROBERT BROWN: What do you suppose there was in sculpture that was attracting you?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: It's a three—dimensional. And being able to move them, being able to touch them, and to see how light falls on them, particularly if they're outdoors.

ROBERT BROWN: Well, being outdoors—having them outdoors was very attractive to you, was it?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Oh, very much so.

ROBERT BROWN: Did you take a great deal of care with them—

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Oh, yes.

ROBERT BROWN:—where they were, and—

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Yes. My interest in outdoor sculpture, of course, is very keen. One time, many years ago—this must have been in the early 1960s, when I was quite a new member of the American Federation of Arts, they had an airlift down to Texas. And we were in one of the Texas cities—I'm not sure whether it was Houston or Dallas—and there was a collector by the name of Weiner, Ted Weiner.

And after a theater performance in a small theater that had been designed by Frank Lloyd Wright, we were bussed over to the Weiner home. And it was then dark. And we had dessert and coffee. And I can remember driving up, and there was a sign on the grass saying, "Outdoor lighting done by" so—and—so, some firm. And I thought how interesting, because I had sort of played around with outdoor lighting at my home, which overlooked the lake, Lake Ontario.

Well, this was a beautiful outdoor sculpture court. And apparently, the Weiners were affluent, and they had a staff of gardeners. But Mr. Weiner himself worked out in the garden, along with the gardeners. Positioning the sculpture and the flowers, the planting, the shrubs, the lighting around it, were very important.

So, that really got my interest going. And I thought, "Gee, that would be great to do." And the interesting thing of it is that Lynn Chadwick's *Black Beast*, which was in the Weiner collection, later I acquired. The Weiners, I think, left Texas and I understand it moved to the California area. And several of these things came up for sale. So, I had that in my collection, and I have recently given that to the Memorial Art Gallery. It's now in the sculpture court of the Memorial Art Gallery.

ROBERT BROWN: But now, what did you do, then, in Olcott at your place? Did you begin to light things for night viewing, and—

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Well, I did a number of things. I did all the landscaping myself, planting hundreds of shrubs. And with another man, we built a large outdoor patio. And I had pedestals and smaller sculptures on the pedestals. This was before there was too much danger of vandalism, or anything being carried away.

Then it's very interesting. When I acquired Henry Moore's two upright motifs, one of them was on loan here in Rochester, at the Memorial Art Gallery. And it was coming to my home. And Harris Pryor said to me, "Well, where are you going to display it at your home?" I said, "I'm going to put it out on the lawn." And I was really naive.

And he said, "Well, have you thought of its weight on the grass?" And I hadn't given this any thought—because they are terribly heavy. And he said, "Well, it will sink, or it will tilt on the grass." So, that led to quite a complicated study of sinking a concrete pad into the ground, and where was the frost line. And I called my plumber and a lot of people, and nobody could agree on the frost line.

So, my carpenter, who is an elderly senior citizen man—who is an alcoholic, but only drinks coffee—came down and started to dig this platform. And we—it was about six feet by maybe four feet, I'm not quite sure of the dimensions, and we got down until we hit the water table. And then it was as far as we could go, and then the concrete truck came in and poured concrete. So, those two upright motifs—Moore's *Number Five* and *Number Eight*—were placed on that.

And the same thing I went through later, when I acquired Beverley Pepper's version called *Ventaglio*, although we didn't sink the pad that deep. But these were all the things that I got into.

But getting back to your question about the outdoors, it was a very interesting thing about the placement, because you have to consider the light, and even in the dark. And it is always changing. And then you have to consider the foliage of the trees, and the background for it. It's a real challenge, the outdoor placement of sculpture, or indoor placement.

ROBERT BROWN: Did you consider winter, as well as summer, too, the angle of light?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Yes. And then, of course, in the winter, living in the snow belt, it was very interesting to see the snow form around a sculpture, and on top of it. And very beautiful in winter, entirely different.

ROBERT BROWN: You spent a lot of time, in Olcott, then. Would people come out and visit quite a bit?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Well, at that time, they did. The Cleveland Museum asked if they could come. And I helped organize a weekend trip, and we synchronized a—saw things in Buffalo, they came out to my house, I think, on Sunday. And we had a brunch at the house. And then the print club from the Memorial Art Gallery of Rochester, at a later date, also brought a bus.

And—

ROBERT BROWN: You were pretty pleased with the result in the end, were you?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Oh, yes, yes.

ROBERT BROWN: It worked out very well.

CHARLES R. PENNEY: It worked out very well.

ROBERT BROWN: Now, have you had a hand in the sculpture court at Memorial Art Gallery in Rochester?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: No—

ROBERT BROWN: [Inaudible.], something like that, I guess.

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Well, they have a nice court. I think plans are to expand that court when we go into Cutler Union, yes.

ROBERT BROWN: And I suppose you will—you should have a role in that, shouldn't you?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Well, it would—

ROBERT BROWN: Because of your experience.

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Well, it would be nice.

ROBERT BROWN: Well, the David Smith thing was one we first talked about. You were—also mentioned Henry

Moore. How did you come to know about those? I know you've been to his place, as well, haven't you?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Well—

ROBERT BROWN: How did that come about?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: In my art collecting, I have had certain dreams come true. And I always thought dreaming and daring to dream was a lot of poppycock.

Going back to my years when I was in college, I was in college at Yale University in New Haven. And I would go into New York, and I can still visualize going up those stairs at the Museum of Modern Art. And I never thought—never had an inkling of a thought—that I would ever have a Calder mobile, or I would have an Oskar Schlemmer. And if you still go up those stairs—I think it's called the *Lobster and the Trap*, or something like that—it's hanging. I think it's between the second and third floors, as you round those stairs. And then, generally, they have had this Schlemmer painting of the ballet dancers at the head there.

Well, I have been a lucky guy, because I have owned four Alexander Calders. And I also have an Oskar Schlemmer wall relief. Well, going on from that—that's just two examples of dreaming.

ROBERT BROWN: A dream then, even?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Well, I never thought that I would ever even have an art collection, but I liked those two. And—but what I really sort of did hope for, or did dream about in my collecting, and thought would never be possible, was I thought, "Wouldn't it be great," when I was in the early stages of collecting, "to have a sculpture piece of Henry Moore?" And I thought in terms of the two—chunk linear woman, or the three—chunk outdoors. And also, to have a Picasso.

Well, getting to the Henry Moore first, there was a dealer in Buffalo who is now in New York—and we have become very good friends—by the name of Jim Goodman. And I mentioned this to Jim. And one day he was down in New York. I was not down there, I was not with him, but he came back, and he gave me a call on the phone. And he said, "Charlie, I have just seen a Henry Moore. It's a little bit different than what you have imagined, but I think that you should give it some consideration. And I would be glad to go down to New York and go with you to look at it. It's at Nurdley's [ph] Gallery."

Well, Nurdley's, at that time, was on 57th Street. And so, we did meet in New York, and they had a little sculpture court on the second floor. And here were two of the upright motifs. Well, I had never seen an upright motif. And it was different from the linear things that I think most people think of Moore as. And I can remember right now Jim coming over and saying in my ear, "You know, the two of them look awfully good together." And I thought, "Oh, my gosh, how can I ever swing two of them?"

But, as it happened, I was able to do this. My payments were spread over a period of time. So, into the collection came his upright motif *Number Five* and N*umber Eight*. And, as part of that whole series of the upright motif, probably the most important is the *Glenkiln Cross*. There is one in the Hirshhorn collection, and there is one pictured so frequently on a moor in Scotland that a collector has. Well, then—

ROBERT BROWN: Very pleased with those, were you?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Oh, yes. They were beautiful pieces, and they build up a patina, being outdoors. But when I sold the house, they were just too big. I mean, they were outdoor pieces. And so I worked out a lateral swap. And I still have smaller Henry Moores in the collection, but they're gone.

ROBERT BROWN: And then you—did this lead to you eventually going to see Moore?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Yes. Well, I had always—well, I had met Moore—living near Toronto, and being a member of the art gallery of Ontario in Toronto, Moore came to Toronto. The Zacks were an amazing couple. She is still alive, and I am very sorry that I never met him. I talked to him once on the phone. But they had a large collection in Toronto.

ROBERT BROWN: Her name was what?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Zacks. [Ayala Zacks.]

ROBERT BROWN: The first name?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Well, I can't remember the first name.

ROBERT BROWN: They got Moore to come to Toronto?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Well, in their collecting—and they have a huge art collection—they had met Moore. And they had Moore in their collection. And it was through him that—yes, he did get Moore interested in the Art Gallery of Ontario.

Now, the story that I had heard was that after World War II, Moore was receptive to this idea, because so many Americans were affluent, and there were a lot of Moore sculpture pieces in American collections. And this was a country other than America. So, what has resulted in Toronto is that there is this Moore center. It is primarily the plastic fiberglass molds for the sculpture pieces, but there are a few pieces there.

But going back, when they dedicated the cornerstone, I went to the reception and Moore was there. And I stood in line and met him. And then I thought, "Gee, it would be great to go to his studio in England." And many people that I knew in Cleveland had visited his studio. And I thought, "Well, gee, it would be nice if I could"—

(End of tape 2, side A.)

CHARLES R. PENNEY: It would be nice if I could do this. So through, again, Jim Goodman in New York, who had a contact with a dealer in London, I went out to his studio, and spent the afternoon out there. And it was a very rewarding experience.

ROBERT BROWN: Was it? What happened, do you recall?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Well, I went out with a girl who was originally from Buffalo, but I didn't know her in Buffalo, a girl by the name of Sandy Feldman, who is—does the research work for Hirschl & Adler, which is a gallery in New York, and then with this dealer, who drove us out at a fast clip in his very elegant sports car. And we were told to arrive. And Moore has this secretary that, you know, had arranged it.

And Moore was down in one of his studios. And we went just briefly into the house. Mrs. Moore is very interested in cactuses and cacti plants, and we saw those. And then you walk down the grounds, and there are pieces on the grounds. And we went into a studio where he was sort of running around, supervising this large rosewood carving—it reminded me of an earlier piece—of a woman with the big holes through the body section. And there were two young men working on this.

Now, this—these two young men were his apprentices. He has always had, I think, one apprentice. But apparently there were two now. One was a British boy, and I think the other was either French or Belgian. And they were carving this rosewood sculpture piece from a small maquette that was sort of placed near it. Sandy Feldman asked if she could have some chips from the rosewood, and Mr. Moore said, sure, that was fine. And I have some chips from that rosewood.

But in that particular studio, off to one side, there was one room. And in that room he had some beautiful marble pieces. So he apparently had gone back to marble. And these were going into a show later on that year. They were gorgeous pieces. And I hadn't seen his marble carving since—there had been a show in New York of the marbles over at Nurdlers. And at the same time, I think his castings, his bronze castings, were on exhibition at Marlborough, across the street on 57th Street.

Well, then, from there, we went to some of his smaller studios, where he has lots of little pieces of rocks and bones, and you've probably seen pictures of those in the books, there are so many books on Henry Moore. And then that elephant skull—and he has done sculptures of that, and I think he's done prints—

ROBERT BROWN: Did he go with you? Was he—

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Yes, he was there. And I—

ROBERT BROWN: Was he very patient, even interested in your interest?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Well, he seemed to be. I had the sense that he was restless. But this is another aspect that fascinates me about men of this age. He had just reached age 80. This was, I think, 2 years ago. I think he is now 82, or maybe going on 83. And he was very restless, jumping around. It seemed like—whether it was nerves, or whether it was just that he had so much to accomplish.

And I said to our dealer friend in London, I said, "He seemed awfully nervous." And he said, "Oh, no, he is—quite to the contrary. He was more calm and relaxed today than I have seen him before." This dealer from London had brought out a—it was either a print or a drawing for Mr. Moore to sign, which he, of course, did sign. And he was very willing to sit there, and I took a number of pictures, and Sandy took pictures.

Then, he went off someplace and then the three of us went through another studio where he does all his prints. And we saw this print studio.

ROBERT BROWN: Was that—you've mentioned it earlier. Were you disturbed when you saw assistants doing the rosewood carving? You mentioned this in conjunction with other sculptors, as well, where you know it's sort of a team that works on certain—

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Well, I think so many of the masters have done this. I—

ROBERT BROWN: Does this bother you, as a collector?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Well, we were discussing that earlier today. It's just a question of—like if somebody is doing work in wood, and he has an assistant, who do you attribute the credit to? Do you attribute it to the master or to the assistant?

And I think Rodin, if I remember correctly, had lots of assistants, and so many sculptors do. I mean, those large metal sculptures that Louise Nevelson has done, now—it's sort of like a print maker, whether the print maker actually pulled the print from the press, or he just supervised the thing.

It doesn't bother me at all. And I think it's a marvelous opportunity for a young man. I have known one person who was an assistant to Henry Moore. And then, of course, I have read of others. I think Lynn Chadwick was an assistant. And wasn't Anthony Carroll [ph] an assistant? And people that have gone on, but they call themselves the next generation of sculptors after Henry Moore. Yes.

ROBERT BROWN: Did you get to meet some—Lynn Chadwick?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: I have never met Lynn Chadwick. He has been in this country, and I think he has been at Yale. I had missed him. I had—

ROBERT BROWN: What about Calder? Now you say you have—you had or have four or five things by him.

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Yes.

ROBERT BROWN: Is he someone you ever went to see, or—

CHARLES R. PENNEY: I have met Sandy Calder, yes, yes. I have. I never have visited his studio. He had a studio in Connecticut, outside of New York.

ROBERT BROWN: Yes.

CHARLES R. PENNEY: And then, of course, he had in France. And, as I understand it, his daughter is married to Jo Davidson's son, and they live in this French area, and I think run a pension, where I guess you could stay.

ROBERT BROWN: But you simply met him at a gallery or something.

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Yes, I—well, I met him at an opening at the Whitney Museum. Then I went to a very interesting presentation—or dedication, I should say—in Washington. The—Mr. and Mrs. Cafritz [ph]—Mr. Cafritz is dead, but she is alive, I believe, still, Gwendolyn Cafritz, and she is sort of a “Pearl Mester”, or was sort of the same kind of thing, in Washington. This is a number of years ago.

And the Cafritz Foundation gave to Washington, as you may know, a large [Inaudible.], and it is in that—near that Air and Space Museum, I think. Anyway, I was invited there, and it was in the afternoon. It was, I think, in the summer. And I went down to Washington, because I'm sort of interested in these things. And they had chairs set up on sort of a hill, overlooking this sculpture piece. And Mrs. Cafritz came in a Rolls Royce with a chauffeur, and Dillon Ripley was there. And there was a small group of people sitting up on a podium, which included Mr. Calder.

And Mr. Ripley introduced Mrs. Cafritz, and then introduced Sandy Calder. And he got up, and I don't think he said anything except that somebody asked him, "Well, what are you going to call this piece?" And then he stood up again and he blurted out, "*Gwenfritz*," Gwen for Gwendolyn, and Fritz, for Cafritz. And I don't know what it's referred to in Washington. It may be just untitled.

ROBERT BROWN: That's funny.

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Yes, yes.

ROBERT BROWN: Tongue in cheek.

CHARLES R. PENNEY: And then there was a bit of a reception afterwards, wine or something like that, yes.

ROBERT BROWN: You said that, you bought a William Wiley. You bought him when he was—fairly early.

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Yes.

ROBERT BROWN: What in his work struck you?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Well, actually, I didn't know who William Wiley was.

ROBERT BROWN: Oh.

CHARLES R. PENNEY: I mean, he was sort of unknown. This, again, goes back to the Carnegie International in Pittsburgh. And I flew down there with Jim and Merlie Goodman, and we were going around, and a lot of things had been sold. I mentioned the David Smith, of course, one—man show there. And I liked this. It's called *Flag Song*. It's a large oil, and it was rather reasonable.

And so, I bought it, not realizing—then I would read more about William Wiley—until—this goes back a number of years ago—Tom Thridenheim [ph], who has had an interesting background, and he comes from a Buffalo family, was back in the western New York area with his wife, who is a very interesting person, who is an architectural historian. And he was just on his way to become director of the Baltimore Art Museum. But before that, he had been out at the West Coast at UCLA, working with—I believe it's Peters Sells [ph] who is out there. And he had been asked to accompany a show of abstract and contemporary art to the Slavic countries in Central Europe, which he had done.

Well, anyway, that's sort of getting away from William Wiley. But he saw the William Wiley in my home, and said, "Oh, we are organizing a Wiley show on the West Coast. It's going to travel. Would you please loan that to us? And there is a very good person on our staff by the name of Brenda Richardson [ph], who is organizing this."

Well, I was a little bit concerned about this, because there is a very heavy pigment on this. It sticks out maybe about an inch, about—around where the heart is. And I thought, "Oh, gosh, this probably will be damaged, and will chip off, and all that." But Tom reassured me that this Brenda Richardson was very reliable, and it was going to be a good show. Well, I—with trepidation, I said, "All right."

Well, then I had to get the painting to Buffalo to be photographed. I did not have a color print. But the word came back from the West Coast that Mr. Wiley considered this one of his early key paintings, and wanted to produce it in—reproduce it in the catalog in color. Well, of course, I was receptive to that. And I did get it to Buffalo, and it was photographed, and it was in the catalog, and then got it back.

And it did travel, and traveled a great deal of time, and came back in very good condition. I was very lucky.

ROBERT BROWN: Is that a painting that you particularly like?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Oh, yes, I like it very much. It's been—it hangs in my office in Lockport, yes.

ROBERT BROWN: Struck—

CHARLES R. PENNEY: But, of course, he has gone on to do all this funk art, and I'm not sure I understand that. But it is a key painting in his development, as a younger man.

ROBERT BROWN: And you mentioned Picasso as one you wanted to get. What did you get, finally, of—

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Well, that was more difficult. I mean, even in those days, Picassos were very expensive. And I didn't realize that Picasso had done sculpture pieces.

But I remember again in New York I was there one day with Jim Goodman, and he said, "Let's go over to the Saidenberg Gallery. And Saidenberg, at that time, was Picasso's dealer in America. And we did go over. And I looked at some of these paintings. But they were very—to me, they were expensive. I mean, they were in the 6 figures, over $100,000. And that's a lot of money. It's a lot of money now.

And so, time dragged on. And then one day Jim says, "Well, I have a little Picasso, and it's a drawing. It's a 1923 cubist drawing." And I thought, well, okay. I mean, you'd like to have a nice big one, but you just can't swing this financially. And it is a good Picasso drawing. And it's in—it's listed in Zervo's, which is the catalog, the French catalog of all the Picasso things.

So, I have acquired it. And the funny thing is that, ever since then, Jim Goodman has been trying to get it back from me, and I won't part with it. But it does satisfy a need.

The other thing is that I also have bought a very small Picasso sculpture. It is a little bull, a little bronze bull, and

it can't be more than about five or six inches long and about three or four inches high. But, again, the Picasso sculpture pieces are very, very expensive. But in a smaller way—but I think in a very good way, a quality way, which I always am looking for—it's the best I can do for representation of this man.

ROBERT BROWN: Quality is always something you try to maintain.

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Very much so.

ROBERT BROWN: It's not [Inaudible] representation, yes.

CHARLES R. PENNEY: I have often thought when the load gets very heavy, and going through cataloging, and worrying about risks, and getting insurance for the collection, that maybe the solution to the whole thing is to part with everything, to sell it either by sale—the collection—or by auction, and just have one major piece, like a major Picasso. And then, when you go away or whatever you're going to do, just put it in a bank vault. I haven't done that.

ROBERT BROWN: Now, you have, over the years, worked fairly closely with various other dealers, and known other collectors. You mentioned Jim Goodman repeatedly. You first knew him when he was starting out with his wife in Buffalo.

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Right.

ROBERT BROWN: Now he's in New York.

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Right.

ROBERT BROWN: Is he someone who still works closely with you, or does he deal privately more than in a gallery, or—

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Well, Jim is a very interesting person, and we are very good friends. He, I would say, would be a dealer's dealer. He does not take on artists, upcoming artists, and give them a show. He will get—and he's into this now—major pieces. Like I will walk in there and there will be a large Barbara Hepworth. Or I walked in there and there was a large DuBuffet, one of those Styrofoam DuBuffets, that kind of thing.

Jim leaves me alone. I say that now, because he would call and suggest this or that in the earlier days. He is very tactful. He handles me very well, and I think I handle him very well, too. We have a very good relationship, because he knows that I am really not buying now, so he doesn't bother me, which I really appreciate. On the other hand, I can go to him and say to him, you know, "I really wish that I had a Joseph Cornell," and he comes up with something like that, a Joseph Cornell, that I can afford.

I have one void, and I have told it to him. I wish I had a good Gonzalez sculpture piece. I don't know, I may never have one, because they're too expensive. He may just come up with one some day. I may just get a phone call 10 years from now, saying, "Gee, I've got a Gonzalez and it's a good price, and it looks good." But that—it's a marvelous relationship.

ROBERT BROWN: He started uneducated in these things and in a small way.

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Yes, in Buffalo.

ROBERT BROWN: And actually built up many—

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Yes.

ROBERT BROWN:—contacts, obviously, to be able to—

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Yes, he has. He is very highly regarded, as I understand it, in New York in the art field. He was in Buffalo for many years. He has thanked me—the timing with him and with myself worked out. He was just starting up. I happened to be his major customer, if you want to put it that way. I was just interested in buying. And he sold me good, quality people, good artists.

ROBERT BROWN: And you've mentioned also, last time we talked a bit, about John Clancy and the Rehn Gallery.

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Rehn.

ROBERT BROWN: Did you—you also, fairly early on, got to start working through Edith Halpert at the Downtown Gallery?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Well, here again, I refer back to Jim Goodman. Jim told me about Edith Halpert. I was interested in John Marin. And I think that Edith Halpert had helped Jim and Merlie Goodman. They liked the Goodmans. She liked the Goodmans very well, and had given them things to sell in their gallery. They started very modestly in their apartment, and then in a very small room in the Parklane Hotel in Buffalo.

And I was interested in John Marin, I liked his watercolors. And they suggested, "Well, go and see Edith Halpert, in New York," so I did, at the Downtown Gallery. And, again, the money, of course, element entered into things. And I bought a watercolor which I still have—and I think it's a good watercolor of his—and she spread me over a period of time. I think this was the very first artwork that I bought—I may be wrong on this, possibly—with Jim Goodman; he spread me over a period of time, but in which she let me pay over a period of time for this watercolor.

ROBERT BROWN: She was very interested that you have it. Did you have a feeling that she got—liked to know her customers?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Well, we hit it off very well. I think that she would like to talk to me. I never bought anything after that from her. There was no reason for that. I would have liked to, had I had the money.

She, at that time, represented the Kuniyoshi [ph] estate. And I do have a Kuniyoshi piece. It's a watercolor on one side, and on the other side a very good drawing. But that I bought from the Goodman Gallery, and I have a feeling that probably they got it from her. But I would have liked—and she also represented Ben Shahn. These were all big artists, but very expensive artists. And so, I guess that was the reason I never bought anything more from her.

But when I would go into New York, I would always stop by and say hello, and I would either mail her the payment on the Marin or took it into her, and she would say, "Well, come on in, I just want to talk to you." And we would talk about her collection. And of course, I knew that she had worked with Mrs. Rockefeller in forming the folk art collection, that she had a large collection of her own somewhere. Maybe—I think she might have lived upstairs in this building that she was then in.

And she was worried—or thinking about where she was going to leave her own collection. And at one time she had said that she was going to leave it to the Corcoran Gallery in Washington. And it came out in the press, and then later on she said no, she had decided against that. She never appreciated what the Metropolitan was doing at that time. The American wing was either non—existent, or very small, and the relationship between the Museum of Modern Art and the Metropolitan, I think, was rather blurred.

As I understand it, MoMA was supposed to keep contemporary art to a certain point. And then after so many years it was supposed to go to the Metropolitan. But I think that fell by the way over the years. I'm a little hazy on what happened there.

ROBERT BROWN: Edith Halpert did not have close relations with The Met or MoMA at that point?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: I don't know what her relation was there. I remember going to an opening at MoMA. I would go to all the openings. I really enjoyed the openings, and I was learning. As the Goodmans have said, you've just got to train your eye. You've just got to see as much as you can. Look, look, look.

And the openings in those days in New York were a lot of fun in the late 1950s and the early 1960s. You could go, and you didn't have to pay for the drinks. I don't mean to sound cheap about this, but now you buy your drinks. And there are certain areas where you can't drink. I mean, you could carry a drink and walk through the gallery, you would walk up and see friends, or whatever, and talk.

But I can remember standing back with her at one of those openings, and looking at an early Frank Stella. It was sort of a pink octagon thing. And we were both sort of laughing at it. And I wish now that I had it in the collection. But it was an early one, I don't think as well developed as some of his later things.

ROBERT BROWN: And she was laughing at it—

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Well, a little bit.

ROBERT BROWN:—[Inaudible] taste?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Well, no. It wasn't her thing, no. No, not a bit, no.

ROBERT BROWN: Would she talk to you a good deal about where you were going, as a collector?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: I don't think that ever came up.

ROBERT BROWN: She would mainly talk to you about her—

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Her things, yes, yes.

ROBERT BROWN: Did you see that she was in a dilemma, as to what she would be doing with her collection?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: I—well, I don't know that it was a dilemma. I think she was concerned, because she had been married to Sam Halpert, who I never met. I don't know what happened there. I think he's been dead a number of years, but I think they were divorced, or they separated. And he is—has been a good artist in his own right. From time to time I see a Sam Halpert painting of some sort. But there were no children, and she was, I think, getting up there. She was in her late sixties or early seventies. And this would naturally be a concern to a person alone at that age.

ROBERT BROWN: But your impression was she had—she wanted—took time to talk with you.

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Yes, yes.

ROBERT BROWN: She was fairly—

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Oh, yes. She was always very friendly. As I say, we hit it off very well.

ROBERT BROWN: And you also got to know, through buying prints, I guess, Sylvan Cole.

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Sylvan Cole. Sylvan Cole, Jr., yes, yes.

ROBERT BROWN: And what was he like?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Sylvan is a remarkable person. I was referred to Sylvan Cole's gallery, which is the Associated American Artists on Fifth Avenue, by the Cleveland Museum. And they thought very highly of him, and for good reason, because Sylvan has been in the business a long time. He came into the business, bought it apparently, and has really made a marvelous thing of it. And I would say in this country he probably knows more about prints than anybody else. And I have bought a lot from him.

And then he has interested me in his new talent show. Every year he will have a new talent show. And I have bought things from there, and some of those artists have really gone on. Of course, as you look back at his catalogs, many of the people in his stable that he had years ago—he was selling prints for $15, $20, or certainly not more than $50, and they're—those prints now are in the 4 or 5 figures, if you can get them. Yes.

ROBERT BROWN: And what was he like to deal with, as a collector? What was his approach, or how—what was your relationship with him?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Well, I would go in there—this is the second location he has been at. But I would always go in, and if he weren't there—he is usually in the back room. I mean, he has a big organization now. But he would always come out, or we would talk, and he'd say, "Now, this is something I want you to look at," and I would look at it. And sometimes I would buy, or think about it.

The person that also has been very helpful there is Mrs. Castellon—who is the widow of Frederico Castellon, who is in my collection—Hilda Castellon, and she has been with him a long time. And we would go around and look at different things together. But the decision has generally been my own.

ROBERT BROWN: So—like the Goodmans. Here they were very low—key and—

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Right. I—and going back on this whole collecting thing, some people say, "Well, this is a collection you inherited," or, "You inherited a basic collection, and you've built on it." This is not so. I do have, I think, three artworks that came from my mother's father, my Grandfather Rand, a few things that came from my mother, who liked art, and was an amateur painter. But the collection has really been built by myself.

And then, secondly, there are dealers that will form collections for you. I have never done that, because I enjoy doing it myself. And I have been told that I have a good eye, and that I can sort of, I don't know, forecast trends. I have never thought of forecasting trends, but I have been in a position where I haven't had all the money in the world to just go out and buy whatever I wanted, but I have had to buy at a lower price, and buy well. And that's what I have tried to do.

ROBERT BROWN: Don't you suppose you would have wanted to form it yourself, anyway, even if you had unlimited means?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: I think so. I enjoy doing this, yes, yes. I enjoy this, and I enjoy the whole chase. I enjoy the

museum scene, I enjoy the dealer scene, and I enjoy the artists. And I try always to have good rapport with all the individuals. In a few cases I have had some bad circumstances. But they have been minor, minor.

ROBERT BROWN: But several collectors you've mentioned to meearlier—Peggy Guggenheim was someone you got to know a bit, or—

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Well, just a bit. I was on the American Federation of Arts tour—I believe I mentioned—to the Byzantium. And we ended up in Italy and in northern Italy, and in Venice. There are, I think, a few pieces of Byzantium in northern Italy. And Peggy Guggenheim entertained our group for cocktails at her piazza. And she was there.

And at that time—this goes back in the 1960s—she was trying to promote a higher quality in glass. And the Murano glass had sort of slipped. And she had interested artists like Miro and Picasso and Cocteau to do glass artworks. Well, I became fascinated by this. They were beautiful pieces. And I bought from her at that time a glass piece. It's a head on a pole by Jacques Cocteau. Friends of mine from Buffalo bought Miro pieces. One couple bought that. Another person bought a series of Picasso pieces, which she has since given to the Albright—Knox Art Gallery. But it was very fine glass.

And at that time I did meet Peggy. And while we were there at the party, we had free run of her palacio. And it was a most interesting place to me, because I had read about her gallery, of course, in New York, and her—how she had supported Jackson Pollock. And I had read also about the moisture in her palacio, and here she had some early Pollocks down in what she called the basement washrooms. I think she did have some washing machines down there. And they were very much warped, the stretches were warped. Now, I suppose wherever those are, they're still there, or back in New York, and—

ROBERT BROWN: What was she like, if you recall?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Well, she was just like a middle—aged club woman. I mean, you read about all these wild tales of her in her younger day, but I mean, she dressed very conservatively, and was a very nice lady to talk to.

And there was a younger man there when I went back, I think several days later, who I guess sort of acted as her appointment man or her secretary, who sort of organized her day for her.

ROBERT BROWN: Now, other collectors in this country, are there any that you are fairly regularly in touch with? Do you find this is of interest to you, to talk with other collectors?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Well, there are a few. One person—and I've told him—who has had an influence, and I don't think he realizes this, is Richard Brown Baker. I had met Dick Baker through a mutual friend in Buffalo, a Dr. J. Benjamin Townsend [ph], Ben Townsend, who is a professor of English at the University of Buffalo. And Ben Townsend was with Dick Baker in World War II together. And Ben really got Dick Baker going on his art collection. And Ben is very much interested in art, and went down to the portrait gallery, took his sabbatical, and helped get that organized with the director, and has an art collection of his own.

And Ben said, "There is somebody in New York that you should meet." Well, this was Dick Baker. And at that time, Baker was living on the west side of New York. He comes from a prominent Providence, Rhode Island family. His father had been a lawyer and a judge. His mother is from a prominent banking firm. But he was doing his artwork on a shoestring, and he had formed a very fine collection. He is about 10 years older than I am. And I asked to come out there. At one time I asked if I could bring my sister and brother—in—law, and he was always very cordial. We would go out, and we would have a drink, and we would sit there, and he would show us the things that he had all around his apartment.

And he has loaned very generously all around the country, if not around the world. And I have learned an awful lot, I think, just by observing what he is doing, because he is buying the sort of avant garde, and he is very tight with his money, which he readily admits. I mean, he still rides a subway, and does all that kind of thing, and goes to Horn & Hardart and buys cheap meals. But he knows, and has a good eye.

And so, so many of these things that he has bought have become very famous. And he has Jackson Pollock that he bought, was written up in the *New Yorker Magazine*. Sidney Janis was representing Pollock, and he said to Janis, "I will buy that, but I want a written guarantee that if the paint falls off this, that I get my money back," and I think he paid, like, $1,800 for it. Well, this was when Pollock was doing his drip thing. Well, of course, the paint didn't drip off, and he didn't get his money back, and it's worth about $1 million, I guess, now.

ROBERT BROWN: Well, what do you and Baker talk about? I mean, what is it he—what are some of the things you've learned from him, would you say?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Well, we actually don't talk too much. I have been on several trips that he has been on, so

—with the American Federation of Arts, or the archives. But he is always asking me what I am buying. Maybe he's trying to pick my brains, and I'm sort of interested in what he is buying.

And I think that, had I not gone back after law school to Buffalo and practiced law, had I maybe stayed in Baltimore after clerking for Judge Coleman for a year, how very different things might have been. I may never have become an art collector. Or if I had been in New York and been collecting art, I probably would have collected the New York art scene, very much like Dick Baker did.

But I was in Buffalo, in upstate, and that's how I pushed ahead with Charles Burchfield. So the Burchfield collection is a very large and important collection. But he was located right here, or rather in New York, in the contemporary art scene. So his collection is very different than mine.

ROBERT BROWN: Yes. And, of course, your whole foundation, much of the thrust there, was toward the rural areas of [Inaudible.].

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Mm—hmm.

[Audio break.]

ROBERT BROWN: Why don't we turn for a moment now from your collecting in prints, sculpture, painting. You have mentioned even beginning with your mother there was this interest in antiques. And I think you have continued this interest to a degree, haven't you, in your own collections?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Yes, yes.

ROBERT BROWN: Have you specialized in any certain things?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Yes, yes, yes.

ROBERT BROWN: What kind of—

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Well, I believe yesterday we talked about the Staffordshire, didn't we, the Staffordshire portrait figures. That is a very large collection now. I don't know whether it's the largest in the country—not that being large is a great thing; I'm going back, like to have quality—there are probably more important ones in England, but that has about 400 or 500 pieces. And I have tried to have a good cross—section there of British royalty, and the different other aspects that were done in the porcelains.

ROBERT BROWN: And then have you done much with glass?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Yes. Glass has been of great interest to me. Historic American glass. I was in the Boston area many years ago and had some free time, and started to collect Liberty Bell. That was a centennial glass. And of course they brought out Liberty Bell again for our last bicentennial. But now that has become very expensive, and you don't really see much of that.

But I have gone into patterned glass, primarily. Not art glass, but primarily patterned glass.

ROBERT BROWN: When you're collecting such things as that, you are not solely interested in the aesthetic, are you? Are you interested partly in the rarity and the historical?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Well, yes. I mean, certain pieces become very hard to get, like in Lincoln Drape, to get a covered compote, so many covers were missing. Goblets—for instance, there is this one centennial pattern—are extremely rare. And every once in a while I will stumble across one or two, or maybe several, and I will get—grab them up.

ROBERT BROWN: But there you're not—when you're buying prints or paintings, you're thinking of quality.

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Yes.

ROBERT BROWN: Are you thinking of the same kind of quality in—let's say in regard to patterned glass, or—

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Well, you have to think, I think, of quality. This brings up duplications. There are a lot of copies. In fact, I have just seen several platters, centennial platters. And I have a feeling that they may be reproduced now.

The quality as to chips, sometimes there will be chips around the top. But sometimes the thing will be so rare, sometimes a thing will be broken and mended. Sometimes in my haste I will break something, but I will mend it because I think it's worthwhile just having as an example, or to use as an example when I'm giving talks.

And I give a number of different kinds of talks. And I've been made an honorary member of the Niagara County Antiques Club, I think, and they're forever asking me to give talks, you know, and it's good to have those things—just for an example.

ROBERT BROWN: Well now, in other areas that you've collected—you've gotten into collecting quilts?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Yes.

ROBERT BROWN: Now, what are your—what's your criteria there, when you're collecting them?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Well, always the quality. The quilting, actually, the quilting sometimes—the colors the area comes from. Cost. Quilts have gone up so much in price. I am really not buying any more quilts. I was lucky in buying quite a few out in Iowa City, in the Amish community there. And then I bought some here in Rochester from a very good quilt dealer. But they've become very expensive. The market has exploded, and there is a greater appreciation of them as a folk art now, and there are traveling exhibits, and that kind of thing.

ROBERT BROWN: Folk art is another area that is—

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Very much so, yes, yes.

ROBERT BROWN: What do you think there is in folk art that appeals to you?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Well, it's probably the primitive. And I think it reveals a lot about the people in an area.

Like, on my travels, if I may be on the Amazon River, and suddenly I'm in some very primitive community, and they're doing a ceremonial dance, and they come up in these gowns—and they are available, I mean, I've bought them for $1 or $2, and it's just incredible, because they're made out of bark cloth and painted with mud colors and ochers, and that kind of thing, and they're really museum pieces, I think. So that I think back in the ceremonies and the kind of things that they reveal.

ROBERT BROWN: And this association, then—in those cases you see them actually being used.

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Yes.

ROBERT BROWN: In the case of the quilts, by the time you see them, you can't meet the people who made them, generally speaking.

CHARLES R. PENNEY: No, they were made by great—great—grandmothers, and they've been in the family in different chests, or used on beds, or whatever.

ROBERT BROWN: What is it about so—called tribal art? You have a good many African and—I don't know about Polynesian, but New Guinea pieces.

CHARLES R. PENNEY: New Guinea pieces, yes.

ROBERT BROWN: What is it there that has attracted you?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Well, I feel like I'm just scratching the surface on this. There is so much research to be done on my part. It—these things stand for different things. Like the tall figure in the corner there, a fertility figure, and I would really like to get into that, and the different beads, and so forth, around the neck.

So that brings up another collection that I have, is a bead collection. I never thought I would be collecting beads. But in New Guinea, there are marvelous beads that they make out of all kinds of things, like boars' tusks and shells and that, and they use them in some of their ceremonies. And that's another fascinating aspect of it.

ROBERT BROWN: You are, in terms of all your collections now, in the midst of a massive effort to catalog.

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Cataloguing, yes, right.

ROBERT BROWN: You had—you kept, I know, quite fine records to begin with.

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Yes.

ROBERT BROWN: But now what is the effort—what are you planning to do? You've done a print catalog.

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Yes.

ROBERT BROWN: And there is, of course, the catalog of the Penney Foundation.

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Yes.

ROBERT BROWN: And what is your attempt now? What are you in the midst of?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: There is also a catalog of my complete Burchfield collection. I think there are 176 Burchfield objects in that. There is a fairly complete catalog of my Gansos, between the print catalog and the catalog that the University of Iowa did.

Well, we have just published the print catalog, as you say. I have been at that almost two years. And there was a cataloger, she measured the prints, and prepared the worksheets. And then the photographer photographed each one. And I worked closely with all of them, and of course, with the printer.

Now we have, at the printer's right now, the drawing catalog. And that should be coming out within the next month. Also about to go is the catalog for the quilts, coverlets, and hooked rugs. And then, before the end of the year, we will have the sculpture catalog and the paintings catalog.

Then there is a man who has lived in New Guinea, who is a professor at Empire State. He's an anthropologist who has been working on my New Guinea collection. I also have acquired some pieces out of his collection. And hopefully there will be a catalog on that. And then the girl who was the cataloger for my drawing collection is very much involved in African art. In fact, she has just been down working in the African Museum in Washington, and she will be doing graduate work out in Indianapolis. And I hope to get together with her on the cataloguing of the African art.

And then, I will go on into cataloguing the glass. For example, dealers are very good to me. They know that I am interested in various fields, and they will propose that my collection acquire some of the things that they have. Like there is a very good Heisey dealer. Heisey was a Depression type glass. There is a good Heisey dealer here in Rochester. I have quite a few Heisey pieces. I don't want to get into great depth with it, because it was a big field. But I'm trying to collect major pieces—like those two bowls on the sideboard are both Heisey punch bowls. But I have to do an inventory, at least, minimum, or a checklist of what I have, before I can go back to her and say, "Okay, I want to channel my direction along this line, and maybe weed out some of the other things."

ROBERT BROWN: Each time you have a catalog, you have the aid then—or try to get the aid of some expert?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: If I can, yes, yes.

ROBERT BROWN: And if you can't, you at least have that catalog, or a person helping you contact leading scholars and send photographs to them, et cetera?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Well, that would be ideal, yes, yes.

ROBERT BROWN: For example, in your paintings catalog you wish to have, you want to have a complete provenance and things of that sort?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: That would be ideal. We need that. And I do a lot of the work, and it's very time consuming. Because, for each work of art, a worksheet is prepared, and you have to give the artist's name, where the artist was born, the date—the year they were born, the date they died, if they're dead. And then, of course, the dimensions in both inches and centimeters of the artwork. And then you make any notations about the conditions of the paper, whether it's a drawing or a print, and where the signature is, the location of that. And it's a very detailed thing.

ROBERT BROWN: Why are you doing this cataloguing? This is extraordinarily thorough for a private collector.

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Well, I feel that it is really sort of a duty that I have to do. For years, I have been collecting. And now this needs documentation. Certain artists are in the collection because they wanted to be included in the collection, and I like their works. And I feel I owe a duty to them, certain things have come my way because they like the Penney collection and they thought it would be a good repository.

Now, the step that really remains to be resolved—and I hope I live long enough to do this—is that after the catalog, then what do you do with these collections? And I have now, in my office, about three different proposals from three different universities. And several other universities that have written me, desiring parts of the collection in certain aspects. And there are several museums, wherever I go.

I don't know what will happen. I'm not going to live forever, and I don't have any family. It would be nice to have this resolved before I die. Whether eventually a lot of it will be sold, or some will be given, I don't know. But I think the thrust now is for documentation, before that decision can be made.

ROBERT BROWN: Have you talked about this with a number of fellow collectors, the problem of what to do?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Well, not really. But I have seen it come up. We were talking about Edith Halpert. And, of course, as I understand it, her collection was auctioned after her death. I have also seen it in regard to Peggy Guggenheim. And when I met her out in Venice before she died, she had told me that it was going to go to the Tate in London. And then, of course, after that she changed and it's now associated with the Guggenheim, which are—who are relatives of hers.

We have all seen the Hirshhorn Museum, and how Nelson Rockefeller would have liked to have had it in New York State. But President Johnson was able to lure it to Washington. And I think, before that, Canada had hoped that it would stay in Canada. It's a very interesting study, to see where collections go.

On the other hand, I have seen, as you have, and so many of us have, collections go to auction houses and just be dispersed. And I have discussed this aspect with, like, antique dealers. And antique dealers will say, "Well, isn't it marvelous that a collection is getting back into the maelstrom again, and it's available, it will be split up, but we can now purchase things like this?"

And then I have thought of people like Colonel and Mrs. Garbisch, their important collection. She was a Chrysler, Walter Chrysler's sister. And they were very well—to—do people and collected very well. Well, they did make some gifts to the National Gallery and to other galleries. I think they have made some gifts even to the university—to our gallery here, the Memorial Art Gallery in Rochester. But at the very end, after they both died, they had that large auction in the last few years, and it was dispersed. And I think I read somewhere that they felt that that was what they wanted. Well, it must have been what they wanted, it was in their will, certainly. Because then individuals or institutions would buy it, if they had the money, and they would appreciate a good bit more.

And this is also a problem for people gifting art to museums. Sure, and I have done this in one instance. I have gifted things and gone back several years later, and that whole gallery is just no longer in existence. The things I gave were not deaccessioned. I even offered to buy them back. But it was mainly a whole staff change with a new director whose interests were entirely different. Or, things may be given to a gallery, they may end up in the basement. You don't know.

ROBERT BROWN: What effect did that have on you? What was your feeling at the time?

(End of tape 2, side B.)

CHARLES R. PENNEY: I felt very badly about it, extremely badly about it. They're still there, and they're listed in the catalog, which was recently published, but I really would like to have them back. But they don't want to give them back, and they don't want to sell them back, so they're there.

ROBERT BROWN: And yet they don't want to display them all right now?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: No, no.

ROBERT BROWN: Well, do you have—certain aspects of your collection do you feel have an integrity, a wholeness about them, that you feel should be kept—they should be, therefore, kept together somewhere?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Yes. I feel very strongly about this. The Charles E. Burchfield collection. This was—this is a major American collection. It was a—started by myself. I never thought—it's another dream—that I would ever have such a large collection. I think it is possibly the largest private collection, if not the largest, even including public institutions. I was told a number of years ago by Joseph Turvado [ph], who is the assistant director of the Munson Williams Proctor in Utica, that it was larger than what they had, and they certainly have a large holding. And he considered it the largest one.

Well, it's not only large. It's quality, and it's in—depth. It's a study collection, because I started with the drawings and then from the drawings went on to the paintings, then went to the prints. Then—the paintings? I mean watercolors. Then went into oil paintings, and I even had doodles and wallpaper in that. And I think that there is a certain art there. Now, the—in assembling a collection like that. And ideally, it would be wonderful to have that all kept together. Itmay be impossible. Several institutions have approached me about using it as a core for an American studies area. And I am working right now on that disposition. I may just decide it's impossible, eventually, and maybe sell parts of it, or give parts. I don't know.

ROBERT BROWN: Well, would you be inclined—say in the case of Burchfield—to keep it in the region with which he—in which he lived, up here in New York?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Well, that's a very interesting subject. Many people say, "Oh, wouldn't it be too bad if it were to leave the region?" I don't exactly feel that way. And I think what really made me sort of change my thought about that was a few years ago a man down in—I think it's Greenfield—North Carolina bought an

Andrew Wyeth collection. And it is—I think it's a little bit—the publicity was wrong. They first said he had given it to that museum, but I believe that he still maintains it. But it's down there. So, Andrew Wyeth, of course, is from Pennsylvania. And I don't know that he has ever worked down there. But at least it was located in one place.

Now, I try and think of other collections where you might go. Well, look at—I, years ago, got very upset about Kandinsky, because the Guggenheim in New York had a lot of Kandinsky, and then they deaccessioned. But Kandinsky was certainly over in Germany at Die Blaue Reiter, and so forth. But you would have to come to New York to do it.

I really don't feel that it's essential that—getting back to Charles Burchfield—that the collection be kept in the upstate New York. It would be nice. But if it were located in Houston, Texas, or San Francisco, were it kept together, that would be nice.

ROBERT BROWN: Now your catalogued collection, you respect very much documentation.

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Right.

ROBERT BROWN: So possibly in the disposition of the collection, you would want it to be in a place where it could be studied, where there would be facilities?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Yes, yes. I believe very much in documentation. I believe very much in what you are doing, and what the archives is doing. I think this is terribly important, yes.

ROBERT BROWN: So this was a decision—these are decisions you are wrestling with.

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Yes.

ROBERT BROWN: The Burchfield is quite a—fairly complete, fairly in—depth collection.

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Yes.

ROBERT BROWN: Others of yours are not quite so much. And those you might think of having dispersed, right? You would not be quite so concerned.

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Well, it's interesting how museums react to this. Like with the case of Emil Ganso, I started to collect there by acquiring prints, and then drawings, and watercolors. And not too many years ago I bought quite a few oils.

Now, in approaching the University of Iowa, the curator was very interested in doing a show of the prints. And I said, "Well, I also have paintings." Well, the curator didn't even want to look at the paintings. And I offered to give the whole collection. Well, they were only interested in the prints. And then they picked—I still have some prints that they didn't pick.

But they're not at all interested in any of the other things, which rather strikes me as being funny, that they could really have them all there, and it would be sort of a center to study this man's work, and particularly since that man was hired by the University of Iowa art department to teach painting, although he did make a big name for himself in prints.

But I mean, there is just a—that same museum also felt that if I were to offer them the whole Burchfield collection, they wouldn't be interested in the collection at all. The philosophy of the director who was there at that time was that it would be better to split the collection up in smaller museums, where it would be more likely to be on view, and they wouldn't be interested in the whole collection, as such.

ROBERT BROWN: So, from your point of view, there is a peril in all this. I mean, museums are either apt to put things in the cellar, or deaccession, or say they only want certain portions.

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Right.

ROBERT BROWN: Whereas, in many cases, you have collected en bloc. I mean, you've tried to gather representative—

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Right.

ROBERT BROWN:—example of one person's work or, say—

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Yes.

ROBERT BROWN:—quilts or African tribal art, or whatever.

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Of course, let me say this. I serve on the board of managers of the Memorial Art Gallery. And as a trustee, and being rather involved in museum procedures, I can appreciate the museum's standpoint of view. Museums have certain directions, they have budgetary problems, and so forth.

And so, like when I gave my foundation collection, they took it with the right to do whatever they wanted to. And I said, "Well"—that rather scared me at first, and I said, "Well, how do I know that I give it to you today, and tomorrow you may deaccession something or everything?"

And their answer was, "Well, no, we don't think so. But if we do, we will let you know first." And nothing has been deaccessioned, because it has worked out so well. It filled gaps.

Then my second question to them was, "Well, how do I know that the University of Rochester won't go out of business?" Because at that time—and maybe still now—certain universities were folding up. I think in the state SUNY system, certain smaller colleges were being closed up.

And the answer to that was, "Well, if the University of Rochester closes its doors, well then the American economy will really be in bad shape, because it's rather highly endowed, particularly with Eastman Kodak stock that George Eastman gave, and with Xerox stock that the Wilson family have given.

But I can certainly also—as I say, getting back to this—appreciate the museum's standpoint in taking collections. And sometimes they have taken collections with restrictions that have—were a hardship, or the collections have been bad, and it has been embarrassing.

ROBERT BROWN: Are you glad you devoted so much to collecting? You're no longer a lawyer, really, you've entirely devoted yourself to this. Has this been a good thing, do you feel?

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Well, I still am a lawyer, and will always be a lawyer. Yes—

ROBERT BROWN: But I—

CHARLES R. PENNEY: I know—yes. Yes, I think it's a great thing. If I had it to do all over again, I would still do it. I enjoy collecting, apparently have a good eye, and I enjoy putting collections together. And, as I've said earlier, I enjoy everybody I have worked with. I have enjoyed dealers, museum people, professionals, other collectors—

ROBERT BROWN: And—

CHARLES R. PENNEY: And learning, learning. You're always learning.

ROBERT BROWN: You said a ways back that you liked to look for the good things in people and situations. And this has been a good policy for you.

CHARLES R. PENNEY: You mean the good talent, or—

ROBERT BROWN: The good talent, the good—the relations, say, with people you've just mentioned. You've tried to—

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Oh. Oh, yes, yes.

ROBERT BROWN:—find—work with the better aspects of—

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Well, I really—

ROBERT BROWN:—mixed situation.

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Yes, I am very positive, I guess, and I enjoy having a good relationship, particularly with people in the art world. I think this is very important, yes.

ROBERT BROWN: I think another thing that keeps you going so much is you're always wanting to learn, I'm sure.

CHARLES R. PENNEY: Oh, yes, yes. You never can know it all. I mean, at least I don't have that much sense, but I have learned that as long as I've lived. There is always something that you learn. You know, and you never stop learning. You never should. Yes, always taking courses, always trying to see another show.

I still think it's important to see shows. And I think even though I'm not adding in the contemporary scene, that I try and keep familiar with what's going on by going. And I explain, if I'm going into a gallery, to the dealer that I am not adding. Because they think, "Oh, well, here he comes. He's going to buy something." And recently, right

in this city, I saw a very interesting glass show. But I told the dealer, who was doing, I think, a very fine job, that I wasn't adding glass, but I just wanted to learn. And he was very nice. And he said, "Well, I hope you will visit the studio of some of these glass makers."

[End of recording.]