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Oral history interview with Charles Burchfield, 1959 August 19

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 tape-recorded interview with Charles Burchfield on August 19, 1959. The interview took place in West Seneca, NY, and was conducted by John D. Morse for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Interview

[TAPE 1]

JOHN D. MORSE: This is the interview with the American artist, Charles E. Burchfield, at his home at 3574 Clinton Street, West Seneca, New York. The interviewer is John D Morse, and the date is August 19, 1959. First of all, Mr. Burchfield, a minor geographical puzzle -- your letterhead says West Seneca and yet it is well-known that you live in Gardenville – a minor mystery that puzzled me on the way over here.

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: Well, West Seneca is our township which comprises several villages of which Gardenville is one.

JOHN D. MORSE: Oh, I see.

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: And our mailing address is West Seneca, I mean as the township. It is confusing. If I want to get something here by express, it's got to be marked via Ebenezer, which is the village next . . . .

JOHN D. MORSE: Well, that's a little confusing. However, it is very simple, I am happy to tell you, to get here from the airport. We zoomed right down here in no time at all.

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: You came down on 18B?

JOHN D. MORSE: Here we are in the famous and most beautiful studio of yours. How long have you had this studio here on Clinton Street?

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: Since 1926.

JOHN D. MORSE: '26. That's when you moved to Gardenville?

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: I moved in 1925.

JOHN D. MORSE: '25. And built this little studio yourself?

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: No, I had a friend build it who was sort of a jack-of-all-trades. He did carpentry and so on -- odd jobs more than -- I mean he didn't make his living as a carpenter. He just . . . he did odd jobs for people. He did build several houses, but he built this for me.

JOHN D. MORSE: And this is where, then, since 1927, most of your pictures have been painted?

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: Yes.

JOHN D. MORSE: And every time we've seen a crow in one of your paintings, there he is, up there. Is that the one?

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: That's the one, yes.

JOHN D. MORSE: By the stovepipe. Well, one of the . . . . I think in speaking of your work, Mr. Burchfield, we might as well begin at the beginning, and that is your schooling and training. And one of the questions I wanted to ask you is: which of the teachers you had seemed to have influenced you most?

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: Well, I think the greatest inspiration to me was Henry Z. Keller.

JOHN D. MORSE: Oh, in Cleveland, yes.

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: Do you know him?

JOHN D. MORSE: I know of him, yes. I've heard a great deal of him.

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: He died several years ago.

JOHN D. MORSE: Well, a great man and a great teacher, I've always heard.

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: Yes, he was a rare combination. He was not only a good painter, but he was also a good teacher. Quite often it's the . . . .

JOHN D. MORSE: One or the other.

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: One or the other, yes. But what I got most from him, I think, was not only some of the principles of design and composition and out-look on things, but it was his enthusiasm for art. He made you feel as though art was the most important thing in the world, and you couldn't do better than to be an artist if you had the aptitude for it.

JOHN D. MORSE: But, as I recall, you had started on your own painting watercolors when . . . ?

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: Yes. He didn't teach me anything about watercolor, but more just about the principles of art and composition of the pictures, and so forth.

JOHN D. MORSE: Well, that interests me. How did you, if you can recall, when you first went to, when you first attended formal classes, so to speak, how did what you had done before appear to you?

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: Oh, well, it seemed, of course, pretty amateurish. I had . . . I did not do very much before school that was, I would say, too highly original. I copied the work of other artists a good bit except when I was a child, of course. That always . . . like any child.

JOHN D. MORSE: Well, isn't that the usual procedure with most painters, most artists?

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: I imagine so. I even copied Gibson Girls, and I got quite a kick out of that many years later when I got the award of the American Academy. Charles Dana Gibson was the man who made the presentation speech.

JOHN D. MORSE: Wonderful! Did you tell him . . . ?

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: And I told him then that I had copied his work as a boy, and I said probably I'm not very unique; there must have been thousands of boys all over -- people all over the country -- copying his work.

JOHN D. MORSE: But not many of them won the award of the National Academy.

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: But I got quite a kick out of that, that he was the one chosen to make the award to me.

JOHN D. MORSE: Interesting coincidence. Another question I wanted to ask you in this direction of training is: how important do you feel your work with the Birge -- that's the H. M. B-i-r-g-e, isn't it . . .

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: That's right.

JOHN D. MORSE: . . . the wallpaper firm in Buffalo? How . . . did you find the discipline of that job of making wallpaper designs helpful for your later work, do you think?

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: Well, I don't think so. I've thought over that -- you had that question in your letter, and I've thought it over and I still haven't been able to come to any decision as to whether it had any effect on my work or not.

JOHN D. MORSE: Did you enjoy it? Did you enjoy the work?

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: Oh, yes, I enjoyed it very much. I don't know whether you know how I got the job?

JOHN D. MORSE: No. I'd like to know.

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: Well, I got it through the work of the year 1917, which is about the most important of my early years.

JOHN D. MORSE: That was shortly after you were in the Army?

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: No, before.

JOHN D. MORSE: Just before you went into the Army. And where had they . . . where did they see the work?

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: Well, it was during the Depression of . . . the postwar depression, in 1920. I went to

the head of the Cleveland School of Design, Henry Turner Bailey, mainly for help. The incentive I had for trying to get a worthwhile job was that I had fallen in love . . .

JOHN D. MORSE: become engaged.

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: . . . and I had to make a living somehow. I was out of work, and I knew that it would be years before I could hope to make any money out of painting. So he suggested, he said, well, this work of 1917 -- one of its great values to him was its pattern, and he said, "I wonder if you might not be able to design wallpaper." And he said, "If you will let me, I'll send some of these sketches to what I consider the finest wallpaper firm in the country," which was H. M. Birge in Buffalo. He did, and they immediately wrote back and told me to come up for an . . .

JOHN D. MORSE: Interview?

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: . . . interview, all expenses paid, and so forth. And I got the job then. The very first design that I made was made from one of the 1917 water colors adapted over to a scenic wallpaper. This was quite a success in one way. It wasn't what they would call a breadwinner, but it was what . . . they put out papers for prestige, and nothing like this had ever been done before in wallpaper, and I was quite pleased that my very first design was made into wallpaper, and it was received quite well. As I say, it didn't sell -- it didn't make them money, but it did create quite a stir.

JOHN D. MORSE: You must have had the experience several times of walking into a house and seeing your own wallpaper on the wall?

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: Well, yes.

JOHN D. MORSE: I mean your own designed wallpaper. Have you had that experience?

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: Yes.

JOHN D. MORSE: It must be rather pleasing, isn't it?

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: Now I can't remember where it was recently I saw one.

JOHN D. MORSE: Just recently?

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: I saw one of my papers somewhere, but I can't remember where it was.

JOHN D. MORSE: In this neighborhood around Buffalo?

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: No, it was some other . . . probably out in Ohio.

JOHN D. MORSE: Well, that's interesting that the paper was . . . well, that means it's still in production.

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: No, it's not. It means, I think, that they put it on and left it there. I forgot to call your attention to our back hall. There's one of my designs on that back hall and it ought to be replaced and the whole thing done over, but we've left this paper on there purely for sentimental reasons. I'll point it out to you.

JOHN D. MORSE: I'll look forward to seeing it.

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: I did enjoy until . . . as long as I was in command. The head designer at that time was Ed Sides and, as long as he bore the brunt of the administration of the department and so on, it was fine. That left me free; I didn't have to worry about it. I'm not an executive. And he died then in 1927 and, naturally, I was made head of the department. I couldn't refuse. I mean it would be ridiculous to refuse because it was a logical step. I had three young fellows under me, and I just simply could not, I could not . . . .

JOHN D. MORSE: You were then an administrator instead of creator.

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: Yes. I've never been able to tell somebody to do something that I didn't want to do. It was the same way when I was in the Army. I was made a sergeant and I had a half a dozen men under me, and we were doing camouflage. And I was happy making the designs for camouflage before I was made a sergeant, but then when I was put in charge of these six and had to tell them what to do, then I wasn't a good sergeant at all. At one time we were supposed to paint some guns, and I didn't know anything about a gun any more than I know what's on Mars -- and by mistake we painted all the mechanisms and everything, and this was not to have been painted at all, you know, and when an officer discovered that did he . . . ? Then I had to tell these fellows to laboriously clean that all out, and I just hated to tell them.

JOHN D. MORSE: I can well understand.

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: Of course, I was responsible. I mean I should have had enough brains to know you don't paint the working parts of the gun, but . . . .

JOHN D. MORSE: Well, back to Birge & Company. I gather that at no time did you feel that the work was anything but pleasant, that you weren't demeaning yourself, so to speak, as a commercial artist?

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: No, I didn't have that feeling. The reason I finally quit was that it's a strenuous business, and for three months of the year I didn't do any designing. I had charge of running out samples. They created about one hundred new designs a year, and about a dozen colorings of each design. So, you see, there were six hundred colorings and I had to supervise that and criticize the samples as they came. Well, the man that I was under was responsible for the line. He and the plant manager just hated each other and I had to be the go-between the two. And one would tell the other -- one would say to me, "You go down there and tell that redheaded so-and-so, so on." And I, of course, had to go down and give him a reasonable message, you know, not that he was an s.o.b. but . . . and it became too much for me. The doctor said to me, "You're just in line for ulcers of your stomach." And that's when I got in touch with Frank Rehn.

JOHN D. MORSE: That was the year 192_?

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: '29.

JOHN D. MORSE: '29, yes.

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: Well, it was '28 when I actually made the decision to change. My work was being shown at the Montross Gallery, but he wasn't doing enough for me that I could quit my job. So I had an interview with Frank Rehn. And he said, "Well, I feel sure that, with the reputation you've got so far, that I could sell enough." But he said, "Before you quit your job, let me have a chance to see what I can do." I had a family of four then and another one was on the way. I switched over to him then in January of 1929.

JOHN D. MORSE: And have been there ever since?

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: Yes. And in a very short time he sold enough pictures to convince me that it was safe to quit my job. Of course, we didn't know what was going to happen that next October, you know -- 1929. It might have swayed us -- I don't know.

JOHN D. MORSE: Had you known?

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: Had I known, yes.

JOHN D. MORSE: Aren't you rather pleased now that you didn't know?

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: Yes, because, as it turned out, I was much better off even during the Depression than I would have been at the factory where everybody eventually had their salaries all cut in half. But we got along; we didn't get rich or anything, but we got along through the Depression.

JOHN D. MORSE: By then you were living in this house right here and painting in this very room?

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: Yes.

JOHN D. MORSE: Well, I repeat, it seems to have worked out very well indeed.

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: Yes. Well, I wouldn't have been able to do it if it hadn't been for the faith and courage of my wife. As she has often said, "I'd rather be poor and hungry than be a widow." Of course, probably she wouldn't have been a widow, but I would have been very unhappy and probably sick and miserable.

JOHN D. MORSE: As Jack Baur said, in the catalogue of your wonderful retrospective exhibition at the Whitney a few years ago . . . pointed out there were three Burchfields. Do you agree with that? The first watercolors that were on exhibit at the Rehn Gallery in New York were of a lyric style, most of the critics agree . . . .

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: Yes. Well, I think that you can roughly divide it into three periods. Although one collector in Cleveland declares that I am entering a fourth period.

JOHN D. MORSE: A fourth period?

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: Yes. And he may have something. I'll show you some of my recent work.

JOHN D. MORSE: Oh, fine! I'll look forward to it.

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: Now this would be the third period.

JOHN D. MORSE: Yes. The third period, which roughly began . . .

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: About 1943.

JOHN D. MORSE: '43. Well, Mr. Richardson in his article in the Magazine of Art made a point that gas rationing might have had something to do with it, that you could no longer get into your car and go and see buildings and bridges and that sort of thing.

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: I don't think that was a . . . wouldn't be a fundamental reason. I think he was just making . . .

JOHN D. MORSE: Oh, yes, he made it clear that . . . .

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: . . . a little fun, you know. But it did work out fine because I couldn't get enough gas to ramble around the country like I did before, and by taking these early pictures and adding to them and working them up, I didn't need to go out.

JOHN D. MORSE: What do you think was possibly a more important driving force to turn you, in a sense, back to nature?

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: Well, I don't really know. I don't think an artist ever knows why he changes from one style to another. If he did, I don't think it would be genuine. I mean, for example, if I'd say to myself, "Well, now, I've said what I've been saying long enough and perhaps I'd better change my style," I don't think it would have been valid. Well, Jack, I think, described it pretty well in the catalogue, or in the book at least -- perhaps not in the catalogue -- but in the book. You don't have the book?

JOHN D. MORSE: I don't have the book with me, no.

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: Well, he mentions that day that I was working on the large picture called . . . . I don't think it's reproduced in here.

JOHN D. MORSE: I'm just looking at the foreword to this catalogue where he speaks of these three Burchfields.

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: Well, I can explain . . . .

JOHN D. MORSE: Why not, in your own words, yes.

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: Well, in 1917 I started a picture of two ravines. One of them was to symbolize the coming of spring into the ravine, and the other ravine was to show that winter still held sway in that hollow. Spring was coming down one hollow and winter retreating up the other. And it was too much of a subject for me at that time. I didn't have the experience or the equipment, artistic and mental equipment, to carry it through. It always remained an uncompleted failure, you know, in the sense that it was something that was beyond me.

JOHN D. MORSE: This was 1917?

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: 1917. So I put it away and, in the early Thirties, I got intrigued with the same subject again, but I started a totally new picture. And in the second period manner, which is more realistic, less imaginative, perhaps, than the other version. And I still had a lot of problems, but I did finally complete that version in 1943. I started in '32, I think it was, or '33, and it was at least ten years before I completed it.

JOHN D. MORSE: You completed it in your so-called second style?

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: Yes. In the second style. And then, when I got it done, it seemed rather prosaic to me, so I got out the 1917 version and, looking at it, and it just came to me: now I know all the fundamental problems. I know how to handle light coming down one ravine and retreating up the other; why not see if I couldn't finish that, and use the same style that I had used in 1917. And I had a most wonderful time. I think I spent four straight days on that. Well, I made a lot of studies first, working out ideas in the 1917 manner. But I worked four straight days on it and finished it up. And right now it belongs to the Metropolitan Museum.

JOHN D. MORSE: Yes.

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: And I think everyone has agreed that it's more of a -- I don't know what you would call it -- triumph than the other one. Although the other one also has its value, too, as a middle period piece. I have

the picture here. I don't . . . .

JOHN D. MORSE: I would like to see it presently.

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: Yes.

JOHN D. MORSE: You've already answered one of the questions I wanted to ask you -- which everyone speculated on when you began exhibiting them. Why you had taken earlier pictures and enlarge the paper with strips around, and then made the pictures bigger. And you've already answered it.

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: Yes. Well, you see, I didn't do that with 1917 pictures that I considered successful. It was pictures that had a germ of an idea in them but that hadn't quite come off. By adding to them then I could make them work.

JOHN D. MORSE: Now this is a matter of technique. In the ravine picture you were speaking of, of 1917, did you do much work on the picture itself? That is, the center part, the original?

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: Well, I didn't add very much to that picture. It was already a good-sized picture, and I added just enough around the edges so that it . . . . At lot of the work was done right in the 1917 part.

JOHN D. MORSE: Was the original -- the 1917 picture -- pure watercolor, or was it some gouache that . . . ?

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: There was some gouache.

JOHN D. MORSE: You could work over it?

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: A little bit, yes.

JOHN D. MORSE: The reason for my question is that I've always understood that pure watercolor is very hard to work over after it's done.

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: Well, it is if you use a certain method. If you use the traditional method, which is light washes put on more or less wet paper, it's very hard to make a correction on that and not have it show. But I don't use that method. I use a dry paper and what is called a dry brush, which isn't dry, of course, in that it has the minimum amount of water on it, and I stand them up just like that is on the easel there and work on it just as a man painting an oil painting except that you're using different materials. Now, for example, supposing I didn't like that tree on the right there, that tallest one going up into the sky. I would take a sponge and wipe that out and do it over again. And the way it is done you wouldn't know that it wasn't put there originally.

JOHN D. MORSE: I see. Well, but . . . .

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: I like to be able to advance and retreat just like a man writing a book. I doubt that very few of them ever sit down and leave a paragraph as it first comes into their head. They work over it, delete things and add things. Well, I feel that I like to do that just as they do. Or as a composer does. Otherwise, I mean you start a picture and I don't know how it's going to come out. I don't know. I think it was Maurice Sterne . . . do you know him?

JOHN D. MORSE: I never knew him personally, no.

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: Well, I think he expressed it very well. He said, "A picture has a life and direction of its own and the artist has to find out which way the picture wants to go, and follow." And that is true. Oh, so many of my pictures . . . I think I know what I want to do but, when I put it down it's not right, and it's got to be changed. I have to find out where the idea wants to go. It sounds like double talk but it's true.

JOHN D. MORSE: I don't think it sounds like double talk. One question, one further question about technique: I've always thought of your paintings as a pure watercolor technique in that you use the paper itself as a white.

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: Yes, I do now. In my earlier pictures I used some gouache; one whole spring I did a whole series of gouache paintings. Now this -- there is no white in any part of that. And you have to do a certain amount of planning and be careful. I mean, you can't do too much sponging out. You have to know what you're going to do.

JOHN D. MORSE: Of course, the advantage of dry watercolor, as you point out, is that you can stand it upright instead of leaning over it and wetting the paper.

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: Yes. I mean you couldn't do a picture as large as that on a level plane. I mean you couldn't see it. See, most of my painting is done back here where I can't even touch the picture. I mean I put

something on, then I come back and sit . . .

JOHN D. MORSE: Sit in a nice rocking chair.

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: . . . and look at it. Did it work? Or didn't it?

JOHN D. MORSE: One fairly . . . well, not exactly a minor question on this matter of technique that I have asked a number of people is that there's been, there seems to be quite a lot of talk recently of paintings deteriorating -- oil paintings particularly -- coming apart actually. The attention to the actual craft -- and this again chiefly oil painting -- and the knowledge of it seems to be almost non-existent among many of our younger painters. Have you had any -- of course, with your medium, watercolor, you have very little difficulty of that kind, I imagine?

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: Not in that way, no. Watercolors do have to be taken care of just the same as oils. For example, they cannot be stored in any place where there is great variation of temperature. I was horrified one year, the year that the Carnegie Institute held the first retrospective of my work, in 1938, coming upon a watercolor that was completely covered with mold, and the mold was on the glass and you could hardly see what that thing was about.

JOHN D. MORSE: What did you do to it?

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: Well, I restored that thing completely so it was just as good as new. I didn't know how I was going to do it, but I asked permission of the owner -- told him what had happened. I don't know how they ever thought that that was fit to send out; but they did, and they hung it, and that was still more odd. At any rate, I asked permission of the owner to take it home with me. I said I would like to see if I could restore it. The first thing I did -- I took Carbona, a sort cloth with Carbona and wiped off all the mold, and then, wherever the color had been affected by the mold and so on, I retouched it and cleaned it up and it was . . .

JOHN D. MORSE: And it worked.

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: . . . just like new. It worked. You see, Carbona doesn't hurt watercolor. You couldn't do that with oils; you'd ruin the oil, But Carbona doesn't hurt watercolor. I tried it out on something else first. See, there's nothing in the watercolor that the Carbona will affect, the binder or anything. I asked them what had happened. They said they had taken it up to their summer home and left it there during the winter without heat. They were very apologetic about it. I couldn't understand why people would spend a lot of money for a picture and then not take care of it. But it was just ignorance -- they didn't know that that would happen.

JOHN D. MORSE: Do you ever use any sort of protective varnish film or light film on your watercolors?

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: I did once, and to this day I regret it.

JOHN D. MORSE: Oh, really? That's interesting. Why?

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: Well, in the first place there's no reason for it. I mean watercolor should be protected by glass. The oil which is in the protective varnish seeps into the paper and yellows it. George Bellows bought one of my favorite pictures of the second period. On his death it passed to Mrs. Bellows. It had become very yellow, and when they asked her to lend it, she said that it seemed to be in very bad condition. Well, Jack Baur said there was only one man -- I can't think of his name -- only one man in New York who might be able to do anything with it and have it safe. But this man was in Europe at the time, and Mrs. Bellows became impatient. Jack said he would be back in time to do it, but she became impatient and got someone else to do it. And that picture is just . . . you can hardly . . . oh, it's there, you can see that it was something, you know. But he must have taken . . . I don't know what he took, and tried to get the varnish off, and I don't know what all. I could have done a better job myself.

JOHN D. MORSE: Then you think that glass is the only . . . ?

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: Oh, yes, glass is the only thing.

JOHN D. MORSE: Incidentally, what pigments, or rather paints, do you use? What brand do you find most satisfactory?

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: Windsor & Newton. Now that doesn't mean that there aren't a lot of other good ones, but that just happens to be . . . .

JOHN D. MORSE: And what paper? Where do you get such a fine, handsome piece as you're working on now there?

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: Well, this is made by the Bee Paper Corporation and, while it is not a handmade paper

obviously, it is the same material that they put into handmade papers, except that it's done by machine. And I swear, if you take a small section of this paper, no one would know it wasn't handmade. It has a beautiful texture for a machine-made paper.

JOHN D. MORSE: And has an heroic size. What is the size of this one, this landscape you're working on?

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: This is 38 x 53. The paper comes two ways... It comes in sheets and also in the thirty-eight inch roll. And so, without piecing, I could make anything with one dimension at least thirty-eight, and any length I would want.

JOHN D. MORSE: While we're looking at it, the one that's under way now on your easel -- I know better, of course, than to ask you what the title is going to be. Incidentally, I have found that many people whom I talk to almost don't believe me when I tell them that artists always, invariably, entitle their pictures when they're done. Have you even begun to think of a title for this?

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: Well, I'll tell you how this . . . this grew out of another picture which I did back in 1939, and at that time I called it Appalachian Highway. But now that doesn't seem as though that's going to be a good title for the picture, because the highway is very incidental; it's important, but it's very incidental to everything else that's going on. I really don't know what I'm . . . it ought to have something with August in it, but I've got August Morning and I've got August Afternoon.

JOHN D. MORSE: Do you have difficulty with your titles?

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: Yes. There was just one exception that an artist doesn't title his pictures until after, but there was just one exception and that is Black Iron.

JOHN D. MORSE: Ah! Of course. I can see why.

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: I got the title as soon as I saw the . Everything, even the water -- the water had oil and all kinds of chemicals in it from the manufacturing plant; the water itself looked as though it might be liquid iron, I mean not melted iron but iron in a liquid form. It was black and oily and shiny. And the bridge and everything suggested black iron to me.

JOHN D. MORSE: I can see . . . .

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: And so I began thinking about black iron, and when I started painting the picture, I had that in mind, that everything would tend to look as though it was made of iron and belonged to it.

JOHN D. MORSE: And succeeded marvelously. That picture is now in the . . . .

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: That's the only exception. I had the title as soon as I started the picture -- Black Iron.

JOHN D. MORSE: And that picture, I believe, is now in the Fleischman . . ?.

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: Yes, that's in the Fleischman collection, yes. He remembered that picture for twenty years, I think it was.

JOHN D. MORSE: Oh, really? And wanted it for twenty years?

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: Yes. He . . . they had seen it, and right about twenty years afterwards -- later when he could afford to buy pictures, he asked my dealer if that was still around. And by that time it had been sent back to my studio. No one seemed to show the slightest interest in it. It was admired by critics and so forth, but . . .

JOHN D. MORSE: Yes, one of your most famous . . . .

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: . . . not by collectors. You see, the ordinary collector -- I mean it isn't a living picture -- but take a collector with taste like Fleischman has, he doesn't hang pictures for their decorative quality but because of their value as art.

JOHN D. MORSE: It is a little . . . well, severe isn't actually the word -- this picture we're speaking of, Black Iron -- but kind of forbidding. And yet . . . .

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: Yes. It was intended to be.

JOHN D. MORSE: Yes, but weirdly beautiful in an odd way. I never can quite figure it out.

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: I wanted it to look completely hard-boiled and uncompromising. The way that thing

juts up into the air, you know, that big counterweight; and I've even tried to make it look unbalanced and still make it stay within its . . . .

JOHN D. MORSE: Which it certainly does. Which reminds me of a remark: I believe it was Mr. Richardson in the piece he wrote about you for the Magazine of art, quoted you as saying that you . . . that no artist ever painted anything he didn't love, really, basically.

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: No. That was a great bone of contention between Henry McBride and myself. My first exhibition -- he gave it a terrific boost, but at the same time he said that I must hate Salem, my home town, cordially in order to be able to paint such indictments, and . . . .

JOHN D. MORSE: I had forgotten that. Why -- he's a very perceptive man -- why should he . . . ? Is it because he's a New Yorker?

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: Well, I suppose . . . that's the way I figured it out. He probably looked at those houses and those things, and he thought of himself as a New Yorker, probably living in a very nice apartment or hotel, what an awful place to live, for anybody to live, you know.

JOHN D. MORSE: Couldn't imagine you enjoying it.

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: I did paint two or three what I would call indictments of certain industrial problems. I painted a steel mill with its huddle of little red houses around it, which did seem to me a horrible place for anybody to live, and also some miner's huts. But even so I was thoroughly in love with the subject, I mean even though I was trying to show that this was not quite a fit place. I don't know whether the . . . .

JOHN D. MORSE: On picking up the catalogue I was struck by a phrase you used, ". . . of the men coming up the road along the mine." Is that the one you're speaking of?

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: Oh, no. There were no men in this one I'm speaking of, but the End of the Day is . . . .

JOHN D. MORSE: End of the Day, yes, that's . . . ?

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: That should be right there.

JOHN D. MORSE: Yes. Well, that sentence I like. Here, would you mind reading it yourself? End of the Day -- what you wrote about it.

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: [Reading] "At the end of a day of hard labor the workmen plod wearily uphill in the eerie twilight of winter, and it seems to the superficial eye that they have little to come home to in those stark, unpainted houses, but, like the houses, they persist and will not give in; and so they attain a rugged dignity that compels our admiration."

JOHN D. MORSE: Well, isn't that the point . . . ?

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: Yes. That's the point I'm . . . well it's the dignity of life even in its humblest form. I painted another house -- a painting called Winter. I don't know whether that's reproduced there or not.

JOHN D. MORSE: Let's look it up. Winter.

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: A huddle of houses. It belongs to - - the period should be about '42 or '43. Go up this way a little more.

JOHN D. MORSE: I think back . . . .

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: It's not there.

JOHN D. MORSE: Winter? But I think I remember seeing it in this catalogue. Just a minute. Here. No.

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: No.

JOHN D. MORSE: Perhaps I'm thinking of another illustration. But your point was the same of the solitary, solemn house?

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: No, it was a group of houses all huddled together, and they were unpainted and very dark, and it was a gloomy winter day towards evening, and it was reproduced in the Buffalo Evening News on the first page, and somebody had written something about it. I had a letter not long afterwards from a man who lived in one of those houses. And in the meantime the houses had been painted and they looked quite

respectable. He said he had been advised to ask me by what right I had painted those houses, and that the neighbors were kidding him because he lived in a neighborhood of beat up old houses, you know. Well, I didn't have any idea whether I had the right to paint them or not, but I asked Judge Sears, who was one of the most prominent men in the legal profession in Buffalo . . .

JOHN D. MORSE: S-e-a-r-s?

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: Yes. He was also at that time a director of the Albright Gallery -- that's how I met him -- and I just asked him at dinner one time, and he said, "You can take a photograph, or you can paint a picture of any building there is as long as you don't get on their property to do it, or unless they have a sign on the corner of the house that this house is copyrighted." So I just never even answered the letter. But I did feel kind of sorry for the fellow. He had an inferiority complex and he was being kidded by his neighbors, even though his house had been painted. And incidentally, as a subject, painting the houses just ruined them. I would never have looked at it a second time.

JOHN D. MORSE: How do you mean painting them?

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: I mean they painted the . . . .

JOHN D. MORSE: House paint?

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: Yes. The house paint, yes, ruined it as a subject.

JOHN D. MORSE: Why?

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: It did look quite respectable. See, before there was no paint on the house and the boards had weathered to this, you know, this beautiful tobacco brown that unpainted lumber gets, and they were quite fascinating. But when they were painted up nice, bright grays and yellows, and so forth, they were quite ordinary. I never would have looked at it a second time, I know.

JOHN D. MORSE: Do you think it is the color and texture of these fine old weathered houses that makes you want to paint them, as well as the quality?

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: Yes.

JOHN D. MORSE: And the rest of it is a kind of . . . ?

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: Yes. If I put a nicely-painted house in a picture, it's only incidental. I mean, like all the houses around here are painted, you know -- some of them I absolutely could not put in a picture. There's a house a couple doors down here that's painted the most vivid blue-green. Oh, I can hardly go past the place. It's terrible! It ruins everything around it. I mean I look over that way and the trees are the wrong color, you know, and so forth.

JOHN D. MORSE: What is it, do you think, in addition to the color and texture that makes old houses appeal to you?

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: Well, it's also, I think, the fact that they are old, and you have the feeling that a lot of living has gone into those. That's what I tried to express in that one that's in the Chicago Institute, The House of Mystery.

JOHN D. MORSE: Yes.

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: It seemed to me that almost anything could have happened in that house, a murder, or -- it had to be something sinister, I guess -- I don't know. And I tried to express that in the painting of it.

JOHN D. MORSE: Incidentally, Mr. Burchfield, while I have this Whitney catalogue in my hand here, I want to tell you how much I enjoyed, as a writer, and how much I congratulate you on these comments. Did you have much difficulty writing them? Did you write each one of these for each picture, or did sometimes your journal supply you with this information?

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: Well, some of it, of course. But I used to do that more than I do now. In 1917 I would write out, as I was working on a picture, I would write out what I felt about the subject and write it on the back of the watercolor.

JOHN D. MORSE: Oh. So many of these . . . .

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: Like the one now -- is Crabbed Old Age reproduced in there?

JOHN D. MORSE: Let's see, that would be about when?

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: 1917. Here it is.

JOHN D. MORSE: Yes. Read it, will you, and then tell us how you . . . ?

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: He didn't quote it complete, but he . . . .

JOHN D. MORSE: I see. But that was written on the back? How does it go?

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: [Reading] "Crabbed old age sits in front of her black doorway without hope for the future, brooding. Spiders lurk in dark corners. The dying plants reflect her mood. The romantic outer moon rises just the same."

JOHN D. MORSE: Well, then, that you had written on the back of that watercolor itself?

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: Yes.

JOHN D. MORSE: At the time?

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD:Yes.

JOHN D. MORSE: Well, that's interesting. I didn't know that.

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: Yes. And a great many of them, not all of them . . . .

JOHN D. MORSE: Well then, many of the pictures of yours that are in museums and in private collections have these phrases, these descriptive phrases, on the back?

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: Yes. Unfortunately . . .

JOHN D. MORSE: But they're concealed, of course?

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: . . . I mounted them, but I would generally write this then on the back of the mount.

JOHN D. MORSE: Oh, I see.

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: Now this I had a description for.

JOHN D. MORSE: The Song of the Katydids?

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: The Song of the Katydids.

JOHN D. MORSE: Oh, yes. Read that. I remember that.

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: [Reading] "A stagnant August morning during the drought season, as the pitiless sun mounts into the mid-morning sky, and the insect chorus commences, the katydids and locusts predominating. Their monotonous, mechanical, brassy rhythms soon pervade the whole air, combining with heat waves of the sun, and saturating trees and houses and sky.

JOHN D. MORSE: Well, that's wonderful prose as well as a beautiful picture, Mr. Burchfield.

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: Thank you.

JOHN D. MORSE: And may I . . . ? Really, why haven't you written more? Because you're a painter, I suppose?

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: Yes. Well, at one time I did think I was going to be a writer -- when I was in high school and even the early years in art school I thought I was going to be a nature writer in somewhat the sense, you know, that Teale writes, and Harold Borland, and so forth. And if I did anything with art work, I would make my own illustrations. But I soon realized that my outlook was visual rather than otherwise. But I mean it still . . . I did these short things.

JOHN D. MORSE: But you have kept a journal?

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: Yes, I've kept a journal.

JOHN D. MORSE: I hope that sometime you will be able to turn that over to the Archives of American Art . . .

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: Well, I'll . . . .

JOHN D. MORSE: . . . or to someone.

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: Mr. Richardson -- but I told him -- I don't know what value the journal is going to have. I'm thinking purely of the commercial point of view, I mean it probably will have -- if I'm remembered after I'm gone very long -- it probably would have a . . . that value. But I was thinking if it was ever to be published or anything like that, it ought to be part of an estate that goes to my children.

JOHN D. MORSE: Mmhmm. That's understandable.

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: And that same way with a lot of my notes. And I hated to say that to Mr. Richardson because he's a man I like and admire very much and he's always written so understandingly about my work. And if he was a complete stranger I'd just say, "No," and that would be it, you know.

JOHN D. MORSE: I think your own point is so thoroughly understandable. Speaking of writing, one of the questions I wanted to ask you: Who are some of your favorite authors, writers?

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: Well . . . .

JOHN D. MORSE: What books do you like to read -- what kind of books? Maybe a better way to ask it is, what books do you find yourself re-reading?

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: Well, now, I like certain books of Knute Hamsun: The Growth of the Soil, of course, and the Segelfoss Town, and The Children of the Age. I have read those so often that I almost feel as though I'd lived in that place, that's Segelfoss.

JOHN D. MORSE: Mmhmm.

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: And then when I was up in Duluth on a little teaching job up there, I got acquainted with a man who was from Finland. Well, of course, we eventually got to talking about the Finnish composer Sibelius. I told this man that I had a deep interest in Finland purely because I like the music of Sibelius and I'd like to know more about the country that produced such a man. He said there were some very good Finnish writers that he thought I would be interested in, and he gave me titles and authors, but unfortunately I can't think of them.

JOHN D. MORSE: When you mentioned that, I'm afraid the only one I know is Growth of the Soil.

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: Well, that of course is Norway. Now this is . . . .

JOHN D. MORSE: Oh, yes.

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: I don't even know how to pronounce this name.

JOHN D. MORSE: Oh! Nor I.

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: One of them. And this one, The Sun and Storm.

JOHN D. MORSE: Sun and Storm. By whom?

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: It looks like . . . .

JOHN D. MORSE: U-n-t-o-s-e-p-p-a-n-e-n. And this one, the Maid S-i-l-j-a by F-e-s-i-l-l-a-n-p-a-a; a Nobel prize edition, incidentally!

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: And then there's still another one.

JOHN D. MORSE: These are both Finnish.

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: Do you want the author? I mean . . . .

JOHN D. MORSE: Sure. This is very interesting. Not worth a lot of trouble to you, though, Sir.

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: Well, it ought to be right here. Well, it's the one called The Seven Brothers.

JOHN D. MORSE: The Seven Brothers. This is Finland again?

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: Yes. And to me it's not only fascinating and incredible, but it's got some of the most beautiful nature descriptions -- as does this Sun and Storm. I have pencilled a lot of these descriptions.

JOHN D. MORSE: Read one of your favorite ones, will you?

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: Well, let's see . . . .

JOHN D. MORSE: Do you keep an ashtray in here, Mr. Burchfield? Or does smoking disturb you?

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: No, it doesn't bother me at all. I don't have an ash tray but, if you're self-conscious about dropping them on the floor, why that's - - I try to tell people to drop it on the floor, that it doesn't hurt, but they don't like to do it.

JOHN D. MORSE: I have used more than one artist's paint bowl for an ash tray.

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: I'm sorry that I didn't suggest before that you smoke.

JOHN D. MORSE: It's perfectly all right. I've been too busy talking.

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: I don't smoke myself and I just never think of it.

JOHN D. MORSE: Did you find a paragraph?

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: Here's one.

JOHN D. MORSE: This is from . . . ?

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: The Sun and Storm by that . . . I don't know how to pronounce that "A."

JOHN D. MORSE: I don't either.

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: I do know in . . . .

JOHN D. MORSE: Something like that.

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: It wouldn't be a long "A." When they want to indicate that the letter is long, they put two of them . . .

JOHN D. MORSE: I see.

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: . . . a double vowel means it's long. [Reading] "Twilight came down out of the eternal heights of heaven on the earth, and the earth was dwarfed. Already the paths and the meadows outside were fading into darkness as Marku looked through the open window. The man and his wife sat in the dark. The last words that Ellen had read were still resounding in the room: 'If ye will not be converted then will He send his arrows to destroy you?' That isn't one of the best, but there's one here about the feeling of the coming autumn in late August, which I have sensed myself, too. There are certain days in August when you feel that in the offing is another season. It's just a little bit sinister -- you think of winter as coming, as being something . . . . Well, this isn't what I was thinking of, but this is a nice one, I think. [Reading] "An evening in early summer. Cuckoos were calling from everywhere as the sun sank to rest. All day long there had been a kind of yellow haze above the pine trees. The pollen from their blossoms even stained with saffron the surface of the lake. The swallows dipped so low in their flight that it seemed they were trying to nip the last of the evening wind from the tips of the grass blades."

JOHN D. MORSE: Wonderful!

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: It's full of stuff like that.

JOHN D. MORSE: Yes, I see.

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: I've read this . . . .

JOHN D. MORSE: Do you find that more congenial to your taste than some of our English writers?

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: No. Now, for example . . . .

JOHN D. MORSE: What of Thoreau?

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: Yes. I have read, I think, almost everything he wrote.

JOHN D. MORSE: Thoreau?

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: Yes. And this is only a later development. I mean this has only come up in the last few years.

JOHN D. MORSE: I see. Through your interest in Sibelius?

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: Yes. And . . . well, there is an American writer that I think is great. I don't think she ever got a Nobel Prize. That's Willa Cather.

JOHN D. MORSE: Ah! She didn't, but she should have. I can understand, and I certainly share your . . . .

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: I wouldn't wish to take away any of the honors Sinclair Lewis has gotten, but if it were me I would have given the prize to My Antonia, rather than to Main Street.

JOHN D. MORSE: I agree with you.

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: My Antonia. I have read that so often.

JOHN D. MORSE: And do you . . . have you ever discovered, as I did only -- not too long ago -- one of Willa Cather's literary ancestors, Sarah Orne Jewett?

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: No. I don't know . . . .

JOHN D. MORSE: You don't know! Oh. Then you haven't read The Country of the Pointed Firs?

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: No.

JOHN D. MORSE: Oh. That will be a pleasure for me to send you. You'll love it!

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: Gee, I . . . .

JOHN D. MORSE: Because that passage from the Finnish books reminds me a little bit of her description of owls and birds. Marvelous. You'll enjoy it.

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: I've read everything of Willa Cather's I could lay my hands on: Death Comes to the Archbishop, and that one, The Professor's House, I think that's magnificent -- especially the middle section where the adventure up on top of that mesa is described. And then Shadows on the Rock, which is about Quebec. And I can't think of one . . . .

JOHN D. MORSE: What about poetry, Mr. Burchfield? Your own writing, your own prose comes so close to poetry now and then. I wanted to ask you, do you enjoy Wordsworth? It's a totally different approach to nature, I think, but it is an approach.

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: Well, all I've read of Wordsworth is what we had in high school and I liked it very much, but I haven't pursued it. And I like the less complicated poems of Browning. His long, long ones I . . . .

JOHN D. MORSE: Don't finish -- like everybody else.

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: And Milton -- of course, his shorter poems. I must confess I never read Paradise Lost or Paradise Regained. But some of his shorter things still linger with me, like Il Pensoroso, L'allegro and some of the other shorter things. I don't read poetry as a rule; I mean I have to admit. What I've read on Robert Frost -- I don't know whether he's written very long things -- but collections of his. Oh, there's -- I can skip all over the . . . . There was a time when I was very fond of French authors, Balzac and Hugo. Curiously, I read all of The Human Comedy; I can't give you the French name, but you know what it is. I tried re-reading Pere Goriot and I couldn't get any interest in it whatsoever. I can't understand that, because to me a thing ought to be timeless. And then, I'm a great admirer of Alice in Wonderland and Through the Looking Glass, and I think that fan club probably is very small and very exclusive. There is a very amusing incident in connection with that. When I was in the Army I was transferred to another battalion and it turned out to be a labor battalion, and I was very much put down because I had been transferred to that. And I was all alone and didn't have any friends, so I went over to the camp library to see if I could find something to read. The only thing I could find at all was Alice in Wonderland. And what prompted me to take that with me, I don't know, but I did have enough sense to hide it under my blouse so that no one would see that I was reading Alice in Wonderland. Well, I spent a most wonderful evening with that. The sheer, utter nonsense of it took me away from my troubles.

JOHN D. MORSE: You had not read it before?

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: Oh, yes. I had read it as a child but I didn't appreciate it as a child. I don't think any child appreciates that book. You have to grow up. And then, many years later, I read that the British admiral in

charge of the fleet at the first battle of Singapore, in the midst of all this hullabaloo that was going on, sat on the deck reading Alice in Wonderland.

JOHN D. MORSE: Wonderful!

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: And I thought . . . well, now I'm vindicated, you know. And when I was in the hospital recently -- I was in for a month with this asthma business -- to try to take my mind off my troubles, I thought I would read Alice in Wonderland again. And I did. I'd read it at night when I couldn't go to sleep. And it was wonderful.

JOHN D. MORSE: The third time still wonderful?

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: Yes. And when my birthday was coming up, my daughter-in-law wanted to know what to buy me. I said, "Well, if you want to do something nice, get me a nice edition of Alice in Wonderland and Through the Looking Glass." So she went into the bookstore asking about it, and the clerk inquired, "Well, just how old is your child?" She told the clerk it was for her father, you know. Which I thought was very amusing.

JOHN D. MORSE: You mentioned Sibelius a couple of times and that somehow clicked immediately. I can see Sibelius in -- not in your paintings -- but I can see the same feeling. You have also mentioned Beethoven in your journal, I notice.

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: Oh, yes. I skip all through the centuries with my loves in the musical world. Matter of fact, I think I get more out of music probably than I do out of other artists' paintings, although I have many great admirations there. For inspiration and solace, I think music is probably the greatest one influence in my life. I love the early Italians. I can't think of all their names but I think Vivaldi would come first.

JOHN D. MORSE: Yes. V-i-v-a-l-d-i, isn't it?

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: Yes. And, incidentally, he's only been rediscovered in this century. It seems incredible that, for almost two hundred years, he was practically forgotten except by composers and musicians.

JOHN D. MORSE: I remember a wonderful concert by Toscanini which began with a Vivaldi and I had never heard of Vivaldi before.

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: And I've just been buying records -- they haven't reproduced anything but his concertos -- but that's enough. I mean he wrote operas and symphonies and I don't know what all. His works go well up into the six hundreds. They've reproduced a great many of his concertos and I've been buying very heavily of those for my record collection.

JOHN D. MORSE: How do you like Wagner?

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: When I was in art school I was introduced to Wagner and I thought that there wasn't any other composer worth listening to than him. Without ever having heard Beethoven, Haydn and Mozart, I tossed them off into the junk heap as not being worth anything. Wagner was the man. Now I can hardly tolerate him. I haven't got a single Wagner record in my collection.

JOHN D. MORSE: Interesting.

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: That doesn't mean that I don't think he isn't a great composer. But you can't like everything, even though he's great. Another curious blind spot with me is Brahms. I like some of his things, the shorter things; but I don't have a Brahms in my collection. Mozart, I think, is one of the very great. And Haydn. Now I never appreciated Haydn until this hi-fi business came in and they started making the long-playing records. There was a Haydn society formed in England and their purpose was eventually to record everything that Haydn had ever composed. Symphonies were brought to light that had never been played in modern times. I don't think anything before Symphony Number 80 had ever been played until recently. And he's a very great man, I think. And some of his later quartets, to my mind, are the equal of Beethoven's whom I still -- I always keep coming back to Beethoven as the all-time great. But my son, who built my hi-fi for me, made a very pointed observation. He said, "Dad, do you think it's possible to have a favorite composer?" I thought about it and I said, "Well, no; nobody with any sensitivity could have a favorite composer because each one gives you something that no one else can give." Like Dvorak, for example; I wouldn't even want to say whether he's as great as Beethoven, or not as great, or only half as great. But he gives you things that Beethoven does not give, and he's one of my favorites.

JOHN D. MORSE: You mentioned in passing that you roamed up and down the centuries with musicians as well as old masters. Who are some of your favorite old master painters?

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: Well, Peter Breughel is an all-time favorite of mine and there was a time when, I think,

probably my middle period might even show some influence of Breughel -- I don't know. I don't know enough about those things.

[END OF SIDE I]

[SIDE 2]

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: I don't believe particularly in influences. I don't think an artist knows he's being influenced. He admires something and probably he is influenced that way. And then there are the early Italians -- their names don't come to mind very readily. That's one of my major handicaps getting older, I cannot think of names.

JOHN D. MORSE: I disagree. You've never failed to think of a one.

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: Well, right now I want to think of the name of an Italian painter who I think is one of the greats of all time, and I can't think of his name.

JOHN D. MORSE: He will come to you, I am sure. Incidentally, we're just about coming to the end of this tape. Suppose we take a little rest and see how the sun is shining outside for a . . . .

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: Yes. Okay.

[END OF TAPE 1]

[TAPE 2]

JOHN D. MORSE: We were speaking, Mr. Burchfield, of some of your favorite older painters, and I think we got to Van Gogh, although I believe the name you were searching for you didn't find.

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: Oh, yes, that was Giotto, the early Italian painter. And, of course, I admire Leonardo, Titian, Michelangelo, although Michelangelo seems like something a little more distant from me than some of the others. And then coming down in time, there's Van Gogh, Cezanne, and earlier than them the French painters Courbet, whose landscapes in particular I love very much, and Degas, and . . . .

JOHN D. MORSE: What about some of the . . . well, the post-Cezanne people? What of Picasso, for example?

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: Well, he's one that I wrote about in my journal, which is just for posterity. I consider Picasso the evil genius of modern art. He has, wittingly or unwittingly, brought about a decadence that is really terrible to behold.

JOHN D. MORSE: A decadence? How do you feel that he departed from Cezanne, whom you admire?

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: Well, really more in his later works. The work of Picasso, which I could accept and which I admire, is his completely abstract phase, which I think was about between the years 1910 and 1912. I think that he and Braque at that time produced the best abstract art that's ever been produced. And I certainly -- after that I think -- I know it probably seems pretty startling to you-- but I consider him as ushering in a decadence rather than stimulating a period. I think that art has gotten to the point today that there isn't a . . . it's no longer fashionable to be abstract; and I don't know whether you'd be surprised or not, but there is a great deal of enmity between abstract artists and non-objective artists. And you may say, "Well, where to you draw the line?" A good abstract painting is still at least decorative; I don't think it's anything else, no matter what they say -- what they say they have deep philosophical thoughts and so forth that they put in. I think abstract painting is purely decorative and, as such, can be enjoyed very much. But non-objective art doesn't even have that, doesn't even have pattern. A man may just make a smear across a canvas and call it a picture, and it will be bought by . . . well, do you know that little new magazine Art Times?

JOHN D. MORSE: Only vaguely. No, I . . . .

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: It's just a little one, about three or four pages. They must be working on a shoestring.

JOHN D. MORSE: I don't think I know it, Mr. Burchfield, no.

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: Well, they're trying to make a battle against -- I don't know what you'd call it -- the slough of despond that art has fallen into.

JOHN D. MORSE: You're referring, I suppose, to the abstract expressionists at the moment?

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: Well . . . .

JOHN D. MORSE: Currently in vogue?

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: I wouldn't even dignify them by calling them abstract. Of course, I mean that's very -- I think of abstract -- well, a good abstract painter would be one like -- there again I can't think of his name . . . .

JOHN D. MORSE: Well, you mentioned Braque.

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: Well, later than that. An American. I know in the art gallery here they've got a birdbath of his which is very beautiful; it's like a stained glass window. Well, I just can't pick his name out of the air.

JOHN D. MORSE: An American painter?

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: An American painter, yes. I think of that as being abstract art. But when you come to -- this is terrible -- I wouldn't have been able to think of the name even if I had sat down and . . . .

JOHN D. MORSE: Well, I've been fumbling recently about . . . .

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: Well, for example, there was one reproduced in the last issue of this Art Times of an upright canvas which had a lot of vague smudges, probably with charcoal or something, or maybe just black paint, and across that the artist had just drawn a single line diagonally across the picture. And that was bought by a prominent collector here in Buffalo. And no one can ever tell me that that artist had anything in mind when he did it. I think he's laughing up his sleeve. He's fallen in with the trend. And there are many of them like that. Well, out here, there was a fellow painted a picture that's -- I think it was fifty or sixty feet long, and he had smudges on it, and he had some pieces of rag burlap pasted on it, and bits of newspaper. There wasn't even design. I mean a man can make a collage, you know, but I don't think it's great art, but he can make a collage and make it interesting and with play of one texture against another, you know, and make a pattern out of it, but he didn't even have that. It was fifty feet long and it got the first prize.

JOHN D. MORSE: In a local show here?

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: Yes. And one of the judges for that was my good friend Hasson, of Art News, and . . . .

JOHN D. MORSE: What has happened to this fifty-foot picture now? Where do you suppose . . . ?

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: Oh, I think probably it was bought by the gallery, and what they're going to do with it, I don't know, because it takes up so much space, you know.

JOHN D. MORSE: What do you think, in this connection, of the man whom I consider to be the father of this current movement? And that's Kandinsky. Are you very familiar with Kandinsky's paintings?

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: Yes. And I think he's got something that his followers don't have.

JOHN D. MORSE: I think he's said it.

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: Yes. That's what I mean.

JOHN D. MORSE: Once and for all, yes.

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: That's what I don't understand about this renaissance of abstract painting. To my mind, it's served its purpose. It really was necessary. While there were some great artists in the latter part of the Nineteenth Century, like Homer, for example, who did not fall into that sentimental sort of copying of nature, which the revolution was directed against and which brought on the abstract movement, I think they served their purpose. And, as I say, Picasso . . . . Now, for example, I served on the art committee the year before I got sick, and there was a Picasso that came up for purchase along about -- painted about 1911.

JOHN D. MORSE: Which exhibition was this?

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: Well, this wasn't an exhibition. I served on the Art Committee for the gallery, the Albright Gallery.

JOHN D. MORSE: The Albright Gallery, yes.

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: I didn't explain that very well. And we were to decide whether this would be purchased or not. Well, I thought it was very beautiful -- abstract picture -- it was like music, the comparison has been made before, "It's not original but it's something like a Bach fugue" . . . .

JOHN D. MORSE: Yes.

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: And I was very much for the purchase of it, and so was everybody else, and they bought it. But I think it was said; I don't think anybody, not even Picasso, has said anything better since. And some of Braque's abstracts -- well, that one that's based on the violin shapes . . . .

JOHN D. MORSE: Yes. And a guitar.

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: Muted colors, you know. I think the tans and browns and dull reds -- I think they're very beautiful -- I think what they can say is limited. For example, they can't say nearly as much as one of the most beautiful Chinese landscapes of a much earlier period, which I am very fond of, and feel frustrated a lot of times because I don't know where they can be seen. They're not shown anywhere.

JOHN D. MORSE: Chinese landscapes?

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: Yes.

JOHN D. MORSE: Well, the Freer Gallery . . . .

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: Yes. Well, I saw those and they are -- Oh, I think they are just -- I mean in some ways, you know, they just . . . .

JOHN D. MORSE: Make any of us humble.

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: Yes. And you feel -- well, what's the use?

JOHN D. MORSE: Well, what do you think might be the future of art in America, or the Western World? We seem to agree that abstraction has more or less won its battle.

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: Yes. It's won its battle, and now it is repeating itself over and over and over again. I haven't seen anything new -- and I do look at the magazines and so forth -- and I haven't seen anything new in the last fifteen or twenty years. They'll have an article and they'll say, "Here's a brand new talent," maybe from England or France, or so on; and it's the same old formula repeated over and over again. It isn't new. And I just wouldn't -- all you can hope is that the artists will sometimes again turn their attention back to humanity and the world of nature. How it's going to be done I wouldn't have any idea.

JOHN D. MORSE: That, incidentally, is almost the identical words of your good friend, Mr. Edward Hopper; he said to me the other day that he's convinced that it has to turn back to nature.

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: Yes. There's no place to go. And they don't seem to know it. They don't seem to know that they've said it, that it's been said. But the world of nature -- now one of the arguments on this -- one of the arguments is that the camera has replaced the artist in reproducing people, portraits, and pictures, and so forth, and that it is no longer necessary to go to nature or to people for subject matter. Well, I think that if this world lasts for a million years or two million years, or more, that never can you exhaust the subject matter of humanity or nature. It's simply inexhaustible. I feel abut my own work, for example, my interest is more in nature now than in man-made things; I don't know how much time I've got left, but I'd like to have at least another lifetime like I've had to say what I want to say about nature. I just don't think I can ever get it said. There just isn't time.

JOHN D. MORSE: Incidentally, we have spoken of critics. Whom do you feel -- who are the people who have written most understandingly about your work?

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: Well, of course, there is Mr. Richardson, and . . . .

JOHN D. MORSE: The article we've referred to?

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: Yes. He also wrote something for, I think, perhaps some little exhibition that Fleischman put on, which was very nice. Margaret Bruning has written very understandingly about my work. And Lloyd Goodrich. And, of course, Jack Baur, and then there was a writer down in Philadelphia, Dorothy . . . .

JOHN D. MORSE: Grapely.

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: Grapely. Whatever . . . she didn't write very much about my work -- only about things that appeared in Philadelphia -- but she seemed to understand them very much. And Jewell admired my work until I turned to my third period and he turned thumbs down on that.

JOHN D. MORSE: Edward Alden Jewell of The Times?

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: Yes. Which I didn't hold against him because he wasn't the only one.

JOHN D. MORSE: And yet, didn't you say earlier on that Mr. McBride did not find your middle period too happy?

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: No. He made the re . . . . Well, I think he was incensed because in 1928 I wrote an article for a magazine that's no published anymore, Creative Art . . . .

JOHN D. MORSE: Yes.

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: Do you remember that?

JOHN D. MORSE: Yes. Very well.

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: I wrote an article about myself and in that I tried to debunk the idea that I hated Salem. You know, there was a time that people in Salem were very much incensed about me.

JOHN D. MORSE: Did they think you were painting . . . ?

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: Well, they read that, and everybody else was repeating it, you know, after McBride, that I hated my home town, which I love very much. The people in it were nice to me and, when I graduated from high school, they practically insisted that I take a scholarship, which I hadn't thought of even applying for. Well, I mean my relations with the town were very good. But many of them thought, well, is he an ungrateful dog, you know? Then I tried to debunk that in this article I wrote. And at the same time, coincidentally, they had McBride's writeup, little article, with my article, in which he brought out this hate thing at the same time, see.

JOHN D. MORSE: I'm afraid it's an old editor's trick.

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: Well, he never forgave me for that, and never after that did he have anything good to say about my work. One thing he said was that Burchfield doesn't hate as much as he used to. He's probably selling more pictures, he's more comfortable and he's moved to a better part of town. And when he goes over to these places and paints them, it's as a visitor, you know. Slumming, you know, something like that.

JOHN D. MORSE: I'm surprised at that because I've always thought of McBride as one of our more perceptive critics.

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: But he did in my early period, he did, he set me off with a bang. My first exhibition, which was held at the Derarkian (?) Galleries, first important exhibition, he was very highly enthusiastic about that, and all through the Twenties.

JOHN D. MORSE: I'm glad to hear it.

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: And I still consider him . . . I mean I don't hold a grudge against anybody. I mean, if they don't like my work, that's all right. I mean, not everybody can like your work. I've had people say that they just don't -- well, they think I'm completely off the ball now, you know. Well, that doesn't make me mad. I mean they have a right to think that. "I like your middle period, that's swell, but now I think you're clear off the track," see.

JOHN D. MORSE: Luckily, you pay no attention to them.

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: No, and you should try not to pay any attention to critics, although I wouldn't -- some artists say they don't read the reviews, but I wouldn't be that much of a hypocrite, I hope. We read all the papers we can, read all the reviews, and . . . .

JOHN D. MORSE: But apparently the reviews have not influenced you greatly in what you want to paint or say?

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: No. Oh, I . . . .

JOHN D. MORSE: You haven't changed your style because of a review?

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: No. I don't think an artist can possibly do that. I mean you couldn't even if you wanted to, hardly. I mean if some critic said, well, I think he is . . . . Well, there have been some very important people in the art world who have said that they think that the only work of mine that's worth considering is the years from 1917 to 1918, and what I'm doing now is -- well, just not worth anything. I don't agree with them but at the same time I don't hold it against them.

JOHN D. MORSE: Going back further, Mr. Burchfield, have you read much in -- oh, in earlier criticisms -- oh, I'm thinking of people like Hunneker back in the late Nineteenth Century . . . ? What I'm getting at is: who do you

think has written well in general about American art? Not only your own paintings, but art in general? Who comes to mind as a good critic, or a good writer?

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: Oh, I just confess I can't think of when I've read very much like that.

JOHN D. MORSE: What about today?

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: Well now, I think that Elliott did a good job on his book -- what did he call it -- Three Hundred Years of American Painting?

JOHN D. MORSE: Yes.

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: I don't like his method of classifying artists. For example, I am classified as one of the traveling men, and to this day I haven't the faintest idea what he had in mind. But what he wrote about me is very understanding.

JOHN D. MORSE: Oh, really?

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: Yes.

JOHN D. MORSE: That's interesting to hear.

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: He classified me with a very diverse group -- the traveling men. I just can't figure it because I've always stuck in one locality, you know.

JOHN D. MORSE: Sounds very strange.

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: And I just don't understand it. But, on the other hand, when he gets down to writing about my work, he's another one, I think, that has written very understandingly.

JOHN D. MORSE: What about teaching, Mr. Burchfield? I notice that you've done considerable, if not sustained teaching, lecturing and so on in recent years. Do you enjoy that?

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: No.

JOHN D. MORSE: You don't?

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: No. I hope I never will do it again.

JOHN D. MORSE: You're through with it?

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: Yes. I don't feel . . . I did it reluctantly and I don't feel that I was a good teacher. For example, you asked me about how . . . why did I like watercolor over any other medium, and I told you I didn't know, which is true, because I've used it ever since I was a child, and used it -- it never presented any problems. It's as easy for me to work in water colors as for the ordinary person who isn't an artist to use pencil or pen. There's no thought required. The only thought that is required is what I'm going to do, what I'm going to put down. But the putting of it down is just as simple as breathing. And that being the case, I couldn't possibly tell anybody how to paint in watercolor. And that's what they wanted to know. And lots of times I was asked to teach, and students would enter my class hoping they would find out something about how to handle watercolor, and I would try to tell them. I told them: "Don't think about the medium. What you're trying to say is much more important that what you're saying it with. And if you're thinking about what you are trying to express, you may use watercolor like nobody else ever used it. And that's all right as long as you say what you want to say." But I'm sure that they just thought I was being cagey, I mean that I knew these tricks and I wouldn't give them to them. And, well, I wasn't -- and another thing that made me a bad teacher, I think, was I just hated to say anything nasty about anybody's work. I wasn't one of these kind that could just take over and tear it to pieces. Some of the students would say to me, "Well, Mr. Burchfield, will you tell me what you like about my paintings and what you don't like. Why don't you take it apart and tell me what's completely wrong with it?" Well, a lot of the time, you know, I would be saying to myself, "This person has no business trying to be an artist." You know you can't say that; I couldn't anyway. Maybe it would have been the nicest thing to do, but I just couldn't do it. But they worried me; those who weren't getting along worried me. And I understand that the best teachers just don't worry about that. I mean if a student has talent, many teachers pay attention to that student, and the other ones they pass by in silence. Well, I just couldn't do that, so I was quite miserable. Oh, it wasn't all bad. I mean I had two summer sessions down at Athens, Ohio, at Ohio University, which is not to be confused with Ohio State, . . .

JOHN D. MORSE: Yes.

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: . . . that I enjoyed very much. It was short sessions, and a very nice class of people came there. I fraternized with them, which a lot of teachers don't do. After hours I would go out with them. We'd go out to a place and drink beer, you know, and so on, and talk. They loved it and I did, too. The first time my wife couldn't go along on account of the family, but the second time she went along and she had just as much fun out of it as I did. And they didn't seem to demand too much of me in the way of a teacher, you know. I mean, oh, I know I helped some -- not all of them I could help -- and they did an incredible amount of work in two weeks. Then we had a little exhibition at the end of it, and some very good things, too. I enjoyed that. But I didn't enjoy the other teaching experiences. I conducted a seminar for the Albright School out here and, as far as I could see, it was a complete failure. I didn't get the students' sympathy or interest. They were all interested almost entirely in abstract art and there wasn't anything I could tell them about it, really.

JOHN D. MORSE: So you feel that you are through with teaching?

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: Yes, I hope I -- I don't think I will ever do it again.

JOHN D. MORSE: Mr. Burchfield, I know that you've been a good friend of Mr. Edward Hopper for a long time. Now, who are some of your other older friends with whom you keep in touch?

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: Well, there's Franklin Watkins from Philadelphia. And Eugene Speicher. And, well, I've been on the Guggenheim jury since 1940 and I got acquainted with some artists in that way. For instance, Mahonri Young.

JOHN D. MORSE: Oh, yes.

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: And it always seemed to me kind of tragic that, before I could be elected to the American Academy, a very good friend had to die. I took his chair, Mahonri Young's chair. I liked him very much. And there's Carl Zigrosser. And it's odd, I would only see these artists about once or twice a year, but through the years we have gotten acquainted with each other, I think, almost as much as if there was weekly or daily association. I think of them as very good friends. Of course, I haven't been able to serve for several years now, but if I'm feeling as good as I am now, I probably can go down next year again.

JOHN D. MORSE: Well, fine. I hope . . . .

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: Of course, Henry Moe -- I like and admire him very much. I think that whole setup is wonderful -- that Guggenheim Foundation.

JOHN D. MORSE: Well, I hope you can come to New York again, and come often, and we look forward to seeing you there.

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: Of course, there are the Whitney people. Of course, I didn't get acquainted with them too well until this retrospective came up; then, of course, there was a close association. We always have luncheon together, something like that, when I'm down.

JOHN D. MORSE: Well, we'll hope to see you again soon in New York, Mr. Burchfield. I think that covers most of the questions that I had to ask you. And I thank you very much, and for the Archives of American Art, for giving us all this wonderful information.

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: Well, I've enjoyed it too and I don't mind saying that I was a little apprehensive about doing it, but, as you say, it's been completely painless.

JOHN D. MORSE: Well, thank you very much.

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: I've enjoyed meeting you very much.

JOHN D. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Burchfield. Shall we listen to some of what we've been saying?

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: Yes. It would be kind of fun to listen.

JOHN D. MORSE: I think maybe Mrs. Burchfield might like to hear some of this.

CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD: Oh, yes.

JOHN D. MORSE: All right. Fine.

FOOTNOTE

JOHN D. MORSE: This is a footnote to the interview with Charles Burchfield. We walked up the long, narrow,

shady yard to the kitchen, where Mr. Burchfield suggested fruit juice, to which his wife immediately concurred. But, somehow, all three of us ended up with highballs: Mr. Burchfield and I had Old Forrester bourbon, and Mrs. Burchfield, Canadian Club. Mr. Burchfield pointed out that the sun was now over the yardarm and that it was perfectly proper that we should all three have a drink. Then we went back to the studio where I played part of the tape for Mrs. Burchfield and also for Mr. Burchfield. The studio is about twenty by thirty feet, with a six by eight foot north skylight. In the area under the skylight are, on one side, stacks of paintings along one wall, and a bench along the other, in very genial disorder. There is another bench in the area lighted by the skylight, and near it is the easel. Above the easel in a niche next to the skylight is the famous Mounted Crow. Crows have always appealed so much to Burchfield. Directly across the room from the easel is a comfortable rocking chair. Beside it, a small table piled with papers and a box of Kleenex. During the interview, Mr. Burchfield rocked gently in this chair with a microphone placed on a stool between us. As we played back the record he had the usual surprise over hearing his own voice -- far different, he said, from the way he imagined it. And Mrs. Burchfield was delighted with the quality of the voice, and assured him that it was exactly as he sounded. After we had played about fifteen minutes of the tape, Mr. Burchfield said, "Am I the one to say when we've had enough?" And I agreed that he was the one, and he said he thought we had had enough . Mrs. Burchfield then suggested lunch in a nearby restaurant and so we got into Mr. Burchfield's car, a 1951 Chrysler, and he backed out briskly into a maze of traffic in front of their home and whisked us down the road to a very pleasant restaurant. One the way, I asked him why he and Mrs. Burchfield had chosen this town of Gardenville when they moved to Buffalo in 1926, I believe it was, for the job with the wallpaper company. Well, he said then it was the only town within a radius of Buffalo, an easy radius, with a bus line on it, and it took him then only about twenty minutes to get to work and he could still be in the country.

At lunch we spoke of prices of paintings and Mr. Burchfield told the story of the painting Three Trees, now in the Salem Library in Salem, Ohio. When he learned that the citizens of Salem wanted a painting by their distinguished home town boy for the Library, he had then figured out the regular market price at that time, which was $1,800 for a picture of this size. And he said that he thought he should make a gesture, and so he cut the price in half and offered it to the committee for $1,000 -- I believe he said. Well, they were horrified at this price, that a picture should cost this much, so they refused to buy it. However, it was finally donated a few years later by a wealthy woman of the town in memory of Mr. Burchfield's mother. But, by this time, Mr. Burchfield's prices had gone up to $3,500, and that is what was paid for the Three Trees which now hangs in the Salem Library.

During lunch, Mr. Burchfield spoke of mushrooms -- we had had some mushrooms with out lunch -- and he told us what they were. I said, "Well, do you know about mushrooms? Could you tell poisonous ones from edible ones?" He said, "Oh, surely." And of course that was completely in character. As a boy he must have known all about mushrooms, with his love of nature and love of everything that grows. And so he went on rather -- well, very interestingly and he described with zest the flavor of a puffball, picked before they turn brown. And he said that it's easy to tell the edible amedia (?), I believe he called it. And he described then with joy the beauty of a huge, poisonous mushroom that appeared one morning in his backyard. He said it had a beautiful white both underneath and on top, as big as a coffee cup, enough to kill a hundred people. He said the mushroom destroys the red corpuscles and then you simply suffocate. He pointed out very factually that when you know that you have been poisoned by mushrooms, it is too late!

Back in the Burchfield's house, I told him about the Archives, more about the Archives that he knew, and its working methods. He did not know, for example, about the microfilming of records and then returning them to owners. When this had been suggested to him before, he deferred, or rather demurred, because he didn't want to lose them. But he said that this idea gave him a new light on lending his own records. He has a folder, he says, of notes for nearly every important picture he has ever painted, and a folder for many not yet painted. For example, he said, on the Whitney's painting Old House by the Creek he has a folder about two inches thick. And he pointed out that his notes alone could almost fill the Archives. And I assured him that the microfilm took up a very little space, and that we would be delighted to have these records. I think he is agreeable to having his notebooks microfilmed immediately. Could these possibly be microfilmed in Buffalo under Bartlett Cowdrey's direction? Burchfield further said that his journal, which he has kept almost all his life, he wants to leave to his estate, because he thinks it might have some money value, and he is therefore naturally reluctant, as he said I believe on the tape, to turn it over to the Archives at this time.

[END OF INTERVIEW AND FOOTNOTE]

Last updated... July 22, 2002