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Oral history interview with William H. Pierson, 1981 Mar. 11-1982 Jan. 14

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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with William Harvey Pierson on March 11; July 21; August 10, 1981; and January 14, 1982. The interview took place in Williamstown, Massachusetts, and was conducted by Robert Brown for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

The Archives of American Art has reviewed the transcript and has made corrections and emendations. 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 Williamstown, Massachusetts, March 11, 1981, with William Pierson. Robert Brown, the interviewer.

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: I'm William Pierson, the guy who's being interviewed.

[Audio Break.]

ROBERT BROWN: Perhaps we could begin with your talking a bit about your childhood. In particular, think of things that may have led toward what you eventually have concentrated on. Were you born here in the East?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: I was born in a little—a semi-industrial town of Bloomfield, New Jersey, which lies between Newark and Montclair, and attended the public schools there. I think probably the most important thing with respect to my own future life was the fact that, from the very beginning, I was very much interested in art. I seemed to have a talent for drawing. In high school, in particular, I had an art teacher who was a marvelous person, and who encouraged me. I took every art course I could take, and from that, went on after high school to the Yale Art School. I think, in terms of my childhood, that would be the most important thing.

ROBERT BROWN: Was the instruction in high school quite disciplined?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: It was disciplined in the sense that it was a conventional, classical training of the kind that one would expect to get in any art school at that time. This was in the—I graduated from high school in the winter class of 1930.

ROBERT BROWN: That instruction in the '20s in high school—

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: I was in the '20s in high school, so that Ms. Thomas had been trained as a teacher in that conventional sense of drawing from the cast, of doing the conventional graphic techniques. [00:02:15] We did etchings, for example. We had facilities there at the high school, an etching press. We did woodcut. I did still life painting. I did landscape painting, which she encouraged, which she would then criticize.

ROBERT BROWN: You would go out in nature?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: I would go out in the nature and paint. I did this all through high school. Did a lot of it.

ROBERT BROWN: Was this quite a popular kind of course? Or maybe it was—

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: It was reasonably popular. I wouldn't say popular, no. I think, as a matter of fact, that particular phase of my activity would have been regarded by most of the young people there as eccentric, although it wasn't looked down upon. I don't mean that, because I was good friends with all of the kids in the school.

ROBERT BROWN: Were your family encouraging?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: My family was encouraging from the very beginning.

ROBERT BROWN: Had they an interest in art?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: They had no interest in art whatsoever. My father was an electrical—electrician, really, what you call him today. He was an electrical inspector, actually, for a fire insurance company. He quit high school just before he graduated. My mother never went beyond the seventh grade. So there was no intellectual stimulus of the kind in the household that would have encouraged me or directed me toward the

world of art. But there was a determination, in both my mother and father, that my brother and I should have the best possible education, and they encouraged anything of this kind that we seemed to be inclined toward. I think my father had very great potential talent. [00:04:01] He was a good draftsman, and the big problem in his life is that he never received the education that would have encouraged the talents that were there. My mother was also talented, in a musical sense, and I also have this as a second dimension in my own life. Trained baritone voice, and have been involved in music all my life.

ROBERT BROWN: Bloomfield, at that time, was quite a pleasant community?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Well, it was small. It was industrial, but it was small, and it was quiet. Yes, it was. The high school—there were only 44 people in my class, 44 kids in my class, in high school. That was small, to be sure, even for its time, but they didn't get to be much bigger than about 100, so that it was a small school, and a relatively small, at that time, small community.

ROBERT BROWN: You're right near New York. Did you go in there occasionally to look at things?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Never to look at anything. I never went to—

ROBERT BROWN: Newark, perhaps, which is—

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: I never went to—the only art gallery or art museum I ever went to was the one in Montclair, New Jersey, where, occasionally, I had, in their annual show, a painting exhibited. My first triumph as a painter was to be accepted at the Montclair annual show, and I still have that painting.

ROBERT BROWN: There are some pretty—there had been, at least, some pretty considerable painters involved with that Montclair Museum.

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Yes, that's right, and this was an interesting show, as a matter of fact. It was the encouragement that I had from old Anna P. Thomas that turned me on to that track. I went away during the summers. My family always tried to get away, for both my brother and me, to the summers. [00:06:00] We summered for a while up in central Maine. After the First World War, my father was, as a civilian electrician, in the submarine service. We spent the war years down in New London, Connecticut, where he was working on submarines. Down there, we met a very interesting man, who was an enlisted man in the submarine service, whose family came from Maine. He came from Maine. They ran a summer hotel on this lake in Maine, and every summer, we would go up there and get a cottage. My mother and her sister—we would share. My aunt and uncle and my father and mother would share this cabin. We'd be there all summer—

ROBERT BROWN: Where was this?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: It was in the little town of Unity, which is about 25 miles east of Waterville, in that area, south-central Maine. Beautiful, isolated country at that point. So my brother and I had this experience summers, and I used to draw and paint up there, and then—

ROBERT BROWN: Was your brother also interested?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: No, he wasn't particularly. He became a dentist, ultimately. He's living up in New Hampshire still. But we did get a very deep love of the woods, and fishing, and that kind of thing. This is still part of my life and his. In fact, every spring we go off together on a fishing expedition, just to keep that contact alive, and to keep the interest and enthusiasm going. We go up to Maine. We go up into the heart of the Maine woods, way up, in the Mt. Katahdin region. I suppose that all of this leads to the ultimate, obvious conclusion that there's a high level of romanticism built into me from the very beginning, both in terms of my home life, because my mother was a great romantic. [00:08:12] The household was filled with a kind of love that I am grateful for. We didn't have the intellectual stimulus, but we sure as hell had love, and that, I think, was very important in encouraging me to go in the direction that I did, and not follow all the pragmatic potential of all the other kids in the school, but be willing to say, "I'm going to go to an art school," which I did.

ROBERT BROWN: That wasn't necessarily a career school, was it? If you were going to be an artist, you wouldn't be—

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: That's right. No, no, it would not be a career in the sense that you'd be training for business or something of that kind. On the other hand, I think I thought of it very seriously in terms of becoming a painter. I don't think I ever really thought of how I would make money at it. It was reasonably carefree years in the early '20s, of course, until the latter part of the decade, when the whole world fell apart. The years preceding that, when old Cal Coolidge and Herbert Hoover were president, everyone thought the world was a big oyster, and it was.

ROBERT BROWN: You could take some chances.

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: You could take some chances, right. So I went up to the Yale Art School.

ROBERT BROWN: Was that your choice, your first choice?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: My choice was the Yale Art School, which, at that time, was considered by most people who were in the know as the top art school in the East, certainly, and probably in the country. [00:10:00] It gained its reputation, or affirmed its reputation, by the fact that, for 10 consecutive years—I think it was 10 years—the Prix de Rome Prize, which was given out every year, was won by a Yale graduate. I think it was 10 consecutive years that that happened.

ROBERT BROWN: That was something you knew about?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: That was something my teacher knew about and encouraged me to know about.

ROBERT BROWN: She wouldn't encourage you, say, to go the more loosely structured, say, Art Students League?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: No, she didn't. Moreover, I was inclined toward Yale because the opportunities there for advancing other dimensions of my education were attractive. I was interested in other things. I did pretty well in high school. I got decent grades. I was president of my class, that kind of thing. My own inclination was to learn as much as I could about as many things as I could. Yale seemed to offer that opportunity in a way that the Art Students League didn't. It was a prestigious place. It was an art school steeped in tradition. I went up there. I was deeply moved by what I saw. I had a friendly reception. I took some drawings that I had done for Ms. Thomas, and they were pleased to see them, and encouraged me to come. In fact, I was able to go into the first-year class, instead of going into what they call the preparatory class. The course of instruction, in those years, if you started from scratch in the preparatory class, was six years to get a bachelor's degree. If you started in the—I'm sorry, five years if you began in the preparatory class. [00:12:04] If you got out of that, it was a regular four-year course.

ROBERT BROWN: What did the curriculum consist of?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: The curriculum consisted of—the first year, consisted of life—I mean, drawing from the cast, and painting still life, and a design course—a composition course, they called it, where we did weekly projects, sometimes biweekly projects, assignments that were given to us, most of them of a kind of mural-decorating kind. There was a very strong emphasis then on mural decoration. I think one of the principle reasons for that was, first of all, the current thrust in architecture and sculpture was toward architectural embellishment, and there was a lot of opportunity for mural painting. This was the supreme level of achievement that an artist could arrive at, was to become a great mural painter.

ROBERT BROWN: This was still very much the Renaissance?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Still very much the Beaux Arts Renaissance tradition, right. The principle teacher, the man who drew students there, was a man by the name of Eugene Francis Savage. He was one of the most skillful life painters I've ever seen. The man's capacity to take paint and put it onto canvas and make a figure come to life was absolutely remarkable. He was a very stilted decorator. He painted in a kind of quasi-Byzantine style, and if you know the Yale Library at all, and you march into the desk there, you'll see above it a great mural painting of—I can't remember what the allegorical figure is—education or whatever, surrounded by the arts and stuff, and it's all right there, and it's very splendid, and of course absolutely appropriate to that beautiful Gothic setting. [00:14:10] That was the kind of spirit that prevailed. Then we took a number of courses in art history. We had to. This was required. We also were encouraged to take courses in Yale College, and I did every year that I was there. I signed up for at least one course, and sometimes more than that. Courses in English, courses in language, things of that kind that were opportunities to—and history.

ROBERT BROWN: Was Savage a very approachable person? What was he like as a teacher?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Savage was a very interesting man. Yes, he was approachable. He was very warm with the students. He came up only about twice a month, actually. He came up from New York, and it was the great day when he came to give us a criticism in life painting. I can remember him coming into a class and standing in front of a student's work, and working on it. He had marvelous insights into the whole business of painting the human figure. He would suddenly say, "Give me a canvas." So someone would scrounge around and bring in a nice, clean canvas that he'd spent his month's salary on, as it were—his month's allowance, rather. And then, "Give me a clean palette." He would take a tube of paint, and he would put his—he had enormous hands, and he'd take the tube, and he'd take a hold of it here, and he'd clamp down with these two fingers, and then he would pull like this, and the whole tube would come out on the palette, see. [Laughs.] The

whole tube, and you could see this poor guy. There was his—he'd been working his eyes out to buy this paint, and the whole thing squirts out on his palette. [00:16:00] Then Savage would go to work. The great asset, as far as the fellow who contributed the canvas and paints was concerned, is he got to keep the picture, the painting.

ROBERT BROWN: What would he begin with? Which color was that paint?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: It's interesting, because the palette, which we used in life class there in those years, was what was called then the earth palette, and I suspect that's as good a term as any even today. It consisted of white and black, and then burnt and raw umber, terre verte, which was a neutral green, a kind of Indian red. What did they call it? It was a sort of muted red. Yellow ochre, and ultramarine blue. That was it. That was the palette that we'd use for life painting, and it was remarkable, the way that could be manipulated to get extremely subtle silver tones, the umbers in particular for the half-tones. I remember that. Oh, burnt and raw sienna. We were instructed that the burnt and raw sienna were the shadow tones, the umbers were the transitional tones, the shadow edges, and the red and the ochre and the white and the terre verte and the blue were the illuminated tones. This was all we ever used. We didn't dare put vermillion or anything like that, or any of the chromes or the cadmiums, into that palette when you were working from the life figure. That was what we would use. I must say, it was an interesting experience to see how you could, indeed, make human flesh come alive with that—[00:18:01]

ROBERT BROWN: Were you directly painting from the model—

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Yes.

ROBERT BROWN: —within a year or so?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: I got out. I graduated from the cast drawing the first month. We had monthly reviews. I, the first year I was there, was put into the life drawing class within the first month. The third month, I was graduated from still life painting to painting the head, the human head. That was the approach to the life painting. Then, in the second year, instead of the third year, I went into life painting. So that part of my training was advanced, and I had the opportunity to get an extra year of life painting in, as it were.

ROBERT BROWN: For you, was the transition from drawing to painting very difficult?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: No, no, not at all, because I had been painting. I had been using oils for a long, long time, mostly landscape and still life. I had done very little in the way of portrait painting or anything of that kind. We worked—I mean, all morning long, we were in life drawing class. All afternoon, we were in life painting class. Then, in the meantime, we were working on our compositions, our designs that we were working on for old Dick Rathbone, and we were taking our other courses, our art history courses.

ROBERT BROWN: The design course was something that went on a pace, separately?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: It went on a pace, separately. You had one criticism, one formal meeting a week, when you brought your drawings in, your designs in, and they were criticized, and the class worked on it as well as the teacher. Then you had conferences with the teacher during the week.

ROBERT BROWN: How did this relate to the drawing and the painting courses?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Only that all of the ultimate objective would be to take what you were doing in a design course and render this, if you ever got to that point. [00:20:06] We never did. We always just submitted them in small-scale renderings. Watercolor—

ROBERT BROWN: The aim of that course was what, to develop the classical—

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: That's right. The laws of order, that's right, and all according to academic principles of balance and color and all of the other things. Raphael was the great kind of design, and the Renaissance principle of the pyramid. That was drummed into us. If you put a diagonal here, you had a counter diagonal there. You know, this is the way the thing worked.

ROBERT BROWN: Was it a stimulating course?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: It was a stimulating course. It was taught by a very interesting man, a fellow named Rathbone, who was himself extremely talented. Had extraordinary sense of color and form. A beautiful draftsman, a very elegant draftsman. Was very delicate stuff. He had that kind of infinite sensitivity toward very beautiful form in the world of art. After all, let's face it: there are very beautiful things in the classical tradition. He was able to communicate this in a very real way, and he was a stimulating man. He had lots of ideas. It was an exciting place to be.

ROBERT BROWN: This was appealing to you?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: This was very—the whole thing was appealing to me. The first thing that I should say is that I came to this great institution just to say Yale University, whether I was in the art school or wherever I was. I came from a very provincial environment, in terms of cultural opportunities and benefits, to probably one of the great seats of learning in the world. [00:22:01] This awed me in the highest degree. I had to keep pinching myself to say, what am I doing here? Those were the days when all of us were grateful to be there, because none of us had any money. These were the days right following the crash of '29. So there were a lot of us in the same boat, who were struggling to keep the wolf from the door at the same time we were going to school. We were all working for a living. We were waiting on tables and doing things of that kind. There were a handful of people who had money and who didn't have to do that, but not many. Most of us were really struggling along. So there was a sense of—gratitude is the only word I can think of—for the privilege of being there in that great institution. If I can digress for a moment, I think one of the most important things that happened to me in my ultimate understanding of myself—let's put it that way—was the experience I had on the first Sunday I went to—arrived at Yale. I was homesick. It was a brilliant, beautiful fall day. I remember that. But I was homesick. I was also very church-inclined at that point, and so I went to the chapel service at the old Battell Chapel, which is still there at Yale. It's the central chapel of the university. I heard, for the first time in my life, a magnificent male chorus. I had never heard anything like this in my life before. I was so overwhelmed by this that I sort of staggered out after. Furthermore, the whole service—the man who preached the sermon was—I can't remember who it was at this point, but it was a brilliant thing. [00:24:07] And the sort of pageantry of the procession, of the academic procession, with the president of the college in the lead, and the academic robes, and all of that that went along with it. I had never seen anything like this. When I went out, I turned around the corner of the chapel and I saw the choir coming out the back door, and I sort of wandered over. This very attractive, handsome, blonde, curly-haired young man stood there, and he spotted me. For some reason or other, he came over, and he said, "We haven't seen you before. I'm"—can't remember his name now. Um. Oh. I'll remember it. He later became head of music out here at Elmira College. Well, anyway—Bob Goodell [ph], I think it was. About six-foot-four, and a beautiful bass voice. I can still hear that wonderful, rich voice. He introduced himself, and I said, "You're a member of the choir?" He said yes. I had been president of our glee club at high school, and so I had been singing for a long time, the kind of thing that a high school glee club sings. We got talking a little bit about this, and he said, "Well, you know, if you've had this kind of experience," he said, "how would you like to sing in this choir?" I said, "My gosh, that never occurred to me." He said, "I tell you, we're looking for a second tenor." He said, "Let me take you in and introduce you to the choir master," who was then the great Harry Benjamin Jepson, who was one of the great organists of his time. An incredible man. One of the great influences in my life. [00:26:01] So I walked in with Goodell and was introduced to Jepson. He had a kind of lion head, shocky head of hair, which, in those days, was the mark of the artist, and these wonderfully warm human eyes. I was introduced, and Bob said, "This chap thinks he might like to sing in the choir." So we made an appointment for the next day. I went around and sang for him. The next Sunday, I was singing in that choir. That, to me, was one of the greatest moments in my life. I sang in that choir, in the daily choir, through the whole time I was at Yale. Through that experience, I came to know the president of Yale, James Rowland Angell. We became very good friends, because every Sunday, we saw each other. Here is this little provincial character from Bloomfield, New Jersey, suddenly thrown into the very core, as it were, of this marvelous, exciting, cultured community. I think, in many ways, even more than the Yale Art School itself, that was the thing that gave me the kind of confidence that I needed to really take hold of myself and say, this is what I want to do in life.

ROBERT BROWN: You found, soon, that music was—

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: I found, right at the beginning, that I had something to offer that somebody else didn't have—very few people had. This simple experience of singing in that choir, with that marvelous man directing us, was—

ROBERT BROWN: You said Jepson was very influential on you?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: He was tremendously influential. Again, we became close friends. I became a very good friend of the chaplain, Sid Lovett, who, just a short while ago, died, as a matter of fact, just a couple of years ago. [00:28:05] Again, one of the marvelous men of the world.

ROBERT BROWN: What sort of things do you think there were in these men that so influenced you at that time? Were they advising you?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Well, no. It seems—I think one of the things that impressed me so was the extreme contrast between what my life had been and what I suddenly was thrust into. If you go to a certain type of school, a certain type of prep school, where you are, piece by piece, brought into a world of culture, then moving to a world like Yale is natural. It's just the next step. There was nothing in my high school that prepared me for what I encountered there at Yale. It was an outreach from the world of the art department, which in a sense was kind of isolated from the university, you see. It was an eccentric kind of—something you bore, because it had to

be there, as far as Yale community was concerned. It gave me the contact with the other part of the university. In other words, brought me into the heart of the university, in a way I never would have experienced before. It simply encouraged in me, I think, a broader intellectual curiosity. I began to see the light in ways of thinking that had never occurred to me before. A simple conversation for five minutes with James Rowland Angell was an extraordinary experience. This man was one of the most articulate men I ever met in my life. To hear the English language used like this, for one thing, in conversation, you see, by this extraordinary man. To hear the people who preached in there, from Paul Tillich on down. [00:30:04] I had never heard these ideas expressed, this kind of thinking, in the world of religion. I had come from a provincial little church in Bloomfield, where everything was doctrinaire and right out of the Sunday school, and suddenly I find there are other ways of thinking. It was that sort of dimension that opened up for me, which might not have opened up in the art school, which had a tendency to be professional.

ROBERT BROWN: More—almost a workshop.

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Almost a workshop type of thing.

ROBERT BROWN: You were training. You were apprentice—

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: That's right, that's right.

ROBERT BROWN: Were you even overwhelmed by this broader intellectual atmosphere?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: I was, indeed.

ROBERT BROWN: Did you keep your bearings?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: I kept my bearings all right, but I must say, I felt awfully—I can remember walking away that day, after having sung for Jepson. I can remember walking down the campus, and just the thrill—the sense of sudden marvelous achievement. I had heard this thing one Sunday; the next Sunday, I was going to be singing in it, you see, and there I was. I was part of the procession, and I was making the music that had stirred me so the Sunday before. I don't know how to say this, but coming from the kind of background that I did, where I had never heard that kind of thing in my life before—I had heard glee clubs. I had heard the church choir. I had heard that. But this male chorus of 60 voices, some of them professional—they had about eight voices in there were trained, professional voices, as a kind of backbone to the choir, and the rest were all students. It was just a tremendous experience. It went on, and as I say, music became an essential second half of my life. [00:32:00] Through that, I came to meet some interesting people, do some fascinating things. I got into a quartet. We sang around. We sang on the radio. We sang vaudeville. We did all kinds of fascinating things, and I made quite a lot of money at it. This was another important aspect. I was paid for all of this. This wasn't free at all. I got paid for singing every Sunday. I got paid for singing every day in a daily choir. So that that was a supporting thing, which made it possible for me, I think, to approach the work in the art school with a somewhat—now, there were perfectly—there were other kids there who had had this kind of cultural enlightenment before they even came to the art school. I don't mean to say that I was the only one who was participating in the rest of the community. I was not. There were lively people there.

ROBERT BROWN: This enabled you to not merely be engrossed in your—

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: That's right. That's right. This brought me outside, into the world of Yale itself. I took courses in history and English and language. Those were the three, primarily, that I counted on. Now, the interesting thing is—and I might as well tell you this story now, because—when I graduated from Yale, the degree I got was a bachelor of fine arts, which was a professional degree, which had no standing whatsoever in the Yale Graduate School. When I graduated from Yale, I was—matter of fact, I should go back and say that after getting my bachelor's degree, I stayed on and got my master's in painting, MFA, which was another two years. In other words, I spent six years at Yale.

ROBERT BROWN: From '30 to '36?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: [19]'30 to '36. That master's degree—I got the first one ever given by Yale in painting. They introduced the program when I was there as a student, and then I was the first to opt to take it, so I got the first MFA that Yale ever gave in painting. [00:34:08] During those two years, I took even more courses at Yale, so that when I ended up, I had a fairly substantial academic record of courses outside of the art school. Now, when I graduated from my master's in '36, Peg and I were married, and my first job was teaching out in Cleveland, in a boys school. I was the art teacher and the track coach—and skiing coach. [Laughs.] We spent two years at this, but I was restless there, and I obviously wanted to do more. I had gotten interested in teaching at this point. We decided—I went to summer school from Cleveland, and there I got fascinated with art history, and I decided I'd go back to graduate school in art history, because that seemed to me to be assessing my own talents as a painter against my enthusiasms. That seemed to me to point in a good direction.

ROBERT BROWN: This interest in art history had begun at Yale?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: It had begun at Yale. I was an assistant in one of the art history courses as a graduate student. That was one of the things I did. I read papers. This got me interested in art history, and as a matter of fact, while I was there as a graduate student, the marvelous old Edwin Cassius Taylor, who was chairman of the art school, died suddenly. My friend, Dick Rathbone, who was the one who taught the composition course, was tapped to teach this course, and I was his assistant, so I got involved in that course, in working with him with the students and so on, as a graduate student, and that got me interested in teaching, in a very real sense. [00:36:05]

ROBERT BROWN: Even though you were the first MFA in painting, you didn't think you—by the time you had gone to Cleveland, you didn't think you wanted to go on to make a career of being a painter?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: When I first went to Cleveland, I had this notion in mind, but the summer that I went to graduate school—I got to summer school at Harvard. I met, there, a young man by the name of George Hanfmann, who again was a brilliant teacher, and a classicist. I took a course in classical art with him, which was absolutely marvelous. It got me so fired up that I got interested in art history. He was the one that encouraged me to go on to graduate school. Then came the question of where to go to graduate school, and to carry my story a little further about my lack of a bachelor's degree. I suggested applying to Yale, but I found that both Yale and Harvard would simply not accept me, because I had no formal bachelor's degree. I had never graduated from an undergraduate college, only from the Yale Art School, mind you.

ROBERT BROWN: And even Yale couldn't accept that?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: No, they wouldn't accept that. Yale Graduate School would not accept anything short of a bachelor's degree.

ROBERT BROWN: Even though you probably had the equivalent—

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: I had the equivalent—

ROBERT BROWN: —number of courses.

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: —but they wouldn't accept this. I did not graduate from a formal—I did not matriculate, is the way they put it, from a formal four-year college institution, so they wouldn't even accept my application. My friend at Yale that I got to know very well, who later became director of the Yale Art Gallery, Theodore Sizer, Teddy Sizer, who taught courses in art history—was a marvelous man, marvelous family. They lived there. They were great friends of students. [00:38:00] When I had graduated from Yale and gone out to Cleveland and decided I wanted to go on to graduate school, I wrote to him. He said, "Why do you worry about Yale?" He said, "NYU has a marvelous graduate course." He said, "Moreover, they have a Yale fellowship, which goes only to Yale graduates, and you would qualify for this, and I think I can assure you that I can get it for you." Well, he did. Getting the Yale fellowship at NYU, I gave up my teaching post and went to NYU Graduate School.

ROBERT BROWN: You were able—even though you were—

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Now, NYU, you see, would accept my credits. They didn't care where I had gotten these courses, so long as they added up to sufficient points in their system. NYU accepted me as a graduate student, and I got an MA in the history of art from NYU. On the basis of that MA in the history of art, I went back to the Yale Graduate School. So I fooled them. [Laughs.] They don't know to this day. I think that I'm probably the only living human being who's ever gotten a PhD from Yale who never graduated from a formal college. It was the MA from NYU that I offered, you see, as my entrance degree, and they accepted it.

ROBERT BROWN: But in fact, that art school, and particularly the fact that you've gone on for six years there, getting your MFA, you've really done as much academic work in the—

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Absolutely. I had all the credits that were necessary, sure.

ROBERT BROWN: —going through Yale College.

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Absolutely, but Yale wouldn't accept it, because it was not a formal—I didn't formally have that BA

ROBERT BROWN: At Yale, in the '30s, in art history, was there a separate faculty for that?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Yes. Some of the courses were taught by people in the art school. The course in Renaissance painting was taught by Rathbone, who was our composition teacher. [00:40:00] The introductory course, which was called Pictorial Art, was taught by Edwin Cassius Taylor, who was the chairman of the painting

department. The course in history of architecture was taught by old Victor Meeks, who was head of the architectural school.

ROBERT BROWN: So none of these—this was before the modern kind of art historian—

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Well, not really, because when I was there, the graduate work in art history was already fairly well-established at Yale. Among those who were teaching in that particular group were people like Carroll Meeks, George Hamilton, who was then a very young instructor at Yale, Sumner Crosby, and Marcel Aubert, and Henri Focillon. They were on the faculty there. So they had a very strong art history program going.

ROBERT BROWN: It was very new, wasn't it?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: It was brand-new. Yes, it was. It was brand-new. But it provided us with opportunities, you see, to take other courses, other than the three that were taught by people in our—and then there was a wonderful course that was offered at Yale in the graduate school, called Pots and Pans, which was taught by Johnny Phillips, who was, of course, the curator of the Garvan Collection. Extremely interesting, fascinating, urbane, and sophisticated man. It was a very elegant course. Charlie Nagel and Johnny Phillips taught a course in American art that I took, and both of them were extraordinary men in terms of their simple sophistication. They were extremely elegant, beautiful language, and beautiful taste. [00:42:05] It was all impeccable. It was all just what every Yale undergraduate needed to make him a gentleman. At the same time, it had great strength. It was a good course. These were bright men, these were educated men. Johnny Phillips became, of course, one of the famous teachers of Yale.

ROBERT BROWN: Was their scholarship much in those days?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Yes. I was completely on scholarship all the way through.

ROBERT BROWN: No, I mean, was their scholarship—

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Oh, yes, of course. Johnny Phillips was the great expert on American silver. I think that Nagel was not quite the scholar that Phillips was, although he had an immense interest in the world of art. He went on to become director of the Kansas City, uh—

ROBERT BROWN: Oh, the Nelson Gallery?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: That's right, in Kansas City. Or is it St. Louis?

ROBERT BROWN: I think it was St. Louis.

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: I think it's St. Louis.

ROBERT BROWN: Did you notice a difference in the teaching between those men and Taylor?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Yes, yes. Taylor—

ROBERT BROWN: And the people who were in the more professionally trained art historians under—such as Aubert, Focillon, George Hamilton?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Yes, very much so.

ROBERT BROWN: Was there a difference in the teaching?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: There was a real difference in the teaching, that's right. Taylor's teaching of the history of art was from the point of view of the painter. He had certain insights into painting that the other people didn't have. There was a kind of rivalry between them, which was unfortunate. There really was. In fact, there was open antagonism. It was more than rivalry. It was open antagonism. It was one of the darker aspects of the whole thing. Lane Faison was there as a student, and as an assistant to Focillon, when I was a graduate student at Yale, so I got to know Lane there before we even came up—[00:44:05]

ROBERT BROWN: So he went straight art history?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: He went straight art history. He came from Princeton, where he—

ROBERT BROWN: There wasn't hard feelings between—

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: In certain instances, there were, yes. There were. It's unfortunate. Old Dean Meeks didn't do much to help it. Meeks himself was one of the most interesting people in the whole world of art

education in those years. He was a very powerful man. He was wealthy. He had enormous political clout in the world in general. He walked in the highest social circles. His friends were the most prominent people in the country, from the president on down. It was that kind—he arrived every morning in a chauffeured car. He dressed impeccably. He had quarters in one of the colleges there.

ROBERT BROWN: Was he head of the art history—

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: He was head of the whole business, of the whole art school. He was the dean. He was an architect of the Beaux Arts tradition, the McKim, Mead & White, the Ralph Adams Cram. These were the great heroes of architecture, and his whole attitude was conditioned by this basic, fundamental training. He was a bachelor. He was a little, short man. Enormous in size. He must have weighed 300 pounds. He was as round as he was high. We called him the little king. He had a little, formal goatee, and a very high voice, kind of nasty, nasal voice. He was a very severe man as a dean. He was unsmiling. [00:46:00] If you were called into his office, you went in with fear and trembling, because this was an ordeal. He ran the school with that kind of authoritarian oversight. But on the other hand, he brought to it certain qualities of discipline that I have always regarded with gratitude. His course in the history of architecture was one of the best courses I've ever taken anywhere. It was given by an architect, about architecture, and a man who had genuine insights into the history, historical problems. His was quite different than Taylor's. Taylor was not intellectual—the painter. Meeks was an intellectual of the highest order, and his course was constructed in those terms.

ROBERT BROWN: He would speculate on historical questions?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: That's right, he would speculate on historical questions, and he would open our eyes to historical problems, and to the nature of architecture as it relates to man. We were reading, constantly, books of a kind of philosophical nature. We read Ruskin, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*. This was part of the program of learning about building. The only fault I think I would find with Dean Meeks's course at this point is that the modern world was relegated to one lecture at the end, which he called the cardboard, gas-pipe style. He treated it with the most profound derision. The whole notion of the Bauhaus, which, by this time, was already established in Germany, the whole notion of this was ridiculous to him. Walter Gropius was the great enemy of progress in architecture. His understanding ended there.

ROBERT BROWN: He seemed to feel that the Beaux Arts tradition would continue?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Sure. There was no doubt about it, in his mind, that this was the way architecture would go. [00:48:03]

ROBERT BROWN: Despite the Depression?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Despite the Depression, right. Well, that didn't bother him, because he was cutting his coupons, and everything was working out for him. I guess he made his investments in the proper way, so that the crash of '29 didn't influence it.

ROBERT BROWN: You say he somehow didn't intervene to prevent this kind of tension among the artist-art historians and the—

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: He didn't at all, no.

ROBERT BROWN: —professional art historians.

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: He did not intervene in any way. Of course, you see, those who were teaching in the graduate school didn't come under his jurisdiction. They came under the jurisdiction of the dean of the graduate school. It was specifically a graduate course. Now, undergraduates who wanted to take art historical courses could take Taylor's course. They did. A lot of the people in that—it was an enormous course. A lot of the kids in there were undergraduates.

ROBERT BROWN: Did he emphasize, particularly, techniques, and ask you to observe them?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Yes, and composition, and how attitudes toward design changed. It was completely a course taught from the painter's point of view. Well, it was good to have it taught, in some ways, from the—

ROBERT BROWN: Don't you think it's perhaps unfortunate that there was later a split, and that one way in art history you seldom have the artist glimpse of art history?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: I think this is very true, and I think one of the reasons Lane Faison asked me to come to Williams was that I brought to my teaching here not only a training in art history, because by then I'd had two years at NYU, but my long experience as a painter in the Yale Art School. I think I brought insights into my handling of the teaching of the history of painting, sensitivities and insights into the nature of painting, what

it meant to put a brush on canvas, than either Whitten or Lane. [00:50:04] I'm not saying this in a way to downgrade their teaching ability, but I think that they would agree with this, that I brought certain insights that they didn't have. I think there's a lot to be said for that. A lot to be said for that.

ROBERT BROWN: You were, in a way, at Yale at a very fortunate time.

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: I was, absolutely.

ROBERT BROWN: When you went—well, your graduate work, of course, you went to NYU, but later, you went back to Yale.

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: I went back to Yale.

ROBERT BROWN: Eventually, and you were working with professional art historians.

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: That's right.

ROBERT BROWN: At NYU—you went there in '38?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: I went there in '38, that's right.

ROBERT BROWN: Were, already, some of these eminent refugee art historians on board?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Yes.

ROBERT BROWN: Could you describe a bit that school?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: When I went there, I went for my first interview. I talked with Walter Cook, who was the chairman. Again, a remarkable man. Did you ever know Walter?

ROBERT BROWN: I've seen him, but I never knew him.

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: He was—how do you describe Walter? He was a bull of strength, simple physical strength. You simply couldn't knock him out. He was filled with energy, filled with enthusiasm. As a scholar, he was a little muddled. He was renown as a scholar of Spanish art, but he was a very muddled teacher. He was not a good teacher.

ROBERT BROWN: Had he been European-trained in art?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: I don't know where Walter got his training, frankly. I haven't any idea. That's an interesting question. I've never asked myself that. His role was not so much that as the teacher. He taught a course in methods, for example, that was a farce. Sort of puttered along. He'd get a box of slides, and he'd show us slide and say, "Next slide, please," and then—[coughs]—he had a bad cough. [Coughs.] "Next slide, please." [Coughs.] [00:52:00] And that's about the lecture. The slides just tumble through. Anyway, as a leader and man of molding an institution, he was tremendous. It was Walter Cook who had the wit to get into that institution these people who were running away from Germany, the people who were there when I was there. Karl Lehmann in classics, Walter Friedlaender in the Baroque, Richard Krautheimer, Erwin Panofsky. These are the people we were working with. It was an absolutely extraordinary group of probably some of the greatest scholars in the world, and it was a wonderfully relaxed place.

ROBERT BROWN: Where was it?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: It was on East 82nd Street—East 80th Street, I'm sorry. I lived on 82nd Street. Peg and I lived on East 82nd Street, just a few blocks from—it was 17 East 80th Street. They've now moved down to the Duke Mansion, and I can't remember the address. It's right around the corner from—but it was on East 80th Street. Our classes were either there—our seminars were there, or some of our lecture classes were over in the Metropolitan. We used the Metropolitan library, and the Frick. We also used the library at NYU, but in those years, it wasn't much of a library. They were just still building. I guess it's pretty good now.

ROBERT BROWN: Would you say it was very informal or relaxed?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: It was informal, relaxed—

ROBERT BROWN: Compared with Yale?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Compared with Yale—now, the difference between Yale and NYU is this. At NYU, the filter for the degree is at the top. You have to struggle through and take a tremendously difficult final

examination, oral examination, and everything else to get your degree. In other words, it's much easier to get into NYU. It's much harder to graduate. At Yale, it's much harder to get in. The classes there were limited. [00:54:00] When I was there, we had, in most of our seminars, six people. I think they take up to 10 now, something like that. It's a very small, select group of people, who, when they choose them, they have decided then that they're going to go through for their PhD At NYU, there were a lot of people in there who never intended to go on to a PhD and it kind of livened the group. The classes were bigger. Not the seminars. The seminars were still—well, we'd have 12, 15 in a seminar. The bigger classes, the lecture classes, had a lot of people in them who were never going to go on beyond that particular course. So it was very relaxed, and the teachers were marvelously available there. You could get to see them, even Karl Lehmann, when you wanted to—had a problem, you were admitted to his office, and you sat down and had a long talk with him. All of them—Walter Friedlaender. That was the kind of teaching and environment it was. It was completely Germanic in its teaching methods and intentions. It was—

ROBERT BROWN: What do you mean by that?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: I mean by that, first of all, that the teachers were very jealous of their particular students. You had to be very careful if you were working with two of them, as I was, with Karl Lehmann and Walter Friedlaender. I wasn't quite decided whether I wanted to get into the classical field or to stay with Walter Friendlies in the Baroque. I finally opted for the Baroque, and I finally opted for the American field. That's another part of the story. You had to be very careful, because they were very possessive of their students. They also demanded a great deal in terms of independent, self-disciplined work. Although they were available for a consultation, and good consultation, it was your job to go out and do the work. [00:56:05] They contrasted, in an interesting way, with a man who came up from downtown NYU by the name of A. Philip McMahon. Did you ever hear of McMahon? He was, at the time, a philosopher. He taught philosophy at NYU, and he's written a couple of books—he had, at that time—on the philosophy of art. He offered a course in—what was it called? Anyway, it was a basically philosophical course, in which we wrote a paper, a critical paper, every week. Essentially, it was a criticism course, which he then took apart in fascinating ways, and then we discussed them in class. I learned more about the thought process of the work of art from him than anybody, even the Germans. The Germans were more methodical. They were more concerned with sources, and literary documentation, and the kinds of things that the great German scholars are famous for. Boy, you had to document everything right down to the last. McMahon was an American, and very much more loose in his willingness to move through the problem. He would draw you out to the point where he wanted you to be by questioning. It was a kind of Socratic method. "Well, now, Mr. Pierson, let's look at this. What does that remind you of? Is there any other sensation that you have in the back of your mind, when you look at this passage in that Homer"—I was working on—can remember this—on one of the great Homers. [00:58:00] "When you look at this passage, does that remind you of something else? Is there any other area of experience in your life that somehow is touched by that?" That's the kind of thing he would say, and draw you out. The first thing you know, you were where he wanted you to be. It was very skillful, Socratic device for teaching. The Germans were not Socratic. They were dictatorial. You listened, and then you went out and worked, and if you didn't do what you were supposed to do, you got very severely chastised. It was a lot of hard, tough—and I suppose this is good, too.

ROBERT BROWN: They wanted to bring you around to a certain point, too?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: They wanted to bring you to a certain point, too, but they were determined to—McMahon wanted you to get there on your own, in a sense, and they wanted you to get there their way. I think that's essentially the difference. It was a tough—and of course, the language problem, to me, was difficult. I had not—I had taken French, and I was fairly easy in reading French, and I had to learn German. Oh, boy—[laughs]—did I have to learn German. This is one of the great weaknesses of the American system for those who are going to do graduate work with scholars like Panofsky, who reads Latin, Greek, German, French, Italian, and English, every conceivable language. And Karl Lehmann, if he writes an article—if he wrote an article for an Italian magazine, he wrote in Italian. If he wrote it for a French magazine, he wrote it in French. Now, how many Americans can match that, you see? That's the sort of discipline that you were thrown into and these Germans demanded. So it was an interesting place.

ROBERT BROWN: You finally, then, opted to work more with Friedlaender then, in the classic—

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: I worked—I kept my options between the two, pretty much. [01:00:20] I took courses with Friedlaender, primarily with Friedlaender, and Lehmann, but I also took courses with Krautheimer, with Panofksy. One had to take—Edgar Vint was there, too, for a while. He went, ultimately, to Oxford. He was another remarkable performer. Who else was there?

ROBERT BROWN: So you had a tremendous amount of learning of languages translation reading to do?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: That's right. That's right. I had to read in German the minute I got there. My bibliography—I took a subject Walter Friedlaender was handing out for—this was in Rubens, in the Baroque. I

picked a subject. I wanted to do something of classical sources of Rubens, because I was working with Karl Lehmann at the same time, and I had had some experience in classical field—interested me—with George Hanfmann at Harvard in the summertime. I was interested in that, and I took that, and—[laughs]—he gave me a bibliography, and every damn book on it was in German. I mean, articles in German. So I had to go right out, right off the bat, and start reading German. Fortunately, I knew I was coming to the graduate school, and that winter, in Cleveland, I had taken a course in reading German at Western Reserve, so I had that behind me and I could cope with it. But it's a hell of a shock to have somebody hand you a bibliography, not one book of which is in your own language. [Laughs.]

ROBERT BROWN: As you look back, that was to be expected, really, wasn't it?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Of course it was. Absolutely.

ROBERT BROWN: There was a dominant group in art history.

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: They were the dominant group in art history, that's right. Curler von Rivensberg [ph]. I can still remember that—[laughs]—article I had to read on Rubens and the Baroque. Boy, oh, boy, I slugged my way through this [laughs]. [01:02:02] But it was good discipline, and it opened up, again, a whole new area of thinking.

ROBERT BROWN: Were you able to get on top of things eventually?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Oh, sure. I never had any problem with that. Never. It was hard work, but that never was a problem. You struggled.

ROBERT BROWN: You got to the point where you were able to work well with these men?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. They were friendly people. I don't mean to imply that what I said, that you were in constant—you just had to be careful, that's all, that you—every now and then, Karl Lehmann would snap you up. [Inaudible] Friedlander! My greatest lesson in teaching, I got from Karl Lehmann. The first class I took with him was in a course in the art of the Aegean world. Again, one of the—I keep saying this about these courses, but they were absolutely brilliant. I went to the lecture, the first lecture. I had a letter of introduction to him from George Hanfmann at Harvard. I listened to this thing for almost two hours. This tiny little man with a wall eye. Very Prussian, ugly little face. Marching up and down. [Inaudible.] In front of the screen. This articulate language coming out, with a heavy German accent, but so articulate, and such fascinating material, put together with such brilliance. I just sat there on the edge of my seat. When it was all over, I took my little letter, in fear and trembling, and went up after class. There were a couple of students around. As I was standing there, he was tearing up these pieces of paper and throwing them in a wastebasket. When I came up to him, I gave him my letter, and he was very cordial. [01:04:00] Friend of George's and so on. Then I asked him, I said, "Dr. Lehmann, were those your notes that you were just throwing away?" He said yes, and he looked at me with his one eye that would look at me. He said, "I never give the same course twice." Now, that was my first and absolutely most essential lesson in teaching, and I did that throughout my teaching career. I never gave the same course twice. I gave the course with the same name, and so did he, but it was never the same course. In other words, you work it up every bloody time. That was my first lesson teaching, and I learned it right then and there.

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WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: —creaked, and as the chairs creaked—

[Audio Break.]

ROBERT BROWN: We're continuing the interview in Williamstown, Massachusetts, with William Pierson. Robert Brown, the interviewer. This is July 21, 1981. We want to talk a bit more about some of the people you worked most closely with when you were in the Yale Art School in roughly 1930 to '36, first as a student, and then as an instructor as well.

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: The instructor episode was a very brief one, of life drawing to the architects.

ROBERT BROWN: What about Louis York? You mentioned him before.

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Louie York was one of the teachers there at the time, and his specialty was advanced composition, and also tempera painting. Thompson—what's his first name?

ROBERT BROWN: Daniel?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Dan Thompson was teaching there in the art history department, and had written

his books on tempera, and he taught tempera for a while, and then York took over. It was a course that was offered for a full year, in which we learned to teach—learned to paint—with the traditional, late medieval, early Renaissance tempera technique, the egg tempera. Both York and Thompson had researched this thoroughly, and had worked out from the various documents describing these techniques precisely how it was done, and we did it. I must say, it was a fascinating part of my whole experience at Yale, and I seemed to have had a particular aptitude for this kind of painting, so I did well in it, and had an interesting time doing it. [00:02:12] Louie York was a little fellow, rather pink-cheeked, very boyish-looking, and therefore a little bit self-conscious of this boyishness. It didn't make him look professorial. So he was belligerent, and his teaching methods were abrasive. His criticisms were harsh and sarcastic. But he was a good teacher, and he certainly knew what he was up to. It was—

ROBERT BROWN: Was he good because he would explain it effectively?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: That's right. He very carefully took you through the process, which was, of course, a very meticulous one. The one which we learned was the one that comes down from descriptions of the technique from the late Middle Ages of how the gesso panels were made, and we made those gesso panels according to the original specifications. We actually got our wood and cured it, and put the fabric on it, and put the gesso on it, and made the gesso the way we were told to make it, and scraped and worked it down to that beautiful, fine finish. I must say, there's nothing more beautiful in the world than a gesso panel before one starts to paint on it. It's almost painful to destroy its lovely, lustrous surface. Then we would incise the drawing, the main outline of the drawing, into the panel, and then work from there, working with the techniques of flat tones laid in, and then the modeling done over the flat tone, in a meticulous and careful way. [00:04:04] We got some things that looked like Renaissance tempera panels out of it.

ROBERT BROWN: Were you pleased by this kind of accomplishment as opposed to creative work?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Well, yes, I was. I was fascinated by all technical problems, and I think probably this was my greatest handicap as far as my ability as a creative artist was concerned. Fortunately, I had the wit to realize this before I hung my life shingle on the tree of creative art, because I never would have achieved in that area at all, but I did have an aptitude for the mechanical aspects of it, and did well in the technical studies that we had. I was fascinated by this whole business. It came in, rather interestingly, useful, later, when I took a course at Harvard in the techniques of painting with George Holt. I had had this experience, and it was interesting to enlarge on that through Holt, because he had a very different attitude than Louie York had. There were many interesting things that happened. One of the most common pranks that students would play on one another would be to come in and find that your egg yolk that you had very carefully prepared had, over the weekend, gone bad. So you would paint this on the light bulb of your neighbor, just to make life unpleasant for him. It was this kind of thing. I don't know how much you know about the technique, but literally, one worked with the yolk of an egg. We had a technique devised whereby we separated the yolk from—by putting it from palm to palm—from the white, and then mixed it with water, and beat it up, and then, with an eyedropper, mixed it with just enough pigment to take you through whatever painting you were going to do that day. [00:06:11] You threw whatever was left out, and you started—and then you ground up your colors, of course, in advance, in little pots. We even ground the colors, by the way. We got rough powdered forms of color, and ground them and mixed them, and ground them, mixed them, with water, and we had a mortar and pestle, and a big grinding board. We went through the whole process of the medieval—

ROBERT BROWN: This was one year with—

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: This was a whole year. Then, of course, we had to design a panel, ultimately, and carry it out. We did some experimental things first, small pieces, to get the skills, and then we designed a panel. I don't know where my offering in that score has gone. It's somewhere around the house, tucked away. We did a lot of gilding. We learned all about the gilding techniques, the so-called water-leafing. Putting on the bowl, and then putting on real gold leaf. I still have some gold leaf right in there, leftover from Yale. It was that kind of hardcore, historical painting method. Of course, that was the prevailing mode there at the time. Our principal teacher, or one with the greatest national prominence, Eugene Francis Savage, still painted, on a large scale, in medieval form, with lots of gilding, and relief, and embossing and all that kind of thing, into the panel, so that we were right lock, stock, and barrel in the prevailing mode of the school at the time. [00:08:03]

ROBERT BROWN: And yet that was nearly the tail end, but you didn't know it, I guess?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: It was the tail end, and I didn't know it. I sensed it, and very clearly I sensed that what I was learning at Yale had nothing to do with what was going on in the world of art in general. Many of us had that feeling, that we were maybe the last of a generation of students who would go through this kind of training.

ROBERT BROWN: Did Thompson teach you ever?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Thompson did not teach me. He was there. I knew him. He was in and out of the class a good deal. But by that time, I think he had broken his relationship with that phase of the operation. He was still teaching, I think, in the art history department. I only vaguely remember what he did there. He was a kind of in and out creature, and Louie York held him in the highest reverence. We all had that feeling, that when Dan Thompson came in, this was the voice of the master. We had read both of his books very carefully. This was the doctrine we were working from.

ROBERT BROWN: He was considered to be an extremely learned person?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: He was extremely learned, and he had done all the major research that had produced these volumes, and produced the technique as we worked with it. Some very interesting things—those catalogs that I showed you earlier have some of those tempera panels in them, and some of them are very interesting indeed. There were students there who had a very real flair for this kind of designing, and a feel for the flat, abstract, patternistic type of work that characterized Byzantine art and late medieval Sienese art, where the great tempera panels were done. [00:10:07] Some of the stuff was really quite beautiful and quite interesting.

ROBERT BROWN: And they could proceed from those historic styles into something of their own?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Yes. They would be modern things. I'll show you some of them if you want to see them. There was one fellow there by the name of Mahoney, who was a genius—I would say a genius—in his field for this kind of designing.

ROBERT BROWN: Should we look at one or two?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Yeah, why not?

[Audio Break.]

ROBERT BROWN: We're looking at some examples that you consider outstanding. This is by Gilbert Banever. The American Academy in Rome Fellowship, 1934. Very simple. You say it's life-size?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: It was life-size. It was Mexican peasants. Of course, it had nothing to do with medieval art, and it was highly realistic, but it gives something of the scope of the potential of the medium. In fact, of course, Wyeth uses the egg tempera technique.

ROBERT BROWN: Had he had any formal training in—

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: No, none whatever. To my knowledge, he—I don't know where he worked it up.

ROBERT BROWN: At its best, what did you see to be the potential of the egg tempera?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: The potential of it was its extraordinary capacity to be developed in minute and beautiful detail. It also had extraordinary surface qualities. There was a kind of inner light in a tempera that was laid up in these very thin layers, over a period of time, in which the underpainting was constantly coming through, that was really very remarkable. Some of the students there, like Gil Banever, had an immense skill with this. Gil always worked in a larger size than the small panels the rest of us worked on. It had that potential for a high level of specific realism, at the same time that the tones were abstract. [00:12:08] It didn't lend itself to the luminous painting that oil makes possible, the manipulation of transparency and opacity, and thin and opaque, and all of those things that one can do with oil paint, you could not do with tempera. But it had in itself a kind of texture, and a kind of luminous—opalescence, I think, is what I'm really trying to say—that was unique to the medium, and people like Banever were able to exploit it in a very high degree.

ROBERT BROWN: To the instructors at that time, though, it didn't matter whether you did something un-medieval or you stuck with something medieval?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: No, not at all. I did mention, a minute ago, that there were some of the students who were particularly skilled in medieval kind of design. Let me see if I can find one or two here.

ROBERT BROWN: Was there any promise held out by people like Louis York of employment? These were the Depression years. But whether you went—

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: This was never mentioned.

ROBERT BROWN: It was never mentioned?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: The objective of the Yale School of Fine Arts was to win the Prix de Rome, even

when I was there in the 1930s. This was the principal objective. Yale graduates had won that prize for God knows how many years. I can't remember now, but it was years that they dominated the field in the Prix de Rome. Banever won the Prix de Rome that year. That was my last year as an undergraduate there at Yale. It was an extraordinary performance. The whole program was geared toward this ultimate objective. The first person to break that was a fellow from, I think, Cleveland, the Cleveland Art School—was the first outsider, let's say, to break the Yale domination over that whole system. [00:14:03] This fellow, J.O. Mahoney, that I mentioned, took this tempera medium and made it into a beautifully elaborate and decorative American form. He had an extraordinary sense of design and pattern, and a keen interest in Victorian life. You can see how this is one of the things. That, in color, was absolutely splendid. It was just filled with all the rich tonalities of a good Victorian scene. You could see the kind of specific detail that—I think there's a little mixed oil in that. Mahoney was very genius in his technical—

ROBERT BROWN: He won the Rome prize in 1932. What did most of these fellows go on to be eventually? Designers or decorators? Work in the theater?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: It's difficult to say. I don't know whatever became of Mahoney. Banever died, I think. I think it was Banever who died. One of them. Let me see. There was another who won the Prix de Rome. No, it wasn't Banever. It was Rabinowitz who died. But I really don't know what's ever become of them. They must have gone into teaching, actually. Here are some of the smaller type of panels. You can see what kinds of things were done. They're more typical of what you'd expect of the tempera technique.

ROBERT BROWN: Some were purely taken off from Renaissance, or Northern European Renaissance?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: That's right. Sure.

ROBERT BROWN: Others were more sort of Art Deco, we call it today. This kind of thing here.

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: That's right.

ROBERT BROWN: That was, more or less, the limits. You mentioned earlier how the last time we talked, there were some new attitudes coming in, but were they coming in from the outside, or was it due to new teachers? [00:16:02]

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: The most important example of that—not to new teachers, no. The most important example of that was the fact that Eero Saarinen came to the Yale Art School, young Eero.

ROBERT BROWN: Were you still an undergraduate at that time?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: I was—well, yes. When he first came, I was an undergraduate. He came—it seems to me we could check it out and look in here, because his name would be listed. I would say he came after I did, because I taught the life drawing in my—when I was doing graduate work there, my two years of graduate work. I took the first M.F.A. in painting ever given by Yale. They offered the degree while I was there as a student, and I immediately signed up for it. Part of my responsibilities as a graduate student was to teach life drawing to the architects, which I did for two years, and it was kind of fun. But Saarinen was in that class, though I'm assuming—I'd have to check this out in the records—that he was younger than I.

ROBERT BROWN: Were most of these—was it a Beaux Arts curriculum?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: It was a Beaux Arts curriculum, and Saarinen came in, of course, filled not only with all the fire that must have come from his father and from that whole setup out there, but with his unique creative impulses of his own, and he turned the place upside down. In fact, as I understood it at the time, the degree committee almost didn't give him his degree, because they regarded him as so out of line with their concepts of what architecture was all about. But he displayed immense creative originality, and he was rebellious. He was a very rebellious student.

ROBERT BROWN: Even in your course, was he? In life drawing? [00:18:00]

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: In my course, I simply—I took one look at this guy's drawings, and I said, "Look, you and I can talk about this, but I can't teach you anything." He was an absolutely brilliant draftsman. I mean, it was so obvious that here was a guy who knew exactly what he was doing. I'm sure he had training of this kind long before he hit Yale. He was an exciting student, and he was fun to have in the class. He was never critical of me or the way I ran the class, but he was apart from it, in a sense. I sat there in fascination, watching him draw. He was also filled with rebellious notions. I remember, on one occasion, we had a student in the painting department by the name of Jirayr Zorthian, and he was an imaginative and able draftsman. He made all kinds of strange and weird things, simply as whims. He used to make these papier-mache masks, full, life size. One day, he came up with a head that had been smashed to smithereens. It was just all blood and gore. Saarinen spotted

this thing, and he got this mannequin, life-size mannequin that was up there in the drawing class. They planned this, obviously, in advance. They got some clothes and they dressed this thing up, and they put this mask on it. Then they got a condom, and they filled it with ketchup, and they tied it around the neck. The drawing studio was way up on the top of that Yale Art School tower, the old building. When I wasn't looking, they opened a window and they heaved this thing out, and gave a bloodcurdling yell, and it went hurdling down to the street, and it hit the street, and the condom burst, and this ketchup went all over the place. [00:20:09] It went right by the dean's window on the way down. Well, some woman was walking along the street, and she sees this thing, and she faints dead away. So all hell breaks loose, you see. People come running. [Laughs.] I had a hell of a time. I knew who had done it. The dean hauled me in, and he gave me the third degree, and I refused to admit to him that I had seen the thing done, because I was not about to turn in Eero Saarinen for what was a pretty goddam good prank. [Laughs.]

ROBERT BROWN: You appreciated that thoroughly yourself?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Yeah. He was—yeah, sure. I was enthusiastically behind this notion, as a matter of fact. But it's the kind of thing he was always doing. He was filled with—[laughs]—another one of Zorthian's masks was a mask of Dick Rathbone, who taught the beginning design course. Rathbone was a very elegant, proper gentleman. Really wonderful guy. We got to be very good friends, as a matter of fact. Zorthian made this mask of Rathbone as though he'd hung himself, with his tongue hanging out. One night, the students took this—again, they got the mannequin, and they—[laughs]—dressed it up. They put this mask on it, and hung it on a rope from the rafters up in the major composition room. I was the night monitor in Street Hall at that time, and the night watchman came around, and pretty soon he came down the stairs, white as a sheet. He says, "My God, Rathbone's hung himself. He's upstairs in the major comp room." I went running up, and my first reaction was, my God, he has hung himself. [00:22:03] Of course, it turned out to be a mannequin, and nothing ever came of that. But it was the sort of thing that went on—[they laugh]—in this place.

ROBERT BROWN: There were tensions of this sort of? Even though they were pranks, there was a real tension?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Yeah. It was—

ROBERT BROWN: But the professors were pretty well ensconced and felt very secure?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Oh, yeah, sure. Oh, my God, the in-ness of the whole system, and the complete dedication to the system, of York, Rathbone, Deane Keller—Keller was a bear of a man, and he was in that, lock, stock, and barrel. He taught drawing and life painting, particularly life painting. And Savage, and Renier. Longatel [ph], another one's name was. And in the sculpture department, the same way. They were all lock, stock, and barrel. They had all been—most of them—trained there, and they were part of this whole system, and they didn't believe in anything else, let alone Eero Saarinen.

ROBERT BROWN: Your two years teaching, though, were they rewarding as far as—

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: They were rewarding, because they made me become a teacher, in a sense, made me articulate my ideas and try to instruct—of course, with some of the other students, the vast majority of them, they were not very good draftsmen, and I had something to work with. Saarinen was absolutely unique. He was the only one of his kind that I ran into, who had facility of a great artist before I ever came in contact with him. I had the wit to recognize this and leave him alone. [Laughs.] Not that we didn't talk about it. We did, and he taught me as much as I taught him. He was a great stimulus in the class. The other students, of course, kind of envied him, his background, and admired him. [00:24:01] I suppose, in some ways, they were jealous of him, the less competent of the students.

ROBERT BROWN: People knew of Cranbrook, for example?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Of course they knew—

ROBERT BROWN: That was a very well-known place.

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Yes, of course they knew of Cranbrook, and they knew of his father, and they knew of the whole background that he came from. He designed the—for example, every year, we had a fine arts ball, and one year he designed this, and it was a medieval ball. He designed a great Gothic interior. Gee, it was incredible. The students executed this thing. It was a kind of stage set that they hung in this great lecture hall, and took out all the seats and put this in. It was really a spectacular show. Saarinen designed that whole thing. It was the kind of thing—it was right up to his eyes, and everything he could possibly get his hands in that was creative. And on an enormous scale. I mean, the man thought in such big terms. He left everyone behind him, absolutely everyone. There wasn't any question in my mind at the time that here, indeed, was an architectural genius who someday was going to become internationally known, and it's the way it worked out. I never saw Saarinen after he left Yale.

ROBERT BROWN: You stayed there until '36?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: [19]'36, that's right.

ROBERT BROWN: Who were some of the other people you got close to? Were you beginning to develop an increasing interest in history of art at that time?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Well, I got to know Lane Faison a little bit, and that was one of the reasons I was thought of to come to Williams to teach, through my association with Lane there at Yale. I got to know George Hamilton. Carroll Meeks in particular, who later became my thesis advisor when I went back to Yale for my Ph.D. Carroll was there as a young instructor, and struggling along in the architectural department. [00:26:01]

ROBERT BROWN: Did you get to know Focillon, who was—

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: I did not get to know Focillon. He was in the art history department, and at that time, there was a very real breach between those who were teaching in art history and the art school. It was really tragic.

ROBERT BROWN: You mean it occurred then? It wasn't simply structural?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: No. It was there as a point of view. The artists were scornful of the art historians, and the art historians regarded the artists as something unclean. It was a strange kind of separation of discipline. I was interested in art history, and I took a number of courses in it, and particularly when I did my graduate work. I took courses in Yale College that I had to take, and some that I didn't have to take. So my interests were kind of split, and I had a certain sympathy for the art history people that some of my fellow students didn't share. As it turned out, this is where I ended up.

ROBERT BROWN: There weren't teachers who taught both in the school of art and in art history?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: There were, and this was one of the bones of contention. As a matter of fact, the introductory course in the history of painting was taught by Edwin Cassius Taylor, who was chairman of the painting department, and it was not a very good historical course. It had a certain interest in terms of the painter's point of view toward historical painting, and he did have very real insights into it. But from the point of view of the art historian, it wasn't the discipline that they would expect to be presented to students of the history of art. So that was a bone of contention. The architecture course was taught by Dean Meeks, the introductory architecture course, and it was one of the finest courses I took in all my learning career. [00:28:03] It was an absolutely brilliantly structured course. It dealt with architectural and architectural terms. It was slanted in its point of view toward the Beaux Arts, but he had genuine insights into historical architecture, and I think it would be hard to do any better in terms of an introduction to the history of architecture.

ROBERT BROWN: He did lack, though, acquaintance with the literature of—

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: No, he didn't. You see, Meeks was also a scholar.

ROBERT BROWN: He was a bridge figure?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: He was a bridge figure. He was a very real scholar. He was a very close friend of Cram. Cram was one of his great heroes, as a matter of fact. He knew the architects in that circle very intimately. He was part of it. At the same time, he was an impeccable scholar. He was a bachelor. He lived in one of the colleges. He was extremely wealthy. He was a pompous, arrogant little man. Very socially conscious. You had to come from the right side of the track to be invited to his house for dinner, that kind of thing. There was a certain element of that in Yale in those years, anyway, of sort of upper crust of intellectual aristocracy. Probably it was a residue of the late 19th century, when that kind of attitude began to take shape. I remember that wonderful statement—who was it—at the planning of the Columbian Exposition. One of the people there—I can't remember who it was. Richard Morris Hunt, I think. Got up and said, "Gentlemen, this is the greatest assemblage of artists since the Renaissance." It was that kind of feeling of superiority in the profession that Meeks and others like that had and shared in those days.

ROBERT BROWN: And he extended it to the aristocracy of wealth? [00:30:01]

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: That's right.

ROBERT BROWN: A whole family's wealth.

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: That's right. The wealth was immensely important. Certainly Richard Morris Hunt is the epitome of this point of view.

ROBERT BROWN: This was still strong at Yale in the '30s?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Still strong at Yale in the '30s, that's right, and largely because of the leadership of Dean Meeks, and the faculty he built up around him there, not only in the architectural school, but also in the art school.

ROBERT BROWN: All of whom were either of that tradition—

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: The Yale graduates, or in some way belonged to that artistic aristocracy that was sort of self-perpetuating. The image of the artist—in other words, the artist had been starved during the 19th century and regarded more as a mechanic than anything else, and suddenly they had been able, through things like the American Institute of Architects and so on, had been able to build a reputation and a stature which brought them equal with other branches of intellectual endeavor. That's certainly one of the reasons why the Yale Art School was so prominent on the Yale campus, because Yale regarded this in precisely those terms. The close association with the teaching there, and the whole concept of the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris was very real. In fact, we did Beaux Arts problems. The problems came from the Beaux Arts. The kinds of monthly problems that came from architects, and collaborative problems—architects and sculptors and painters—these all were Beaux Arts problems. I have, somewhere in my library here, some of those bulletins of the Beaux Arts that spells out exactly how this worked. Old Dean Meeks, he was the epitome of this. He always wore a proper weskit. He had a chauffeur drive him from his room to his office every day. [00:32:04] He walked with the most infinite dignity into his office. If you went in, you were told you had 10 minutes, and when you were to be there, and when you were to leave. It was that regimented, that properly ordered. It wasn't until he got out of the picture, and Charlie Sawyer from Worcester took over as dean, that this thing changed. That's why Saarinen, you see, was such a kind of maverick, because Saarinen was right out on the—because of his own background and his own instinctive creative impulses, was right out on the fringe of things.

ROBERT BROWN: In Meeks's terms, there were all sorts of these outward things? Deportment and dress and association.

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Those were all tremendously important.

ROBERT BROWN: They were extremely important. Creativity was not that important?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: No, it was conformity with the accepted standards and values established by the Beaux Arts. The eclectic—my God, the students in architecture there spent their first two years drawing ornament. Sitting down and making these incredible renderings of the orders, you know, that kind of thing. Some of them—well, look. This is [inaudible] hour after hour after hour. They mastered the Gothic, they mastered the Byzantine, they mastered the Romanesque, they mastered the Renaissance, the French Renaissance, the English Renaissance. You name it, they knew it, and they could distinguish it. I took a course in the history of ornament, with a man by the name of Sheppy Stevens [ph], which was one of the driest, dullest courses I ever took, by one of the driest, dullest men. [00:34:04] But he, again, like the dean, he was an impeccable gentleman. He was a bachelor. He lived alone in this elegant house, and had his little goatee, and proper dress. The art schools of today, my friend, compared to this setup there, are night and day.

ROBERT BROWN: It must have done a lot, though, to stifle creativity.

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: It did do a lot to stifle creativity, and that's probably one of the reasons really few really great, creative artists ever came out of that art school setup. Most of the people who came out of there ended up in teaching in some form or other, either in art school or in a college, some in high school.

ROBERT BROWN: Presumably, some of the architects could have continued as long as the Beaux Arts was still patronized?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: The architects did better. That's right. The architects, on the whole, did better, because they were in the mainstream.

ROBERT BROWN: Their buildings are already becoming simplified, some of them.

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Yes, that's right.

ROBERT BROWN: Because they were in Paris, too.

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: That's right. Meeks bought all of that. What he didn't buy—was the Bauhaus. See, the Bauhaus was just becoming into its prominence. This was 1930 to '36, and the Bauhaus was a brand-new notion. Meeks referred to this as the gas-pipe, cardboard style. He had one lecture on it, at the end of his course, in which he tore it to smithereens.

ROBERT BROWN: Of course, it was hardly a threat in American then.

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: It wasn't a threat in America at all, not until Walter Gropius came over. That was '36, as I remember, that Gropius—

ROBERT BROWN: '37.

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: '37 that Gropius came to Harvard.

ROBERT BROWN: He was the first mention place to Eero Saarinen [inaudible] police station. His father was still one foot back in the historical—[00:36:03]

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: That's right.

ROBERT BROWN: —Expressionism.

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: And he could do this with brilliance.

ROBERT BROWN: Because there were still some overtones of a church or [inaudible].

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: That's right. Saarinen could do it.

ROBERT BROWN: In fact, his classmates' work is scarcely different, really.

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Saarinen could do it. He had great skill at it, and he was smart enough to realize that, I guess, he had to do it to get his degree. But the interesting thing is that when they asked him to come back and become chairman of the department—I think it was after Charles Moore left—he said absolutely not. He wanted no part of any administration in the art school, because he wanted to be free to be a creative artist, and if he made this commitment, then he would not have that freedom.

ROBERT BROWN: His commitment didn't lie in teaching or anything?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: It didn't lie in teaching at all.

ROBERT BROWN: Unlike Gropius.

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: That's right.

ROBERT BROWN: Then, in '36, what did you think you'd be doing? Had you already other—

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: I had already made up my mind. After—I'll tell you what happened in my last year there as a graduate student. Two things happened. One was that Edwin Cassius Taylor had a heart attack and died. I had already been involved in reading papers for him in the course. I had done it for my two graduate years. I had been an assistant in the course, reading his papers. When he died, Dick Rathbone took over the course. Rathbone was already teaching a course in Renaissance art. He was another of the painting department who taught a course in the art history department. The art history department was deeply resentful of this, because there were several there who wanted like crazy to teach that Renaissance painting course.

ROBERT BROWN: And felt they were more up on the literature?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: They were more up on the—they were. They were. [00:38:00] Although Rathbone's course was a really first-class course. He took over the big introductory course, and I became more involved in that with the students. Then I got my first real taste of teaching, quite apart of art history teaching, in that year.

ROBERT BROWN: This was in—

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: This was in '36, yes. It was then that I decided that I really wanted to go into teaching, and teaching art history. The first job that I got—I don't know whether you went into this last time—when I left Yale was in a boys school in Cleveland. I was the art teacher. I not only taught the little boys to draw and do that kind of thing, but I also developed a kind of art history course, because I had gotten interested in it at Yale, and I wanted to go further with it. After two years of that, then I went back to graduate school in the history of art, and then went on in that direction after that. I did quite a lot of painting at first. I exhibited a number of things in the—

ROBERT BROWN: In Cleveland?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: In Cleveland, in what they call the May Show, which was a big—

ROBERT BROWN: Important show at that time.

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Yes, it was an important show, and I had several things that were accepted for that. I continued—I did a lot of watercolor painting.

ROBERT BROWN: What sort? Figures?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: No, no, no, landscape. Landscape.

ROBERT BROWN: Was Cleveland quite a rich cultural community at that point?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Cleveland was a fascinating community, as a matter of fact. The museum art school there at Cleveland, Cleveland Art School, was, even then—as indicated earlier, they were the first ones to breach Yale in terms of the Prix de Rome. [00:40:00] They had a first-class school going when Peg and I went out there on my first job.

ROBERT BROWN: You'd been married—

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: I was married after I got out of Yale, because I had a job. I had gotten this job teaching at this boys school in Cleveland. I hate to think of it now, but my beginning salary was $1,500 a year. That's what I started teaching at. Out of that, I paid back my minor debts and all of the things that I'd accumulated while I was a student at Yale. We lived on a budget of something like $20 a week, and had something leftover to go to the movies and entertain. You know, that sort of thing. You can't do that now. I had that job in pocket, and when we went out there, Cleveland was a superbly cultured city. It had its big symphony. It had a marvelous museum. William Milliken was still director of that.

ROBERT BROWN: Did you get to become friends with many of the people in it, like Milliken, while you were out there?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: I got to know Milliken slightly. We had close relationships with the museum. I taught at the Hawken School, which was one of the elite schools, country day schools, of the area. So a number of the people that I associated with there, including Mrs. Chester Bolton, had contacts with the museum, and so we had kind of entree. We would meet these people, like Willie Milliken, at parties and that sort of thing. I can never say I got to know him well, but I did know him. The person that I got to know better—and I'm trying to remember his name. He was curator of painting there at Cleveland in those years, and his name escapes me. I can't—what is his name? I got to know him a lot better.

ROBERT BROWN: Was he from the East himself? [00:42:00]

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: I don't remember. Oh, dear, what was—

[Audio Break.]

ROBERT BROWN: Henry Francis Prince [ph].

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Henry Francis, yes. I got to know him fairly well. He was prints, that's correct. When Peg and I planned our first trip to Europe, he and his wife were very helpful. We spent a couple of evenings with them, and they told us some of the things they thought we ought to do. We never could carry out that trip, for personal reasons, but he was very helpful. He lives up here.

ROBERT BROWN: He lives, now, in New Hampshire.

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Does he really?

ROBERT BROWN: Dartmouth.

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Is he so? He was curator of—that's right, curator of prints.

ROBERT BROWN: The museum had quite a lot of funds, didn't they, at that time?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Yes, they did.

ROBERT BROWN: Beginning to get some of those large gifts and bequests.

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: That's right. It was a lively place. It was a lively art center. It was, in so many ways, a very exciting community for a young married couple to pop into. I taught at a very interesting school. In educational terms, a very enlightened school, with a marvelous headmaster, from whom I also learned a great

deal about teaching.

ROBERT BROWN: What were some of the things you recall?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Well, yes, I do, indeed. One of the first things Carl did when I got out there was to take me into his office, and we had a long, long talk.

ROBERT BROWN: This is Carl—

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Carl—it was—I'm starting to think of Carl Weston, my old boss here, but it was Carl Holmes. He was a Dartmouth graduate. Sturdy, vigorous man. An interesting and amusing, wonderful family. Very beautiful wife. He was a headmaster with very enlightened ideas. His principal theory of problems in the school was that wherever there was a problem child, there was a problem home. [00:44:01] He was almost entirely right. Occasionally he would be wrong, but most of the time, this was so. He had no qualms whatever about getting a set of parents and then taking them to task for some of the things that were upsetting the kid.

ROBERT BROWN: Did he encourage you, as teachers, to deal with the children on a personal level?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Yes, he did. One of the most important things that I learned from him was this very simple notion that every single human being, particularly those youngsters who are just beginning to cinch their way into the world, needs praise and encouragement. His teaching point of view was positive. Find those things that the kid can do well, and wherever you can praise him, praise him. Don't praise him for something you don't want to praise him for, but wherever you can legitimately praise that person, praise him. Never miss the opportunity to do this, to say, "Gee, Johnny, that was a really first-class job." He said, "If you will do that consistently with every student in this school, you'll have a command over them that will be absolute. They will respect you, and they'll look to you for help." He said, "If all you do is dump on them, then you can be in trouble." I think this was generally right. I've listened to teachers in my own teaching career who would begin by saying, "Now, everything you know is bull pippy, and you're going to start to learn from me, and you're going to listen to me," and then dump on them for everything that they had learned up to that point. Which Carl would have simply said, "This cannot be—we will not tolerate this in this school." [00:46:00] I think that was the basic sense of the human being out there that I learned from him. That wherever you could, you gave him a pat on the back. When he was out of line, you were equally firm in saying, "That was wrong." But you never missed that opportunity to—and there was a level of fairness about him, too, in dealing with the kids, of listening to the kid's point of view always. Whenever he got a boy in to discipline him, he said, "Now, tell me what's wrong. What's happened? Why did you do this?" Let the kid talk, rather than just immediately dump on him and get out a switch and whack his bottom. He actually did that on a couple of occasions, and when he did this, when he thought it was necessary to lay a hand to the kid, who had really been out of line for some reason or other, he would get another teacher in the room to be witness to this, and he would tell the parents that he was going to do it. There was a regular ritual. That boy would take his breeches down, and he'd bend over, and that great big hand would come down on that backside with a whack that you could hear all the way across Cleveland. This is the way he administered—[laughs]—the oath of office when the kid was really bad. There was a kind of—but he always did this in a way that the kid sensed that this was, in the end, just. It was never—he was very skillful about when this was done, and that the kid understood why it was being done. He was a remarkable man, and unfortunately he died too young with a heart attack. But that was my teaching experience. They were a long way from the Yale Art School.

ROBERT BROWN: It was a wonderful way to sense how to work with students.

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Yes, it was.

ROBERT BROWN: A wonderful opportunity.

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: It was. [00:48:00]

ROBERT BROWN: After that, you did come East, and I guess that's when you went to New York University?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Went to New York University.

ROBERT BROWN: We talked a bit about that. You've talked about various of the teachers you had there, and how you had, suddenly, to master languages, or you would sink.

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Yes, that's right. Or sink. That was right.

ROBERT BROWN: Your goal, going to New York University, the Institute of Fine Arts, was to go toward a particular specialty? Were you thinking of going beyond the MFA—the MA?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: I'll tell you what started that, was when I was teaching in Cleveland, and the two

summers I was there, we came East, and each summer, I went back to summer school. I had gotten interested in art history, and I went to the Harvard summer school two years in a row while we were out in Cleveland, and did my six weeks there of a summer school course. One of the courses that I took was a course in ancient art, taught by George Hanfmann. Hanfmann, I guess—I don't know whether he's still teaching. I guess he can't be. He must be retired by now. He was a marvelous teacher, and his course in ancient art stirred me very much indeed. We got talking about graduate school, because I was getting restless with the problems of secondary school teaching, because the intellectual challenge was not what I was looking for. It was largely a disciplinary, patient, pleading job, trying to introduce young, squirming kids to the world of art. I really wanted to teach at the college level, and that meant going back to graduate school. I talked with George Hanfmann about this, and I made the decision, and I applied to Yale, and I was turned down by Yale. [00:50:03] In fact, they wouldn't even accept my application, because I did not have an undergraduate degree. Even though I had the credits, and many of them from Yale, they would not accept me as a graduate student, because I did not have—I had only a BFA, bachelor of fine arts, and an MFA—that was a master of fine arts, but that still didn't count. So I could not apply, and I couldn't apply for Harvard. At that point—oh, it was Tubby Sizer at Yale who suggested to me—he said, "Bill, have you ever thought of going to NYU?" He said, "I know that this sounds a little bit like a factory experience, but," he said, "may I assure you the Institute of Fine Arts at NYU is rapidly becoming a very distinguished graduate center." He said, "I can assure you, you can get in there, and moreover, if you want to do this, I can equally assure you that I can get you a Yale fellowship, because we have a fellowship for study at NYU, which is only for Yale students." Which he did. When George Hanfmann found this out, he gave me the letter of introduction to Karl Lehmann that I told you about last time. So I went to NYU, and I never regretted it. It was a marvelous experience, certainly with some of the great art historian types in the world.

ROBERT BROWN: And you were much more on your own there than you had been at Yale.

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Oh, absolutely. Absolutely. There, I was a full-fledged graduate student, absolutely on my own, and I did get that fellowship, which made it possible. I quit the job in Cleveland and went to NYU. Two years there, and then Lane Faison came down one time. I had known Lane at Yale, when he was assistant to Focillon, as a student. [00:52:10] Well, I think—no, he'd already graduated. He was an assistant of some kind. I think he had an instructor's rating there at Yale. I got to know him there. Then he came—one afternoon, he showed up at NYU. Every week, we had a student tea, and Lane showed up and he spotted me. He said, "I didn't know you were down here as a student." I said yes. "How long have you been here?" I guess I had been there a year, anyway. I had been there a year. I was in my second year. He said, "That's all very interesting." Within three days after that, I got a letter from him, asking me if I would be interested in teaching at Williams. There was an opening.

ROBERT BROWN: Was Lane then the chairman of the art—

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: He was chairman. He was the new chairman of the art department. Carl Weston had retired, or was about to retire. As a matter of fact, the letter came from Yale, but Carl was still chairman. He said, "We have an opening, and if you're interested, why, come on up. We'd like to talk to you." The reason Lane was interested in me is that he knew of my art school background, you see. My experience there, as well as my new interest in art history. They were looking for somebody who could teach a kind of introductory studio course in an undergraduate curriculum, who could, at the same time, teach courses in art history. I happened to have that double-barreled asset, and I got the job. I, at the same time, had in my pocket an offer for the job as chairman of the department at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, which was twice the salary, and started as an assistant professor. [00:54:03] I turned that down to come to Williams as an instructor, at $1,800 a year. [Laughs.]

ROBERT BROWN: Why did you turn down North Carolina?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: I wanted to be in New England. I was attracted to Williams immediately. It was a small department. I wasn't sure that I wanted to get involved, really, in administration. I had certain qualms about it when I went down there to be interviewed. But I did have the offer. I had the letter in hand when I got Lane's letter, as a matter of fact. I got them almost in the same mail.

ROBERT BROWN: Did you think, though, you wouldn't stay on at NYU? You wouldn't have to? You could—

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Well, you see, I had completed my course requirements, and I needed only to do a dissertation. So my plan was to do my dissertation while teaching at Williams, which is what a lot of people do. It's not really a good thing to do, but I was married with children—no, there were no children at—yes, there were, when I—let me think about this now. No, we had no children yet. This was before the war when I was offered the job and came to Williams.

ROBERT BROWN: About 1940?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: About 1940. That's right, I came in 1940.

ROBERT BROWN: But you then finished that second year at NYU?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: I had finished the second year. I had done two years of residence at NYU, and that was all that was required. The interesting thing is that I got into NYU Graduate School on the basis of my credits. I had enough credits of the undergraduate courses that I had taken at Yale. I took a lot of courses while I was there. I took advantage of the opportunity to take courses in language and literature and history, the kinds of things that I felt were going to broaden me as a painter, and I took them. [00:56:00] Several—many of us did, as a matter of fact. So I had a line of credits there that was the equivalent of a BA degree. NYU accepted that as credit. Then, on the basis of my MA at NYU, I was admitted to the Yale Graduate School.

ROBERT BROWN: This was, of course, after the war?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: This was after the war. That's right.

ROBERT BROWN: At NYU, did you have to write a paper for the MA?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Yes. I did a dissertation on the drawings of Rubens and Poussin from the antique. It was kind of a fun paper. I loaned it to Julius Held, and he still has it. I can't get it back from him. [Laughs.]

ROBERT BROWN: This is stuff you'd had to work up pretty quickly? Learning languages and everything.

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: That's right. I started to study German out in Cleveland. I already knew French. I had a reading knowledge of French. That was no problem. But I knew no German at all, and Hanfmann warned me, he said, "You're just going to go smack into a hotbed of Germans, and you darn well better know German." So I took the course my last year in Cleveland, at Western Reserve University, which was strictly for graduate students, of course in German. I got that under my belt, at least in a preliminary way, and then when I got to NYU, I immediately tutored in German, so that by the end of the first year, I was—I can't say I could speak the language, but I could certainly read it with sufficient ease to know whether or not I wanted to push further into something. Then I'd sit down with a dictionary and work it out. More and more, I got so that I could really read most of the things that I had to read in German.

ROBERT BROWN: You no sooner got up here—that was in what, '40, you came up here?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: I came up here in '40, that's right.

ROBERT BROWN: How soon before you went into the military? [00:58:00]

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: It was in the spring of '42. Let's see. '40, '41. I came up here '40, '41. Pearl Harbor was the late winter of '41, and it was right after that. So I left here in the spring of '42. I didn't quite finish that year.

ROBERT BROWN: And you taught a combination of studio courses?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: I taught a combination of studio courses. I taught a course that was designed not so much to make artists as it was to give undergraduates a sense of what painting, and the techniques of painting, and the process of the artist was all about. Of course, my training was superb for that, because I could speak with authority on how painting was done in the Renaissance, and what tempera was, and fresco was, and what these meant in terms of what one could expect in terms of certain types of form. So I had an enormous advantage there over the other straight art historical people. It was a lot of fun, and I did this—all those first few years, I did that, and I did it for quite a while after the war. Then the pressure to increase the number of studio courses was tremendous among the undergraduates. When we made that decision, I said, "Look," to Lane. I said, "This is something we really should get somebody fresh out of a good modern art school to do." I said my training was not in that direction, and we recognized this, and so we got—the first person to come up here was Frank Trapp, who later went down to—

ROBERT BROWN: —to Amherst.

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: —to Amherst. Then, a little after that, Lee Hershey [ph], and then that whole branch began to grow and grow, until it got more and more like a regular art school.

ROBERT BROWN: Before you went into the war, what did you find Williams to be like? [01:00:00] I know you wanted to be in New England. You were attracted by the setting. What were the students like?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: The students were very good. They were absolutely first-class. When I first came to Williams, the majority of the students came from the prep school environment. There weren't many high school kids among them, so that it was a pretty select group. There was a certain—I suppose that Williams had the reputation then of being a kind of gentleman's college. It had a reputation of being a sort of gentleman's college.

Well, it really wasn't that. As a matter of fact, by this time, there had been sufficient changes in the administration at Williams, particularly through President Tyler Dennett, who shook the place up, but then was fired.

ROBERT BROWN: Was this in the '30s?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Yes, this was in the late '30s. Then Phinney Baxter took over, and his whole notion of education was something very different than what had traditionally been expected at Williams. He was rapidly turning it into an absolutely first-class, small liberal arts college.

ROBERT BROWN: He felt that the students must work hard—

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Must work hard, must have absolutely first-class teachers. The first thing he started to do was to bring in brilliant, and in some ways, controversial men. Max Lerner, for example, was a teacher here when I came. Fred Schuman. These were men way out on the liberal side of thinking in America. There was an increasing stress on that kind of broadening of not only the curriculum, but of the attitudes that the students were exposed to. It was rapidly on its way to becoming what I think it was, for almost all the time I was teaching here, and that was an absolutely first-class educational institution. So it was a great challenge, and I had interesting students right off in the beginning. [01:02:00] I had very kindly help from Lane, in terms of teaching skills, of getting to know undergraduates and how to handle them, and what the problems were.

ROBERT BROWN: How long had he been here before you came?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: He'd only been here, I think, about five years, and Whitney Stoddard had been here two years before I came. They both came under Carl Weston, and Lane came with the, I think, explicit understanding that he would become chairman when Carl retired. It was Carl's retirement that opened up the position that I took. So we were—

ROBERT BROWN: Were both Faison and Stoddard excellent mentors for you when you first got here?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Absolutely. Stoddard was hardly older at it than I was, but Lane, of course, had had teaching experience at Yale, and he came into my courses and sat and listened, and was critical of them, and helped me a great deal, in both the preparation of the classes and in how to handle them. It was a learning experience those first years that I was here. I was sort of on my own—king of my own domain in the studio part of it. I taught a course in the history of prints and printmaking, and then I taught a course in the history of techniques. We actually did things in the studio. We'd make an etching, we'd make a lithograph. When we talked about lithography and the history of printmaking, we made a lithograph.

ROBERT BROWN: Most of the students wouldn't have done much of anything before they got here?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: None. None at all. But they were good students. They were challenging students. Right off the bat, I was at home here, happy here, and I can't say that Williams ever gave me anything but the most complete, free opportunity to teach the way I felt I wanted to teach. [01:04:00] I was never dictated to by anybody.

ROBERT BROWN: You've mentioned there were things you had to learn. What were your weaknesses when you first came here?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: I think my weaknesses were that I wanted to teach too much at the graduate level. It was the inevitable moment of truth for all people fresh out of graduate school, that when one comes into an undergraduate situation, you do not use the same techniques and the same attitudes that prevail in a graduate school. You've got to sense that these are people, particularly in the field of art, who know absolutely nothing about it. They're coming to the experience brand-new, and what are the ways that you can best stimulate their sense of seeing, their ability to see, their ability to analyze and evaluate what they see? It was as much that kind of experience that Lane gave to me, that wasn't art historical at all. I had the paraphernalia of art history. It was how to organize this material, how to present it, and what to make of it in terms of these people who are coming into the discipline for the first time.

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ROBERT BROWN: —second tape.

[Audio Break.]

ROBERT BROWN: You went into the—what, into the army or navy, in the spring of '42?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: In the spring—no, it was earlier than that. I went down immediately. It was in

December, after Pearl Harbor.

ROBERT BROWN: You volunteered?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: I went—yes. I went down. I have to backtrack a little bit. Just that fall, there had been a naval officer that came to the Williams campus, and was appealing for volunteers for work as photographic interpreters. This was to take aerial photographs and be able to analyze them, and prepare reports, intelligent reports, on what one saw. I had what I thought were some of the qualifications. I had had some architectural experience and so on, and artistic training. So I went to the—that evening, and I was impressed, and I got the data from him. Then came Pearl—well, I should also say that I had been working a little bit with Clarence Kennedy in Smith, who was, at that time, working on problems with three-dimensional photography, and I got interested in that. I was interested in photography very much at the time. This whole notion appealed to me, you see, that this naval officer came up here. So when Pearl Harbor came, I went down to Boston with another member of the faculty here, who was a geologist. That was one of the qualifications one could offer. We tried to sign up for photographic interpretation. We went down, took our physical exams, and signed up for this particular assignment. [00:02:05] Well, neither of us got it.

ROBERT BROWN: You did this partly in a spirit of patriotism?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: The spirit of patriotism, right. Immediately after Pearl Harbor, I just said, well, the hell with this; I've got to get involved. I had remembered vividly this man's talk that night, so I went right down, and I went to the naval headquarters, where they were recruiting young officers, and told them what I had heard, and they said, "Oh, yes, we have applications for that," so I applied. Well, nothing happened, and nothing happened, nothing happened. Freeman Foote got his orders, and off he went, and they sent him to the intelligence school down in Newport, Rhode Island.

ROBERT BROWN: This was the geologist?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Geologist, yes. Which didn't seem to make any sense. Then, out of the blue, I got orders, which were, "Proceed without delay." Now, I don't know whether you know anything about the navy or not, but "proceed without delay" gives you 48 hours to get to your new station. Here I was, I had no uniforms, I had nothing. "Proceed without delay." Naval Air Station, Norfolk, Virginia.

ROBERT BROWN: But you were already signed up?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: I was—oh, yes, I was already accepted.

ROBERT BROWN: Your family—your wife had slight knowledge that you might—

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. Sure, I'd signed up, and I was just waiting for orders, you see, so I was prepared.

ROBERT BROWN: You dropped your teaching commitment? They understood?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: I had to. There I was. Yes, they understood, and they had made arrangements about that. Of course, that was the days when we were still mad about Pearl Harbor, so that wasn't any problem. I got these orders, I dashed down to Boston, I bought a new uniform at Brooks Brothers, I guess it was, or whatever, down in Boston.

ROBERT BROWN: Really private outfitters.

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: And left my wife with the job of closing the house and all this stuff, because I expected to have a month, at least, what I was assured I would have. [00:04:05] I didn't get it. I was to go to the Naval Air Station in Norfolk, Virginia for special assignment. Project—it was called something. I can't remember what. I bought a uniform, I got on a train, and I landed in Norfolk, Virginia. I was scared to death. This enormous naval air station, and the remotest idea what I was going to get into. I went into the commandant's office. I presented myself at the gate, in uniform, with my orders, and they sent me to the commandant's office. I went in, reported to him. He said, "Ah, yes, we've been expecting you." This surprised me. I knew enough to call him "sir." [They laugh.] He said, "Well, now, lieutenant, you're"—I was a lieutenant JG.

ROBERT BROWN: How did you get rank? Had you had some prior training?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: No, no, it was just a matter of age, I guess. I don't know how the hell they sorted it out, but anyway, I got—my commission was lieutenant JG. The commandant was very cordial and very pleasant, and he finally called in a Marine Guard. He said, "Lieutenant, you're going to be attached to one of our top-secret projects." He said, "We're going to have to get clearance for you for this, but." he said, "that process is already in the works." He said, "I'm going to have to send you down to this place with a Marine Guard." So this

Marine takes me in a Jeep, and we drive way the hell down, the far end of the naval air station, to this great hurricane fence, and there's a guard there, and they let me in. I go in, and I find myself in this room, filled with all kinds of electronic equipment and stuff, and I thought, what in the hell am I doing here? The commanding officer of this unit was a short, red-headed Irishman, marvelous guy, by the name of Morse [ph]. [00:06:07] Regular Navy. Red [ph] Morse. I knew enough to call him "commander." I had learned that much about rank, and I saw—

ROBERT BROWN: You didn't know much else, did you? [Laughs.]

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Not much else. He was a lieutenant commander. I called him "commander." I said, "Commander, I really and truly don't know what I'm doing here." I said, "I'm sure there's been a mistake." I said, "I think we ought to talk about this before we go any further." He looked at me. He said, "I don't think there's been any mistake." He said, "In some ways, you know as much about this as I do. I can assure you that you've been picked for some very special reason. Now," he said, "this project, I'm not going to tell you yet what it is, but I'm going to tell you this much about it. It is probably the most secret project today in the United States Navy." He said, "Do you want to be part of it or don't you?" He said, "If you don't, I would be glad to request a change in your orders. But," he said, "if you say yes, you will be part of one of the exciting developments that's going on." I said, "I'll take it." Well, it turned out to be the first training project in the use of radar for aircraft control. Now, this was the name—the term "radar" was something you never mentioned in public. We were—that was nailed into us. Here we had one of the very early radar sets. What happened was that we were being trained to direct fighter aircraft on the basis of radar information, and then we would be sent to ships in the fleet, where we would control fighter aircraft on the basis of radar information. [00:08:07] All the techniques that we were being taught had come over from the British, because the British were the first to develop this. As it turned out, actually, it was radar that saved England in the Battle of Britain, because they could keep their fighter planes on the ground. They didn't have to maintain any in the air at all. They could see the Germans forming up on the other side of the channel, and when they saw it, up went every fighter aircraft in England. The Germans, it took them a long time to figure out what was going on, because—

ROBERT BROWN: Even though those were giant platforms. The early radar were huge, weren't they?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: That's right, they were. Even so, it took them a long time to figure out what was going on. But in any case, that was my assignment. This was a two-month course, and I went through this. It was a rigorous course. It was absolutely fascinating. I learned a great deal in that time about basic electronics, about their functions and how these sets worked, and what we could expect out of them. We learned all about naval protocol and all the things you had to learn to be a good officer. We worked night and day. It was absolutely constant. Well, in the class with me was this young architectural student from Harvard, Hugh Jones, and he and I became very close friends immediately. It was a good class all the way around. We had lawyers, and we had schoolteachers, and it was this kind of—and architects. When the orders were—there was a big ceremony when the orders came, and this fellow got this ship, and this fellow got that ship, and so on. He said, "Now, two members of this class will not get their orders today, Pierson and Jones." He said, "We have special orders for you, and you'll have to go up to the commandant's office to get them." [00:10:00] Well, we went up to the commandant's office, and it turns out we were being ordered to a top-secret, again, project at the Naval Air Station in Quonset, Rhode Island. That project was the development of the first night fighter squadron in the United States Navy, and the equal development of the tactical procedures using a new piece of very high frequency radar, of which there was only one in existence. That was our assignment. There, we were cleared for top-secret. We went up to Quonset. I was put in charge of the field station, down in Beavertail Point, in Jamestown, Rhode Island, where this one set of radar was in existence, and where the engineers who had developed it lived. These people were from the radiation lab at MIT, and they had developed this radar, which was a height-finding radar. One of the problems in the early radar was that you never could tell what altitude the planes were at. This one was a very high frequency radar, with a great dish antennae, which could narrow down and specifically read the altitude of the plane.

ROBERT BROWN: Being in charge, what did that mean?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: That meant that I was in charge of the team which was developing the tactics for this radar. I had, originally, three other officers. Hugh was my executive officer, and we had three other officers assigned to us. There were five all together, and then one radar officer, who was learning the equipment, plus these scientists who were living right there with us in this isolated station down on Beavertail Point, with a great hurricane fence all around it, and a 24-hour Marine Guard. [00:12:03] We had a contingent of Marines there. I had no authority over them. They were simply the security to guard us against—now, I'll tell you an interesting story about that in just a minute. But anyway, we worked 24 hours a day, with a squadron that was stationed at Naval Air Station Quonset Point, which was 20 miles away. These men in that squadron were flying constant training runs out to sea, controlled by us, to intercept, on the basis of their own radar, which they had on their plane. You see, it was a very complicated setup. Each plane was equipped with a radar gun. Our job was to put them within sufficient range of an enemy plane so that they could bring their own radar gun to bear, and come

in at night—this was a night arrangement—and a gun sight that could fire in the night on an enemy plane, and the enemy plane would never even know they were there. It was a very highly complex and highly—

ROBERT BROWN: It required your ground radar?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Our ground radar gave us the information on the basis of which we put these airplanes on the tail of an enemy plane.

ROBERT BROWN: You would radio those airplanes?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: We would radio instructions to the night fighters, and they would—and we went through drill after drill after drill, developing techniques of control and all that kind of thing.

ROBERT BROWN: It was over this 20-mile stretch?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Well, it was out to sea.

ROBERT BROWN: You could get—

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Oh, God, we—

ROBERT BROWN: Turn your dish southward?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Oh, it went around 360 degrees, and we sent these guys way out to sea. In fact, we went out on night flights and controlled the aircraft from the backseat of a target plane, just to bring them around and let them work their own equipment. It was a very exciting period. We developed this, and we actually then put together—well, let's put it this way. [00:14:03] The *Lexington* was sunk just about this time, and the information that came back from this whole experience was that the radar needed much more coordination in terms of information provided, and a much different kind of space in which to operate. They had stuck it in a little corner somewhere, and some poor devil was in there trying to work it, didn't know how to work it. So my commanding officer, who was Admiral Durgin, got a hold of my immediate boss. We were under Fleet Air Quonset, who was Commander Durgin—Admiral Durgin—and my immediate boss was a fellow by the name of Taylor, who had been the squadron leader of the first Eagle Squadron that went over and fought with the British. He was a fascinating man, and he had been picked for this job.

One day, he called me in. He said, "Admiral Durgin has a notion that I think we ought to follow up. Come on up. We want to talk about it." So I went up, and he said to me, "We think it's about time somebody with some knowledge of the use of radar put together a coherent scheme for a space aboard a carrier that would function as a kind of combat information center, with the radar as its most important instrument of information." He said, "I want you and Hugh to get to work on this and draw something up. And our scheme is this. We're going to build a mock-up of this space, and we're going to take it down to Washington on a truck, and we're going to set it up in the Navy Department." He said, "This is all arranged through Admiral Durgin. We're going to demonstrate this until we get it done, until we get it onto the carriers." So that was our job, and we designed this space. [00:16:01] Then we were assigned, from the intelligence school at Quonset, a student there who turned out to be a stage designer from Hollywood, a fellow by the name of Hal Grieve [ph]. When we designed this, he then went up to assembly and repair, and got the carpenters and all, and they built this damn stage set, that came apart and went onto the truck. We got out of the truck. It was driven to Washington. I took a train to Washington. We set this up in the navy department, and for one week, we ran regular demonstrations of how this thing should work in terms of its control over aircraft. In fact, its control over all intelligence information brought into it [ph]. We had been there about three days when I looked up one time at a group of people who came in, and here was Admiral King, commander in chief of the United States fleet. Enormous man. He'd come in to see this. So he came in, and we ran one of our projects. I'll never forget it as long as I live. When it was all over—I started the aircraft out, the fighter aircraft out, on a course that didn't prove to be correct, and I had to change it to get them to make the interception. This was all programmed in advance, you see. I was just reading from a text. Admiral King, after this was all over, he came down. He never smiled. He had fingers that were about this long. He came up and he pointed down at the chart where this had been plotted. He said, "What in God's name did you start that aircraft out on that course for?" He said, "Any goddam fool could have seen you should have started him out that way," and he turned around and walked away. [Laughs.] Anyway, he was sufficiently impressed that they stopped all work and set the designers to work, and the first aircraft carrier to get this was the new *Lexington*. So we were, in effect, responsible. [00:18:00] We didn't design the combat information center on the *Lexington* and subsequent ships, but our initiative was the catalyst that made the navy Department realize they had to do something—that they had something hot here, and they had to do something with it. From that point on, they redesigned the spaces.

ROBERT BROWN: This was, what, in '42 and '43?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: This was in '42 and '43. Then, in the—

ROBERT BROWN: You mentioned there was security. Were there problems?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Yes, there was. We had this marine guard that was [inaudible] there. The machine gun setup, as a matter of fact, to protect this installation, because as I say, it was the only one of its kind in existence. One night, I got a call from our commanding officer. They were sending down a reinforcement of marines. They had received intelligence information that there was to be a landing of saboteurs from a German submarine somewhere between New York and Boston. They didn't know where, but somewhere. We were a logical target, and therefore, they were doubling the guard. We were to—there was no leave or anything. We were to stay onboard the station and stand very alert. So we had a doubling of the guard, and by God, that was the very—within two days—remember the saboteurs that landed on Long Island that they caught? Those were the guys. They actually—that was how good their intelligence was. The thing that happened was that the young sailor who discovered them upset the applecart, because they had agents all along to pick these guys up and follow them to see where they were going. [Laughs.] This damn sailor patrolling the beach stumbles on them and puts them under arrest and upsets the whole applecart, because then, of course, they had them and they couldn't follow them around. [00:20:03] But they did try it. That was one occasion when our Marine Guard seemed to make a certain amount of sense, because we would have been a logical target for that kind of—if they had known anything—we didn't know any idea how much the Germans knew about what was going on.

ROBERT BROWN: You don't know but what they might have moved over on Long Island to Rhode Island or something.

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: That's right. Or might have even landed on Long Island—Rhode Island, I mean. That whole shore was vulnerable.

ROBERT BROWN: Or picked up a fishing craft in Long Island.

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: All kinds—yeah, that's right, all kinds of—

ROBERT BROWN: Intrusively come across.

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: All kinds of things. Anyway, it was a fascinating experience. Then—I was there for, I guess, almost a year, not quite, when again I was summonsed up to headquarters at Quonset, and sent down to Brigantine, New Jersey, to examine an installation that was being made down there, in which fleets—teams from various types of ships in the fleet were being trained to operate in this new CIC, which was being installed in all the ships in the fleet.

ROBERT BROWN: The CIC?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Combat information center. So I went down, and I find this was absolute chaos. The guy who was in charge of setting it up didn't have the slightest idea what he was doing. He was a sort of decent character. Spent most of his time in the bar. I came back and reported this to the admiral, and boy, he took right off. He said, "Bill, you're going to go down there and set this up." He said, "Any request?" I said, "Yes. May I take you, Jones, with me?" He was the architect. We went down to Atlantic City, and we took over the Brigantine Hotel on Brigantine Island, which had been one of Father Divine's heavens. [00:22:06] The thing was filled with his literature when we got there. This was a 14-story hotel. We took the top four floors, and installed there a completely detailed CIC, two carrier installations, one battleship installation, one cruiser installation, and two destroyer installations. The instruments that were in these were exactly what they were going to encounter when they went aboard ship. We had the plans sent up from Washington, and the layouts we did exactly according to scale, and everything else, with every instrument in place. We did this in about six months' time, we made this installation. We opened up for business, and I was in charge of that operation down there. Then I got Lane Faison down as one of my training officers. He had, in the meantime, joined the Navy. He came down and joined the staff. We received the first of these teams in January 1943, I guess it was. '43? '44. Because—yeah. That's right, '44. Then, through that spring, the first part of the winter, we were training these teams. They would come for two weeks. The lower part of the hotel was living quarters for our crew and for these teams, and that was run by the commanding officer of the Naval Air Station Atlantic City, the mess and everything else. He ran that part of it, and I ran the installation on the top. We received—

ROBERT BROWN: These people were simply being trained how to use the equipment?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: That's right. That's right. [00:24:00] We had these problems all set up. We even had live aircraft flying out from Atlantic City Naval Air Station and giving them time to work the radar, and to make plots, and to do all the things that they would be doing when they were onboard ship. And to teach them to handle into communications, all this stuff. Ship the ship, the whole thing. They had exactly the communication system they would have aboard ship. The teams came in. They'd spend two weeks, and then off they'd go. We

ran a constant—there, I had a crew of about 12 officers and 65 men. That was a bigger operation. Then, one day, I got a call from Admiral Durgin, who was still in charge of this, by the way. This was still all under Fleet Air Quonset, which was up in Quonset Point, Rhode Island. He wanted me to come up immediately. I had been pestering him to go to sea. I was getting a little restless with this stuff, and I thought if I was ever going to be a man, I had to go to sea. So I pestered him about this. I got this call from him, and it was in the late winter of '44. Yes, that's right. Yes. Because Normandy was '44, wasn't it? That's right. Late winter of '4—I went up, get in an airplane. I called up the naval air station. They sent out a plane and took me up to Quonset. I was off—I went up to the admiral's office, and normally you'd sit there cooling your heels for a while. I was ushered right into the admiral's office. "Sit down. Bill, you've been suggesting for some time you'd like to go to sea." "Yes." He said, "I'll tell you what. I'm going to give you this document to read. You take it in the security library." It was marked top-secret. "And read it carefully, and then come back and we'll talk." [00:26:02] So I took it in and opened this thing up, and here were all the plans for the invasion of Europe from Normandy. At that time, there were two operations. There was the one over the Normandy beaches, and there was to be a simultaneous, what was called Anvil, operation in the south, the south of France.

ROBERT BROWN: This was before Normandy?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: This was before Normandy. Here it was, all spread out before me. Oh, Jesus. So I read this thing. In other words, I was carrying around this plan in my head long before it ever was materialized. I read it, and I went back in to see the admiral. He said, "Bill, what did you think of it?" I said, "Well, my God, this is it." He said, "Yes, this is it." He said, "I'll tell you what. I've been ordered to command a division of carriers in the Anvil part of this operation, the Mediterranean part." He said, "I'd like to have you go with me as my CIC officer." So I said, "Absolutely. I go." And I did, and I was at sea with him for the rest of the time that he was at sea. We joined the British fleet there. We were actually under command of the British fleet. He was in command of the four American carriers that were in the operation.

ROBERT BROWN: Where did you join up?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: In the Mediterranean. We sailed from Quonset, four of us, four carriers. They were the small CVEs that were designed specifically for ground support. Our role in this was to provide ground support aircraft for the landing operations. We each had a squadron of fighters and a squadron of bombers forward [ph]. The four of us were then joined with four British carriers, eight all together, two divisions, under the British fleet in the Mediterranean. [00:28:03] We went over there. First he sent me down to—he detached me from Brigantine, brought me up, sent me down to Charlestown to live with the night fighter squadron that was going to be aboard. I was not only to be in charge of the CIC, but I was also—of all four carriers—but I was to be the night fighter control officer. We trained down at Charlestown with that Charlestown—Rhode Island—Naval Air Station for about two months before we sailed for the Mediterranean We went over there, and we trained with the British. We sailed down to Alexandria, trained with the British, and then went into the operation. It turned out to be kind of a breeze, because by that time, the German Air Force was virtually impotent in the Mediterranean area, so we had no serious aerial opposition. As a matter of fact, that whole operation went smoothly. As a matter of fact, it was postponed. It was not carried out at the same time as the Normandy landing, as you know. The original intention was, but ultimately they had to postpone it until August. But anyway, it went smoothly, and it was our first deal with the war itself. There were many fascinating things that came out of that. One of them, I was steaming along one night in the Mediterranean, and I had the watch on the bridge. See, the admiral was the flag officer of this group, and he maintained his watch at the same time the ships had their own watch. I had nothing to do with the handling of the ship I was on, but I had a lot to do with the handling of the group. So I had the watch, and the admiral came up after my watch was over. [00:30:00] I was still on the bridge, and he came up. We got into a long talk. He was a marvelous man. He was well-educated, a very philosophical person, expert in Shakespeare. We were standing on the bridge. He said, "Bill, we're headed for Egypt." He said, "What do you know about Egypt? Tell me something about it." I said, "Well, what can I tell you? I'm not an expert on Egypt." He said, "You know about Egyptian art." "Oh," I said, "yeah." "Well," he said, "tell me a little bit about it." So we talked about that. He said, "You know, if I can, while we're down there, I'll see if I can't get you a couple of days off so you can go down, at least, to"—

ROBERT BROWN: —Giza?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: —"Giza and see the pyramids." So we went into our port at Alexandria, after a fascinating stop in Malta. We went down to Alexandria, where the first night we were entertained by King Farouk. That was a great evening. What a slob he was. Oh, God.

ROBERT BROWN: Great opulence?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Great opulence, yes. But the next morning—oh, I got—before we even went ashore to this, the admiral sent down a messenger for me to come see him. So I went to see him, and he said, "Bill, I know I promised you that I'd try to get you to go down to—a chance to go down to Giza, but," he said, "I think

we're going to have to forget about that, because I have a special assignment for you." He said, "I want you to be down at the quarterdeck tomorrow morning at eight o'clock, prepared to be away from the ship for at least a week." He said, "You will be greeted there by Lefty Nation"—who was chief of staff—"and a British liaison officer, lieutenant commander in the Royal Air Force—Navy." So we went ashore, and we had our big evening, came back. The next morning, we were all down there at the quarterdeck. [00:32:02] We were taken ashore. We were met—and we said to one another, "What are we going to do?" Nobody knew. We just carry out what we're told to do. We were taken ashore, and there was a car waiting for us there. They said, "Oh, yes, we know." They took us out to the airport in Alexandria. An airplane was waiting for us, for God's sake. We get in it. Well, the pilot—we questioned the pilot. It was a British RAF officer. He hadn't had a shave. He was reeking of alcohol, and he hadn't had a shave in a week. [Laughs.] Jesus. We climb into this twin engine Cessna, and we take off, and we don't get more than 50 feet in the air, and he heads out over the desert, El Alamein. We said, "Where are we going?" He said, "We're going down to Cairo"—no, he said, "I can't tell you that," he said. He said, "My first instruction is to take you out over El Alamein and let you see what it looks like from the air," so we flew out over El Alamein. Then—

ROBERT BROWN: Was there anything to see there at that—

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Nothing but red desert and wreckage, that's all. Then we started down in the Delta, and you could see the line of demarcation between desert and Delta. Pretty soon, the pyramids appear in the distance, and we circle, and we land in Cairo. We were saying, "What the hell is going on? What's this all about?" We get out of the airplane, and here's this great, tall, handsome, young naval officer in whites, white shorts, to greet us. Lefty Nation was the chief of staff. Says, "What are we going to do? What's this mission all about?" "Oh," he said, "haven't they told you?" He said no. He said, "You're down here on a rescuer." [Laughs.] They took us to Shepheard's Hotel. [00:34:00] They had tours of all the pyramids, of Saqqara, of everything laid on. They had an Egyptologist on the staff down there. It was fantastic. The admiral had arranged all this in advance, and it was absolutely—and then he came down the next day himself, and we spent about, all together, about five days down there. This is the way the guy operated, the bastard. He was going to send me off on a special mission—[they laugh]—and the special mission was a rescuer, and Shepheard's Hotel, and Cairo. So we had quite a time. I did get to see the great pyramids, and Saqqara, and a few things like that. [They laugh.] Jesus. Well, anyway, we have to—oh, your time.

[Audio Break.]

ROBERT BROWN: Continuing an interview with William Pierson, in Williamstown, Massachusetts. This is August 10, 1971.

[Audio Break.]

ROBERT BROWN: About when was that Egyptian jaunt? This in '44?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: This was in—yes, August of '44. Let me see. Do you want me to nail this down in terms of date?

ROBERT BROWN: Sure, if you'd like.

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Let's put it all—

[Audio Break.]

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: All of this was the summer of—the operation took place, actually, in August of 1944. The operations in Southern France were originally scheduled to have taken place simultaneously with the Overlord operation in Normandy. It was originally called Operation Anvil. That's the kind of symbol of strike from the bottom. The two were to be coordinated, but there was not enough shipping to carry out the Normandy operation and the Mediterranean landing at the same time, so the Mediterranean landing was postponed until August of that year. [00:36:09] The troops landed down in the area of Grenay, about middle of the French Mediterranean coast, I guess—well, a little bit east of that. East of—

ROBERT BROWN: You were in on that?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Yes.

ROBERT BROWN: You'd come up from Egypt?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: We'd come up. We went down to Egypt on a training cruise. That's what we were doing down there. Let me just close this door.

[Audio Break.]

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Came up to Malta. We spent a little time over in North Africa. I went down to North Africa to work particularly with the British night fighter squadrons that were going to be part of our defense system at Oran. I went out into the desert and worked with the ground control people there. Then the landings took place, as I say, between Grenay and Saint-Raphael and Fréjus, in that area. The operation was led by a—or preceded, I should say, by a fake landing off the mouth of the Rhone River, in very much the same way that the British intelligence put out the information to the Germans that the landings in Normandy actually were going to take place in the Pas-de-Calais. The Germans actually bought this. Hitler was never convinced, until it was too late, that the real landing was the one in Normandy. They did the same thing down in the south. They gave out false information about the landings taking place in the mouth of the Rhone River, where the beaches were wide, and where it would be easy to put ashore. [00:38:08] Douglas Fairbanks Jr. was in charge of this fake operation, and he had a bunch of small ships, tiny little things, the size of minesweepers. What they did was put together, on tape, a complete landing battle, as it were. The communications between the shore and the ships, between ships and aircraft, all of this was on there, and was put out on the air by these little ships, and then they had sound-makers that imitated the sound of tanks coming ashore through the sea, of guns firing, naval gunfire. In fact, they had some ships out there actually firing. This took place down off the mouth of the Rhone, whereas the real landing was further east.

ROBERT BROWN: But this drew the Germans in?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Well, it held two divisions. I think there were two divisions. I can't remember exactly, but there were at least a couple of divisions of German troops down in Southern France, and it held them over there, so that the landings, when they actually took place, were virtually unopposed. There was heavy fighting occasionally, later on, in spots, but not very serious until they began to go up the Rhone River.

ROBERT BROWN: You were in on the main landing? You were right there?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: We were right there. Now, our aircraft carriers were the small carriers, the so-called CVEs, escort carriers. They were used for a wide variety of things, and they were built, most of them, the majority of them, on the Kaiser hull. It was a freighter type, about 500 feet long, something of that nature. Eight, ten thousand tons. [00:40:00] They would carry one squadron of torpedo bombers and one squadron of fighters. The torpedo bombers were converted for use as land bombers as well as torpedo planes, and the fighters were equipped with bomb racks. They were actually—the squadrons were intended not as offensive, but primarily defensive operations. We would stand off the shore, where the landings were taking place, day after day after day, going back and forth, and of course maybe 20 miles long, back and forth, 20 miles from shore, feeding support aircraft in over the landing operations. Some of them equipped with rockets, some equipped with napalm, some equipped with bombs, some just for strafing. This was to support—to lend constant air support to the landing operations, both at the time of the landing and after they got ashore. We were in constant coordination with the shore people. That was our role. In the landings in Southern France, there was no German Air Force to oppose us, literally, by that time. The occasional foray of German aircraft would come down, especially at night, but mostly reconnaissance planes, and we never saw, really, a German plane all the time we were down. Our fighters never encountered a German plane, to my knowledge.

ROBERT BROWN: Did you ever, then, land in France?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Yes, I went ashore in France, ultimately. We were off there two weeks, supporting the landings. As I say, it went smoothly, and the troops got ashore, and they encountered resistances. They moved toward Italy to join up with the American troops in Italy, and they encountered resistance as they moved up the Rhone River. At Monte La Mer [ph] is where they first encountered a stiff resistance from the Germans, but they—an interesting thing—a sequel to this is the actual operation of the Maquis in this whole thing. [00:42:09] This was all planned. The Maquis had hidden themselves out up in the Haute-Savoie, and equipment was dropped to them regularly by parachute from England. These big Lancasters would come over. They even had small tanks, and troop carriers, and things of that kind. They were partially motorized, even. They had a whole battalion organized and trained up in the hills there, waiting for the opportunity to join in the ultimate landing operations. This went on for I don't know how long. At least a year, anyway. These troops up there in the Haute-Savoie, they would be guerrilla fighters, I suppose, at that point. Every night in the German frontier posts up in there, one German soldier would disappear, just one, and the morale was frightful among the Germans, because they never knew. It never failed. Every single night, these men, somehow, would secretly kill one German soldier. Just one. That's all they did. It just demoralized the German troops up there in the frontier outposts. But at the time of the landing, their operation was coordinated with our landing. That is to say, they immediately surfaced and came out and crossed the Rhone at Monte La Mer, and acted as a kind of holding force for the Germans as they began to retreat up the Rhone. They were north of it. Then our troops came in from the south, and they actually captured the remnants of two divisions in there, virtually destroyed the major force of the Germans in that area, and then were quickly able to move right up into France from there. [00:44:00] Then, at the—we were out there two weeks, supporting that operation. Then our role was no longer needed, because they had land-based aircraft by that time. But before we left, I flew ashore with a number of

people on the admiral's staff, Durgin's staff, and we landed at Frejus, on the landing strip there. At first, they weren't going to let us land, and then we reported we were who we were, Admiral Durgin's, and we had the two stars on our airplane. It was a twin engine Beechcraft that we'd brought over and left it in Corsica. Then when we got to Corsica—after the landings were over, we went to Corsica—Ajaccio. I was the only person on the staff that had any knowledge of French, and I had to go ashore and arrange to have this Beechcraft taken off by crane and put ashore so that it would be available for the admiral for transport in the area. It was just kind of an interesting operation. But anyway, we flew ashore in this thing, and as we approached the French coast, we were under orders—there were no any specific orders of any kind, so we decided—I was flying in the copilot seat, and the pilot said, "Hey, Bill, you know this area. How about you fly us around a little bit and show us some of the interesting sights of Southern France?" [Laughs.] So I did. We flew up over Avignon, and Arles, and this area. Very low. We just popped around, and I pointed out some of the interesting architectural monuments below us. We got at least art historical on that level. [00:46:01] Then we started flying up the Rhone until we began to hit some antiaircraft fire, and then we turned around and went back—[laughs]—and landed at Frejus. Then we wanted to get up to Cannes, because Cannes had just been liberated from the Germans. We finally got a Jeep. They got us a Jeep. I don't know where it came from. We drove up to Cannes, and we stayed in the San Martin—San Martino?—Saint Martin Hotel. The dead Germans were still all over the place in Cannes, and equipment. You know, guns and burned-out tanks and stuff. The fighting was just east of Cannes at this—we could still hear it. But the French were finally liberated in Cannes, and they were absolutely beside themselves. They got out all their best silver, all their best linen, everything in that hotel that night. [Laughs.] Their best wines. But the food was K-rations. That's all they had. That's all that was available. They bring in this elaborate service, where the people get a can of K-rations in the middle of the fight. But it was a lot of fun. We were there for two days. Then the admiral came over. Then four of us had to get back to the ship. Someone had stolen our Jeep, so we stole another Jeep. [Laughs.] Then that got stolen, so we finally decided we'd hitchhike back. There were four of us. We—no, there were two of us, in groups of two. Was another chap and I. Along comes this great, big, black limousine—I can't remember what kind of a car it was—flying a Free French flag on its fender. [00:48:00] We thumbed it, and it stopped and picked us up. In the front seat with the driver was this very handsome American soldier, but he was in a Free French uniform. He spoke fluent English. Seemed American. In the backseat—and I got in the backseat, in the very backseat—was this lovely little elderly French couple. It turned out that this young man was one of the commanding officers, a high level officer, in this whole Free French operation in the area. He had gotten away from his duties to come and try to find his mother and father, who lived in Frejus. He'd gone to Frejus, and his home had been totally destroyed by the bombardment. He'd saw some friends and neighbors, and they said, "Your family is fine. They're up in Cannes." So he went to Cannes, and he didn't know where to turn. This story, he was telling us as we were going along. He was walking down the street, and he saw this little lady talking to this American soldier, and it was his mother, and his mother was asking this American soldier—she had a picture of him, and did this American soldier know where this officer was? So they came together that way. It was a terribly romantic story. This was mother and father in the backseat of the car. They didn't speak any English, or not very good English, as a matter of fact. But he had gotten into this operation because he had come to America as a very young man, and had taken out American citizenship papers, and was an American citizen. When the war broke out, he'd gone back to join up with American forces, and he was with Mark Clark's outfit that landed in Africa, North Africa. [00:50:09] One day, he was called into the general's office, and the general had found out about his strange background. He had come from this part of France, and he'd been called in, and he was asked if he would be willing to parachute in behind the lines and help organize this Maquis unit, which he had done. He'd gone in with two Englishmen, a woman and an English man, and he had been dropped in there. He was the only one of the three that had survived. The Germans caught the other two. He was fluent in French, and—

ROBERT BROWN: So he'd helped organize—

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: He had helped organize this whole group up there. It was a fascinating story. I tried to say, "Look, someday you've got to publish this, because it's one of the romantic stories of the war."

ROBERT BROWN: You were quite aware of the historical importance of what you were involved with?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Exactly. Exactly. This was a memorable moment to me, because he was so articulate about all of this. He was the one who told me about the disappearance of these German soldiers every night. One soldier would disappear. So that was—then we went back to the ship, and the admiral came back a couple of days later, and we took off back for the United States. That was—our part of the operation was complete. One interesting contact that I made during this whole process, in the preliminary planning stage—see, we went over early in July, and we were based first in Oran, in North Africa, and then in Malta briefly, and then in Naples, and the trip to Alexandria was sort of a training cruise with the British carriers, so we would be coordinating our flag signals and all that kind of thing. Because we were operating, actually, under British command. There were two American carriers under my admiral who were subordinate to British command there. [00:52:06] I can't remember who the admiral was, the British admiral that we—I could look it up in here, but—then, when our job was done, we headed back to the United States. We came back to where we had left from, Quonset Point, Rhode Island, and then the ships, the two carriers that had been with us, sailed around through

the canal to San Diego, and the admiral and his staff got off the carriers, had a little bit of leave at home, and then immediately took off cross-country by train for San Diego, where we were to again join the carriers, which, by this time, had come around through the canal and up.

ROBERT BROWN: So you were only briefly, then, in Quonset?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Only brief—in Quonset briefly.

ROBERT BROWN: Did your family—could you rejoin your family?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Yes, I rejoined my family. I had been in Quonset for that earlier training operation for the night fighter squadron. In fact, I was the controller for that night fighter squadron during the French landing operation. That was one of my responsibilities, was that I worked that night fighter squadron at night, and we actually used them on offensive, as well as defensive, missions.

ROBERT BROWN: Then after you had been to Rhode Island a short while, you went off to San Diego?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: We took off for San Diego, met the ships there, and immediately took off for Hawaii, Pearl Harbor. There, we were joined by other—my admiral was promoted at this point, and two other carriers were assigned to us, and we were sent out to the Pacific immediately to relieve the carriers at Leyte. That is the famous moment when that whole battle of Mindanao Straits and the subsequent carrier battle off Leyte, where the CVEs were caught by the *Yamato*. [00:54:08]

ROBERT BROWN: Which was what, a great carrier?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: It was an enormous battleship. It was a crazy operation.

ROBERT BROWN: Why is that? Because they—

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: The *Yamato* thought she had caught one of the big carrier task forces, and she hadn't. She caught this group of four little CVEs, four little characters. She steamed right up, came right up, and within flat trajectory range, a couple of thousand yards away. A friend of mine was on the *Natoma Bay*, which was the flagship of that group, and they could see these guns, 16-inch guns, just level right out like this and point at them, see, and—*boom!*—this broadside. There were 18 holes in the *Natoma Bay*, nine on one side and nine on the other. The Japanese were using armor-piercing shells, and there was no armor at all on these carriers, so they went right clean through the ship and blew up a quarter of a mile on the other side. So there was no damage done to the ships, except there were nine holes on this side, and nine holes on this side. Of course, the compartments were torn to hell where—but not a man was hurt. These shells went right through them.

ROBERT BROWN: And these little carriers were much more maneuverable?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Well, they were, but—

ROBERT BROWN: Scare away the—

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Gee, it was a slaughter. The little brave CVEs, these escort ships, went in and launched torpedo attacks on the *Yamato*. They were, some of them, shot out of the water. Then, suddenly, the *Yamato* and all the Japanese ships turned around and ran, because then they discovered that this wasn't a major—that the big task force was further north. Rather than be trapped down there—we don't know, I guess, to this day, why they turned and ran, but they did. [00:56:01] They took off and left them.

ROBERT BROWN: You were nearby while—

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: We hadn't arrived yet.

ROBERT BROWN: You hadn't arrived.

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: We hadn't arrived yet. We'd replace this group, and we were sent out there quick dispatch when they had to retire for repairs. We took over where they had left off. We were off Leyte for a while, and then we went up into the landings in Mindanao—I mean, in Lingayen Gulf, the major landings. The first landing was at Leyte. Then there was one in on—what was the little island they landed on in the inland sea? Then we went up to Leyte—or to Lingayen Gulf, with the Manila landings. We had there—it was a big operation. We went to Manus, the island of Manus, to gather together and get ready for that, and steamed out of Manus and joined this big task group.

ROBERT BROWN: Your function again, you were controller of night fighters?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: No, I was actually, at that point—I should say that by this time, my boss—after the Leyte operation, my boss was promoted to a new command, which was created just for the Pacific operations, which was called Commander Escort Carrier Force. This was Admiral Durgin. We had, under our command, under our administrative command, 36 CVEs, six divisions of six carriers, to be used in these support operations. The plan for the landings in Lingayen Gulf included three divisions of carriers. There were 18 carriers, with support ships, in three groups. We each had a cruiser, and something like eight destroyers—I could tell you exactly what ships were in the force there, but that's not really important—and the six carriers. [00:58:10] We went through the Mindanao Straits, past Leyte, and up the inland sea. We were under attack from the time we got into the Mindanao Straits by the Japanese aircraft. We went up with 18 carriers; we came back with 12. Six of them were either put out of action, or sunk, or beached.

ROBERT BROWN: There were a great many in deal resistance, still, from the Japanese?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: This was all kamikaze attack. Entirely kamikaze. Yes, they were.

ROBERT BROWN: Did you think that that could last when it came to kamikaze? Did you people sense that you really had the Japanese—

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: By this time, when they were that desperate, of course—they started that before we got out there, and we were prepared for it. We'd been told about it. Actually, the one big air battle that we had was on our way up to the landing area, operating area, off Lingayen Gulf, off Manila. They sent out probably what was all they had left in the way of defensive aircraft, and our radar picked them up. There were about, oh, as I remember, about 100 Japanese planes all together. Our aircraft—our radar picked them up, and I was in charge of this whole air defense operation. That was my responsibility in Admiral Durgin's three task groups.

ROBERT BROWN: To pick it up, and then others would—then the admiral would—

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Then we launched our fighter aircraft, and we picked them off 35, 40 miles from the carriers. They just were destroyed. [01:00:00] The Japs were literally shot out of the air. They obviously had gotten to the point where they no longer had skilled pilots down there. Their veteran pilots were elsewhere. The only Japanese that got through to the carriers were these determined kamikazes, who—no organized bombing attacks or anything of this kind ever reached us, only the kamikazes, and they did, of course, serious damage. The *Bismarck Sea* was blown apart. She just disappeared off the face of the earth. I was, in fact, on the radio with the CIC officer on the *Bismarck Sea*, when all of a sudden his voice just stopped, and seconds later, there was tremendous explosion. This is what had happened. Now, actually, he wasn't killed in that. Only the providers.

ROBERT BROWN: This was very different from the Mediterranean experience, then?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Very different. This was the real thing.

ROBERT BROWN: Much heavier fire.

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: That's right. This was—

ROBERT BROWN: You were very close to the admiral at this point?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Well, yes. I was his CIC officer, and responsible to him for all the planning operations in my department, and responsible to see that all of his orders were carried out. It was a year and a half there of rather interesting life, because we were both an administrative and an operating command. In other words, he was at sea with these carriers, on a flagship, which was the *Makin Island*, the USS *Makin Island*, at that point. Then, all the time we were at sea on this—let's say the Lingayen Gulf operation—we were planning the next one, so that when I got off duty at sunset every day, I would go down to my quarters and start to work on the plan for the next operation. [01:02:03] What would happen would be we would have a major plan come down to us from either Third Fleet or Fifth Fleet. Now, Third Fleet and Fifth Fleet were exactly the same ships, but they alternated commands. Admiral Halsey and Admiral Spruance were the two commands. Halsey was Third Fleet, Spruance was Fifth Fleet. When we would get through with any operation, the next operation would be with the other admiral. In other words, the high command changed; the ships didn't. We simply became either Third or Fifth Fleet, and we would have a designating number which would have that in it. What would happen, what would come down to us from either Admiral Halsey's headquarters or Admiral Spruance's headquarters, a master plan for the next operation. Then we were to develop the individual plan for our particular group, operating group. These would be logistical plans, they would be operating plans, communications plans, actual tactical plans for the operation of the aircraft, everything else. All this would—

ROBERT BROWN: Did you enjoy this kind of work very much?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Yeah. This was fascinating.

ROBERT BROWN: It really required a lot of the, what, discussion, and a lot of—

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: That's right. Then, as soon as we would get through with an operation, we would immediately go into a huddle with either Third or Fifth Fleet. We would go back to Guam or Ulithi, wherever the Fifth Fleet was, and then we would go into elaborate planning conferences with their planning officers. Then it would be my responsibility to prepare the working plan for all of the defensive fighter operations. The communications plan, the frequency plan, the actual handling plan, the plan of who would be responsible for what, when. [01:04:04] All of this kind of thing was in paper. This is what these are. These are the actual operating plans, prepared by us, and then distributed to the various carriers.

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ROBERT BROWN: —side two.

[Audio Break.]

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: —was under General MacArthur, and that was Seventh Fleet.

ROBERT BROWN: Did you and Admiral Durgin's staff ever have anything to do with him, with General MacArthur?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: We never had any direct communication with General MacArthur at all. We worked entirely with the naval command. I'm trying to think of who—Admiral Oldendorf, it seems to me, was the man who was the top jig in that one.

ROBERT BROWN: During this time, was your morale very high?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Oh, yes. Our morale was high, because we were succeeding. You have to take losses, and the loss of six carriers was anticipated. They were replaced. There were carriers in reserve. All of this was anticipated as part of the operation. In fact, we got off—except for that one bad day going up through the inland sea there, after leaving the Mindanao Straits up in the inland sea. That was where we came under—were narrowed down, and where they could get at us easily. That was the time we shot them a lot of the air. At least our fighter planes did. That's where we also took the kamikaze attacks.

ROBERT BROWN: Was this during the fall of '44?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: This was in December '44. It was in the winter, this operation. In fact, I think the actual operation, the day that we went into that operation—this plan was prepared on 15 December, 1944, and I've forgotten what the D-Day was there.

ROBERT BROWN: So from that, you were—as you had been in the south of France, so here, once you were through, were you then—[00:02:03]

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: We were in there—

ROBERT BROWN: —put ashore at all?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: No, we didn't get ashore at all at this time. We didn't go to shore at all. We pulled right out and went back to, I think, on this occasion, Ulithi. There were several of those big atolls that were used as advanced headquarters. Ulithi was the principal harbor for these. In fact, we sailed out of Ulithi for this operation, and it was a fantastic sight. One of the great, stirring moments of my life was to see that whole fleet support—carry a unit, steaming out of that harbor. Battleships, cruisers. We had a battleship group that went with us. It went ahead of us up into the Mindanao Straits, and cleaned out up in there. That was one of the famous battles, where old Admiral Oldendorf blew the Japanese out of the water. They crossed the T, which is the famous thing you don't do in the navy, and—

ROBERT BROWN: Cross the T?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Yeah. It's very interesting that the only major battleship battle, or naval battle in which battleships were involved, was that one, and that they were the old battleships. The new ones, the *New Jersey* and all the rest of them, the big ones, were all with Halsey, steaming up and down the coast, ranging around, and throwing aerial bombing attacks in against the Japanese. Our little ships were assigned the old battleships, and the only major classic naval battle was that battle that took place in the Mindanao Straits, with Oldendorf in command of the—I think it was Admiral Oldendorf was in command of the American forces.

ROBERT BROWN: The Japanese ships weren't handled well?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: The Japanese never expected to see us there. They came—what they did, they were—as I remember this—this is all written up by naval historians, but it seems to me they came down in three different forces, and they were going to trap us, destroy us, blow us out of the water, then and there, in this whole Philippines operation. [00:04:12] They sent their whole damn fleet down. That is, the major portion of their battle fleet. One group came down the east side of—the west side of the Philippines, into the Mindanao Straits. They were going to come through and attack from that side. The other side, led by *Yamato*, the battleship that I just described, came down the east side. They never got through into Mindanao Straits, because when they got in there, here was Oldendorf with his old battleships, waiting for them. The Japanese fleet was either sunk or took off and went home. So they never joined up, you see, with the *Yamato* on the other side to destroy the troops on the beach. What they were going to do was come down, blow all these landing craft out of the water, and destroy the troops while they were in the process of landing. Destroy their supplies, everything else.

ROBERT BROWN: Had the landing, in fact, already taken place?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Already taken place.

ROBERT BROWN: So their communications were very poor?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Yeah, and this was one of their last big naval efforts. It's ironic that the big battleships, the *New Jersey* and the rest of them, that were built during the war—

ROBERT BROWN: —were not involved?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: —were not involved, and it was the—

ROBERT BROWN: Were you involved? Were you there in the Mindanao Straits at that time?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: We came in after the battle, and that's where we began to take punishment from the Japanese aircraft. But that battle had already been completed by the time we got into there.

ROBERT BROWN: You went to Ulithi, and after that, you steamed for where?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Then we went, from Ulithi—we had another planning conference, this time for Iwo Jima. [00:06:00] That was one of the bloody battles of the Pacific. Well, they were all bloody battles, but Iwo Jima particularly so. That was an isolated island right out in the middle, between our current holdings in the southern part of the Pacific and Japan itself. The Tinian and—what's the other one? The two that they used down there. Two atolls and landing places for the B-29s.

ROBERT BROWN: Did you have any idea why you were to take Iwo Jima?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Yes, to get a fighter base, to get fighter support for the B-29s going over Japan.

ROBERT BROWN: Oh, to get within range of Japan?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: That's right, to get within range of Japan. To get a good base for aircraft operations, and the B-29s who were in trouble could land there, be repaired, and that kind of thing. It was to get another firm base halfway, as it were, to Japan, after the Philippines operations. Of course, we were much closer than the Philippines. The Philippines really was carried out for no other reason than to put General Douglas MacArthur back in the Philippines. The Navy command was opposed to this. They wanted to go straight for Japan and just simply let the Philippines be cut off, you see. Not bother to take the effort, and the men and the supplies and the ships necessary, to take the Philippines back. But as a political issue—I think it was Roosevelt who made this decision. Nimitz didn't want to do it. But Roosevelt made this decision, that politically, and from the point of view of the morale of the Philippines, we owed it to them to liberate them, and so that operation was put on, and MacArthur waited ashore, and had his picture taken several—he went back and waited again and they took—it was a marvelous moment, you know, for this man to come back. [00:08:06] I think, in the end, from my own point of view, it did what it was supposed to do.

ROBERT BROWN: But militarily, it wasn't—it could have been—

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Militarily, it was not necessary at all, but from the political and moral point of view, it was. The obligation was there. I think Roosevelt was absolutely right in that. Because actually, the losses that we took were minor compared to the ultimate result. The Japanese supply lines were way overextended, and their shipping was being blown out of the water. They were in bad shape down there, and they fought like hell, God knows. I did go back to Manila later and saw some of this. At that time, we didn't. That's when we went up to Ulithi, and there we became—as I remember it, with Third Fleet—wait a minute. I'd have to sort this out.

ROBERT BROWN: You were attached to a new—

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: We were attached—this time, we were attached to Halsey, as I remember. Yes, it was Halsey, so that it would be the Third Fleet. From Seventh Fleet, we went to Third Fleet [inaudible]—

ROBERT BROWN: Did you actually work with him or with his planning staff?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: With his staff. Never worked directly with Admiral Halsey. Always with the staff. I did meet Admiral Halsey, and I met Admiral Spruance, and got to know Admiral Spruance better than any of them. Spruance was much more in with the troops, as it were. Halsey was a more remote character. He was a little bit like Patton. He had very many of the same characteristics as Patton. A gruff, determined man, and very publicity-conscious. He had a publicity staff on his ship that was—I'll tell you who was the head of that. It was Stassen, Harold Stassen. You remember Harold Stassen, who ran for president? [00:10:01]

ROBERT BROWN: Still does.

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Still does?

ROBERT BROWN: Recently.

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: [Laughs.] Well, he was in charge of the public relations part of Halsey's staff, and Halsey was very conscious of this. Spruance was just the opposite. Spruance said, "There can be one press representative on my staff. One. And we will give you the information we need through that person. But I need the space for operating people, and we can't take any more than that." They were absolutely as different as night and day.

ROBERT BROWN: This must have bothered you, or you people in the combat—

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Not much we could do about it.

ROBERT BROWN: —to see all these publicity people?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Yeah.

ROBERT BROWN: You could do nothing about it?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: We could do nothing about it, and actually, some of it was interesting. For example, one of the people who came aboard our ship and stayed there for some time during one of our major undertakings—I think it was at Iwo Jima—was Lowell Thomas. He just came aboard and was there. I don't know whether he went back and reported or what he did, but there he was. He was on through a big part of that operation. I'm sure this was while Halsey was running the show, because Spruance never would have permitted that.

ROBERT BROWN: So you went to Iwo Jima, and you said earlier that was very bloody?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Iwo Jima—we went up to Iwo Jima, in support of the troops there, and our part of it was relatively minor, except for one dramatic episode of the typhoon that hit us. We went up there, and ours was routine. There was no Japanese aerial resistance whatsoever. There were a couple of kamikaze attacks, minor ones. Those came later, in Okinawa. There, we really got it. Iwo Jima was so far out that—but the battle itself was incredible. [00:12:01] There was just inch by inch by inch that they—the marines took that island.

ROBERT BROWN: There was no thought of just isolating that island?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: No, because they wanted to use it.

ROBERT BROWN: Right away?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Right away. They wanted to use it right away.

ROBERT BROWN: They couldn't have gone from China? Was that still—

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Well, no. Taiwan and all of that—Taiwan was still in the hands of the Japanese. In fact, the only time we were smacked with the kamikaze was operating off Taiwan. We were on a side operation over there, and the ship I was on was hit by one. Other than that, the Iwo Jima operation was routine, except, as I say, for the fighting ashore. Now, I did go ashore briefly there. One of the things is that when we got into the battle area, we were supplying the support aircraft, and there were in-shore patrol, or control units, that were controlling these aircraft. In other words, we would dispatch them from the ships, and they would be picked up

by these shore-based controllers, and then would be directed to various targets and so on. I occasionally had to have conference with these people. At Iwo Jima, this was so, and I flew ashore. Once the airstrip had been secured, I flew ashore one day with the admiral, and a couple of other members of the staff, for a conference with these people, and the admiral for other reasons.

ROBERT BROWN: Was it real desolation all around?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Oh, God, it was terrible. The island was a barren island to begin with, and what the bombs and the flamethrowers and artillery and aerial bombing had done to the rest of it was utter devastation. But one interesting personal story comes out of that. [00:14:02] The admiral, when he went ashore, had his cap with his two stars on it. We were with this group of the commanding officer. I don't remember who he was or who had been assigned to the admiral to take him around. Suddenly, this marine, young enlisted man, spotted the admiral's two stars. He said, "Goddammit, take those two stars off of there. Do you want to get us all blown to hell?" See, because anything like that identified somebody that—so they never wore insignia of that kind in the front lines. So the admiral says, "Thank you very much," and he takes these two things off. He turned to the person who was with us, and he said, "I want to know the name of that young man who just said that to me," being very severe about it. He found it out, and when he got back to the ship, he sent him a case of whiskey. [Laughs.] You know, the kid was right.

ROBERT BROWN: Sure, they could have spotted them—

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: That's right. A flash of those, and then, you know, that's a sign for the artillery to open up. Those were some of my responsibilities. I went ashore on that occasion.

ROBERT BROWN: Was it similar when you went to Okinawa? Was that your next—

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Yeah, Okinawa was the next step in the line. We went back to Guam, as I remember, on this occasion, for some planning. I'd have to put all this together.

ROBERT BROWN: Guam was sort of a rest area?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Guam was the advanced headquarters of command Pacific Fleet. It was a wonderful place by the time we got there. [00:16:00] We flew in from, I think, Ulithi or something like that, and we came in, and this old DC-4—was the first of the four engine land transport, after the DC-3, which was twin. This was a four. We spent quite a lot of time there, and it was there that I met Admiral Spruance for the first time. It's an interesting story. I was sent ashore with a group—with a communications officer and a couple of other officer, air officer, for this planning conference which was going to take place at Guam, advanced headquarters. I went into the head, to relieve myself, and this very nice-looking man came in and stood next to me. He looked at me and he said, "I haven't seen you before, young man." He said, "Who are you?" I told him I was with Admiral Durgin's staff. He said, "Well, gee, I'm glad to meet you." He said, "I'm Admiral Spruance," and he passed his free hand over to me, and here while we were both taking a leak, we shook hands. [They laugh.] That was my introduction to Admiral Spruance. He was an incredible person. He really was.

ROBERT BROWN: Was he?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Yes, he was. He was a great scholar, along with being a superb technician. Of course, he was the great mastermind of the Battle of Midway. The interesting thing about Spruance is that he was not an air officer. He was not a naval aviator. He was a battleship man, but he had a great sense of the role of the carrier. When Halsey was unable to, because of illness, command the Midway forces, Halsey recommended Spruance for the job. [00:18:00] That's how Spruance got into that whole business. He was a fascinating guy. His staff was wholly different than Halsey's. Absolutely different. They were carefully hand-picked people. They were a marvelous staff. There was a big, tall, red-headed officer by the name of Armstrong, who was his communications officer. I remember him, because that man knew naval communications right inside his head. He was incredible.

ROBERT BROWN: You mean a great deal of technical information?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: The technical information that he carried around inside his head was unbelievable, and that's the kind of person that Halsey had on his staff. They were very different, to deal with and everything else. I mean that Spruance had on his staff. Halsey's was—I'm not saying it wasn't a good staff, but it was not that same—you didn't feel that same level of sheer, unadulterated competence that you felt in the Halsey staff. It was all business, every inch of it.

ROBERT BROWN: And you respected that?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Oh, you bet your life I respected it. It made it 10 times easier for us to do our work.

There's a story that came out of the—I'm trying to remember the sequence of events and whether it was Iwo Jima or—I think it was—I think it was Halsey that was in command. It was Third Fleet at Iwo Jima. There's one episode that stands out in my mind as one of the most terrifying and substantive that I can report. I think it was when we were off Iwo Jima. It may have been later, in the Okinawa campaign. This is why I should know whether Halsey or Spruance was in command, because it was Halsey, and I think it was Iwo Jima. [00:20:02] We had to retire from the operating area occasionally to fuel the ships—to refuel the ships. We got instructions to retire, to refuel, and we took off on a course that took us out of the battle area, and the big oilers joined us, and we pulled up alongside, and we hooked up our hoses, and we got fuel. Halsey's Fifth Fleet was just over the horizon. We could see the superstructure of these ships, and they were fueling, 20 miles away, something like that. Well, our ships were smaller, and we'd finished fueling and broken lines, and we were back in formation again. We suddenly got a dispatch from Halsey, telling us to cease fueling, which we'd already done anyway, and take course so-and-so, speed so-and-so, typhoon imminent. So the admiral set this course and speed. It was toward late afternoon, mid-afternoon, when we got this, and as the afternoon progressed, seas began to build, and the wind began to pick up. The aerologist on our ship came down to the CIC, and to me, he said, "Bill, if we keep on this course and speed, we're going to hit that typhoon right smack on the nose." So I sent word up to the admiral. He came down to the CIC. He said, "Give me the TBS," which was the talk between ships. It was the inter-ship communicator. He took the radio, and he said—got on, and he identified himself. He said, "This is Federal himself speaking." He said, "I want every aerologist on this circuit, within 15 minutes, with a report on his estimate of this typhoon." [00:22:03] Fifteen minutes later, we got on, and our aerologist on every one of our ships in the group agreed with our aerologist. I'll never forget this. He turned to me, he said, "Bill, give me a dispatch board." I handed it to him. He read out this dispatch. He said, "Have this sent to Halsey." He said, "Disagree with your interpretation of typhoon. I'm changing course to so-and-so, speed so-and-so. Signed, Durgin." Now, he's putting his neck right out on the line. Right out on the line. He was countermanding the orders of the top man in the operation. We changed course and speed, as I've indicated. We missed the center by about 50 miles. Halsey went right into it, smack on the nose. I don't know that I can remember accurately the total—at least one destroyer simply disappeared off the face of the earth. The *Pittsburgh* had a hundred feet of her bow just busted right off, left floating in the sea. One or two of his major carriers were put out of action because their flight decks were just bent right back. It was an appalling story. We got off scot-free. We had a terrible night, I must say. One of the worst nights I've ever spent in my life. One doesn't understand the sea until you've experienced this kind of thing. It was absolutely terrifying. Our little destroyer escorts would simply disappear behind the waves. You wouldn't see them. Then they'd come up again, and you know, it was—oof.

ROBERT BROWN: These are 40, 50-foot seas?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Oh, yeah, at least. Standing on the flight deck—I mean, on the bridge—and looking up at the tops of the waves, and we were—what? On the bridge, we were—God, I don't know how far, but you could—the top of the crest of these waves would break the horizon as they'd come at you. [00:24:06] They were so big that our little ships, our 500-foot-odd, 10,000-tonners, were just sort of riding uphill and downhill, like this. But the rolling and the pitching—oh, my God, it was terrible. Anyway, Halsey, for some reason or other, he—they finally dubbed him, out there, Typhoon Halsey. He simply liked to go into them. This one was a fatal, fatal—

ROBERT BROWN: He got away with it?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Well, it's one of the things that's never spoken about, you see. If he had been—if it hadn't been for wartime, if it hadn't been for the man's record as a great hero in the war, he probably would have been court-martialed for this, but he was the top man. I'm sure that somewhere in the files of the United States Navy is that dispatch that Durgin sent to him. Durgin, as I say, was sticking his neck out, but he did, and we survived.

ROBERT BROWN: Halsey couldn't say anything to him?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: No, he didn't countermand it at all. Durgin had that prerogative. He had that prerogative. He just acknowledged it. But he kept right on the course and speed, and he went right smack into it, bang-o. It happened at least one other time, and I think two other times, that he seemed deliberately to pick out the typhoon and steam into it. I don't know if it was to test his ships and his men, or his own—[laughs]—guts or what. It was, in that instance, disastrous. I suppose that that will always be buried somewhere in the naval files forever.

ROBERT BROWN: Were there any other high points of your—the rest of that—your time out there in the Pacific?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: It was pretty monotonous and routine on the whole. [00:26:01] It was—

ROBERT BROWN: Going Okinawa and Japan itself—

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Okinawa—well, Japan was interesting, because we—after Okinawa, we went up there again with three divisions of carriers, three different task groups, and we spent 91 days off Okinawa. It was

the longest operating period we had. It was a long and tedious time. When that was over, I was sent back to the United States for a planning conference in San Francisco. Flew all the way back across the Pacific. On the way back, after that conference, the atom bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, and then on Nagasaki. I never saw Hiroshima, but I did see Nagasaki. I was sent down, by the admiral, back to Manila, actually, to get transport to take us to go home for a big group of men on—this was after the fighting had stopped. On the way back, a typhoon came along, and we were forced to land, in this big flying boat, in Nagasaki Harbor. So we got ashore and saw the devastation—flew over it, and saw the devastation of the bomb. It was incredible, what that one tiny little bomb—now tiny little bomb—had done.

ROBERT BROWN: What did you feel about it at the time?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: At the time, we were, of course, delighted, because it brought the war to an end. It's very interesting that our first reaction—it was a group of us. When the word of this came over, we had been working like hell on an operation plan for landings in Japan and Kyushu. This was to be the big one. It terrified everybody. It was—what was going to happen there was going to be frightful. [00:28:04] No question about it. This was the Japanese homeland, for God's sake.

ROBERT BROWN: And they knew the Japanese still had plenty of armament?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: That's right, plenty left at home. It was going to be a terrible, terrible business. We had been working weeks on this plan. It was an enormous plan. Everything in the Pacific was going to be poured into this. Our first reaction—it was a group of us when we heard this. Our first reaction was disappointment that our plan, that we'd worked so hard on, wouldn't be able to—and then we looked at each other and we said, "My God, what are we talking about? The war is over. Why are we disappointed?" But you get that involved in what you're doing, to the point where—

ROBERT BROWN: You really felt the war was over because of the devastation of the city?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Well, the Japanese had already called it quits by this time.

ROBERT BROWN: They did?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Sure. When I got back to Guam from San Francisco, the war hadn't ended yet, but it did end, and then I was sent immediately down—our ships had taken from Guam and had gone down to Manila—[laughs]—for God's sake. I had to make my way down to Manila to join them there. It was a shambles for a while. Then we were assigned to occupation forces in Japan. So Admiral Durgin's little task group of carriers—I can't remember how many we took with us. I think two groups. There were maybe eight carriers. We were sent—the Japanese have now surrendered, but no American troops are in Japan. We were sent to occupy the harbor at Wakanoura, which is the harbor for Wakayama. We steamed up toward Japan, and we had instructions that we were to be met by Japanese pilots that would take us through the minefields into Wakanoura Harbor. [00:30:03] I can still see a glorious morning. The mountains of Japan appearing on the horizon exactly the way they are in a Japanese print. No contact at the bottom at all, just these peaks in the haze beginning to show up. It was extraordinary, the visual similarities between that landscape, as we approached it, and Japanese painting of it. It was terribly moving. Anyway, they took us into the harbor, and we anchored in Wakanoura Harbor. Now, we were instructed not to go ashore at all. That the American troops were going to arrive, and then they would go—the Army was going to do this. The Navy was to stay there in the harbor as a presence. So we went in, and Admiral Durgin was in command of this group. Well, while we were in there, a typhoon came along. There we were, anchored in harbor. Well, you don't stay in harbor under typhoon conditions. You get the hell out and go to sea. We had to stay, because that's what we were supposed to do. So we throw out every anchor we had, and every ship in the harbor, and we rode this thing out in harbor. Boy—[laughs]—what a night that was. The chains on the anchor, yanking and jerking, and the ship, too. [Claps.] We had the engines going, turning over to keep the head into the seas and all that kind of thing. When the thing was over the next day, two smaller crafts had been blown ashore. So what to do? The admiral organized a landing party, and there were about 20 of us. We got in the motor whaleboats and we headed for the beach. There was no way for us to communicate with the Japanese ashore, but they saw us coming, and they were organized there on the dock when we got there. The police were there, and a few military types. [00:32:03] As we approached, we had our flag flying and everything else. We came up. We all had side arms. We were all armed. We didn't know what the hell we were going to encounter, and I was not a trained soldier. None of us were. Suppose we'd been fired on. We weren't. The police were there. They bowed. There was a formal group, and as we landed, the admiral got ashore. They had someone who could speak English, a young man. Admiral Durgin identified himself and said he's coming ashore to investigate the damage to the ships that had landed in the night from the typhoon. They were all very polite, and off we went. They took us down there. I think, probably, we were the first Americans to put foot on Japan after the war, because this was several days before the Army arrived to actually formally occupy the place. But it was very interesting, because the people who saw us coming would scurry, particularly the women. They'd scurry for cover like crazy. We finally got up. We walked along this long, beautiful, kind of park-like area, and we

came out to where one of the LSTs had come ashore. There was a whole lot of people in there, Japanese people, and then suddenly they spotted this group coming. The policeman who was with us simply said a few words in Japanese, and that entire group of people simply walked quietly away, like this. It impressed me, because you know what the American crowd would say to the cop. "Go on, you flat-foot." There would be an argument, and it would take half an hour to get these people out of there. But these people were so disciplined that they simply quietly walked away and disappeared. It's as though the land had swallowed them up. [00:34:00] There wasn't anybody there. It was quite an interesting experience. Then we went back to the ship and waited for the Army to arrive, and they finally came. Then we went ashore regularly. We were in there probably three weeks, I think, before finally I was detached and sent back to the United States.

ROBERT BROWN: There was, of course, no chance to get around Japan at that point?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Not really. Only there in—no, only in—the chief of staff did go to—the admiral didn't. The chief of staff—he sent him up to Tokyo for some reason. I can't remember why. He came back with—well, there's the samurai sword that he brought back for each member of the staff. [Laughs.] He had one of these damn things, passed it out. That ended it, and then I—our ship, as a matter of fact, came back to the States. Several ships detached immediately from—once the Army got in there, we were detached. The admiral stayed out there, but I came back with a group on one of the carriers. It was our own ship, but we no longer had admiral's quarters, so I had to change in the new quarters, and I was simply a passenger. I didn't have to stand watch or anything else. We did volunteer to, as a matter of fact, and occasionally we would relieve somebody on a watch, but other than that, we just came along. I had purchased, in Wakanoura, this charming little child's kimono that was only cut. It had never been sewed together. I bought this thing, and I got some parachute silk from a parachute loft, and what I did on the way back to the United States was to sew a lining—sew this thing together with parachute silk for my—what's now my older daughter. [00:36:05] I think she still has it. Absolutely gorgeous little colorful, flowered kimono that I got, and that was what I did on the way back. [Laughs.]

ROBERT BROWN: Were you going to be discharged?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: I was going to be relieved.

ROBERT BROWN: You weren't going to stay on?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: I wasn't going to stay on. They tried very hard to get several of us to stay on. Actually what happened—and this is pure accident of events—I ended up being one of the top five experts in that whole area of radar in relation to both tactical and defensive aircraft tactics—control. They wanted desperately to keep us in the Navy. We were all reservists, except one. There was only one regular naval officer, academy man, in that group, and the rest of us were all reservists. It's simply by happenstance. You see, my role is CIC officer for Admiral Durgin, and I started out, at the very beginning, on the ground floor of this stuff, so I ended up one of the experts in the United States Navy on this whole matter.

ROBERT BROWN: You had a lot of interest in it?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: I had a lot of great interest in it. I created big hunks of it. Admiral Durgin tried—one night, he came and said that the navy was offering a special group of officers an opportunity to become regular naval officers, reservists. What he proposed to me was that I was then a lieutenant, a senior lieutenant, ready to be promoted to lieutenant commander. They would promote me immediately to full commander—full commander. They would send me to the Naval War College for two years, and when I got out of there, they would give me command of a ship if I would stay in the navy. [00:38:00] This is what they offered in the way of a come on—oh, my God, this was something a naval academy man wouldn't get for—you know. Although my age was right for this. But I didn't accept it. I remember the admiral saying, he said, "Bill, you know, the only people that are accepting this are the meatballs we really don't want. We want people like you and so on." He mentioned others who were on the staff. Tom Gates, for example, who later became secretary of defense under Eisenhower. He was on the staff. He was our—he was Admiral Durgin's—

ROBERT BROWN: And he, too—

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: He turned it down, sure.

ROBERT BROWN: Then they turned to these so-called meatballs?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Yeah, what he called—he said the meatballs—he didn't say they are; he said they will accept it. I don't know how many they offered. I almost—

ROBERT BROWN: You had mixed feelings, did you?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Oh, I had very real mixed feelings, but the problem is with that, the life in the navy,

especially the peacetime navy, is terribly insecure. You're constantly moving from one station to another. Then you get a command at sea, and you're gone for a year or two. What does your family do in the meantime? I had a family, for heaven's sake. I just didn't want to get involved in this. But I did have a—if I had stayed in, I think, probably, I would have ended up in the aerospace program, because the two were so closely related. What we were doing is so close to what ultimately happened in the space program.

ROBERT BROWN: Guidance system?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Yeah, guidance systems, and the development of even mechanical computers, which would solve problems of space movement. This was our problem, was solving problems of three-dimensional space movement fast enough to get defensive action going, and in the right place at the right time. It was a fascinating problem. I was chosen for this because of my architectural background, frankly. [00:40:01] Did I ever tell you that? That's a very important and interesting story as to why I was chosen for that work.

ROBERT BROWN: No, I don't think—you may have, but—

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: This is worth putting in the record, because it has to do with education. I was sent down by—my first years in the navy, when I was in Quonset Point, my first responsibility was officer in charge of that experimental field station down on Jamestown, Rhode Island, where we were training night fighters, and where we were actually developing the equipment and the tactics, as a matter of fact. From there, I was sent down by Admiral Durgin to Atlantic City, to set up an enormous training center for CIC operations onboard ship.

ROBERT BROWN: You did mention the hotel you took over and all that.

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: That's right. That's what—okay. That was part of that operation. Now, what was I coming to here?

ROBERT BROWN: You were saying—

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Okay. While I was down there, setting up that station, I had to go to Washington to get personnel. I went down to Bewpurse [ph], and the person that I interviewed down there was a lieutenant in the waves, a woman, Gisella Reese—what was—her name was—Driscoll. Gisella Driscoll. Very commanding, tall, straight, handsome woman. All gray hair. She was fun, and very, very bright. She was helping me put together a crew for this Brigantine operation, and she was in charge of assignments, in Bewpurse, of this kind of personnel. I was having lunch with her one day, and I said, "You know, you may be able to answer this question." I said, "I've never been able to figure out why I was chosen for this particular kind of work." [00:42:00] She said, "I can tell you, because I chose you." She said, "At that time, we had information from the British that had already classified the types of people who did best in this sort of business." That is to say, of controlling aircraft in a three-dimensional problem, where you've got the logic of space to solve. She said, "They came in this order: architects, schoolteachers, lawyers. These two people were able to think on their feet. They had to. They were in the classroom or the courtroom. And the architects had the dimensional capacity." She said, "You had two of these qualifications. You had the architectural background, and you had the teaching." She said, "There was no question about why you would be chosen." This was a very interesting insight into the information that was available to people like that, to make the decisions they had to make.

ROBERT BROWN: Quite a bit more than you'd thought.

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: That's right, because it seemed utterly illogical for me to be involved in this thing in any way whatever. [They laugh.] And yet, from their point of view, it was very logical indeed. So that's how I fell into it, and it was sheer luck on my part that I ended up in probably one of the most fascinating activities of the whole damn war, because it was brand-new, top-secret stuff. It's led to what now these flight controllers, that are now on strike, are doing exactly what we were doing, only with commercial aircraft. They're controlling them, telling them to go to a certain point, and get there at a certain time. That whole thing stems out of that initial military operation. They're using the same equipment. It's different now. It's more sophisticated. But basically, it's exactly the same thing.

ROBERT BROWN: When were you discharged, then? In late '45?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Yeah, in the fall of '45, after—the fighting was over in Okinawa in, seemed to me, late June, and then I came back to the States in July. [00:44:13] No, I didn't come back to the States—

ROBERT BROWN: A little later.

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: That's right. No, wait a minute, it must have been July, because it was August that the bomb was dropped. Yes, that's right. That operation started—it went through July, I guess, into August. As soon as it was over—because I was sent back as soon as it was over, and I was in the air on the way back when

the bomb was dropped, so it would have been early August that I—that the—

ROBERT BROWN: Were you discharged here in the East or no?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Oh, yes, I was discharged in the East. I was given separation orders. That's why I went down to Manila, actually. That little side trip that I took for the admiral to Manila was to get the orders for a big group of officers and men, both. I must have had a pile of orders this high. So I flew down to Manila from Wakanoura Harbor, in a great flying boat, and as I say, on the way back, we had to land, because of bad weather, in Nagasaki. Spent the night there, Nagasaki Harbor. Oh, that was so beautiful. Then came back, and then we were all detached from our responsibilities. Two of the carriers and several other ships were sent back to the States, and on the way, when we got to Pearl Harbor, the squadrons were flown off, and the whole ship was made ready to receive about 1,200 soldiers. Cots were put up on the hangar deck, and these troops were moved right in. We became a troop carrier. [Laughs.] I'll never forget. When we left Pearl Harbor, we went around Diamond Head, and we ran into a mountainous sea. [00:46:02] It was just—*pshew*. Practically 80 percent of these poor soldiers were so seasick, and here they were, shoulder to shoulder, on cots, on this hangar deck, and the upchuck that was—[laughs]—running around on deck, you can't believe it. It was terrible. These poor devils, and it was like that all the way home. That Pacific, you know, was—belies its name every now and then, and it gets to be an absolutely mountainous sea. Something happens. We came down out of Japan—of course, Japan is pretty far north, and we took a northern circle. Gee, we got up into some pretty cold and icy waters, and my God, the seas—whew.

ROBERT BROWN: Then did you come back to look for employment, or you were promised—

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: I came back to Williams. When I left Williams, I had the promise—

ROBERT BROWN: That understanding.

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: —that I could return. Yes. I came back—

ROBERT BROWN: Was your family here?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: My family was in Englewood, New Jersey, with my wife's family.

ROBERT BROWN: Your wife had been—you were going to say something, I know, from last time—had been a fellow art student—

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: —at Yale. That's right.

ROBERT BROWN: At Yale. I think you had met there.

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: She was a sculptress there, and we met there, and we married when I graduated in '36 with my master's. Then I went out to Cleveland. I don't know how much of that we've gone into.

ROBERT BROWN: Yes, we have—

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: We've gone through all of that? Right. The early teaching out there. Then I came back after the war, and I went immediately back to graduate school, and herein lies an interesting story from the point of view of art historians.

ROBERT BROWN: You didn't simply teach here at Williams? You also went—

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: I came back, and I was teaching here, but I also wanted to—I didn't get to teach here—you see, I didn't come back until the winter of '4—what would it be? [00:48:00]

ROBERT BROWN: '45, '46?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: '46, winter of '46. Because I got back mid-fall of '45, and was coming back to teach in '46. In the meantime, I was making arrangements to do graduate study, and I was going back to NYU, where I had already gotten a master's degree. I went back to NYU, to make these arrangements, and I went in to see Walter Cook. You must have data on Walter Cook somewhere in your files. I was talking to Walter about the program that I wanted to carry out. While I was at sea, I did a lot of reading in American history, and I had gotten interested in American art. I kept saying to myself, why am I troubling to do my study in the Baroque field when no one's done anything in the American field? So I decided that I was going to change completely from Karl Lehmann and Walter Friedlaender and all the rest of them. I was going to desert them cold, and I was going to go into the American field to do my PhD in the American field. The man who was—I took one course there at NYU, which I could then sign up in, with Dimitri Tselos. Do you know him? Do you know of him? He was out in Minneapolis for years, and he still lives out there. He's retired.

ROBERT BROWN: The course was in—

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: It was a special studies in the American field. Turn this off for a second.

[Audio Break.]

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: With Dimitri Tselos, I was collecting a bibliography in American architecture, and in a sense getting ready to do a special seminar with him. Already having completed my course requirements, this was going to be mostly dissertation-oriented. [00:50:03] Anyway, I was sitting in with Walter Cook, discussing this whole thing, and Richard Offner came in. Do you know about Richard Offner? Well, Offner was one of the great scholars in 13th-century Italian painting—has written volumes on it—and a very great man, but a very arrogant and snobbish man. Very mannered person. He always wore a little cape. He was a little short fellow. He came into the office. We never addressed him as anything but "Dr. Offner," but Walter said, "Richard, glad to see you. Guess what Bill Pierson's planning to do?" He said, "I haven't"—

[Audio Break.]

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Richard Offner drew himself to his full five-foot-six or whatever he was, and he turns. "I haven't the remotest idea. What is he going to do?" Very mannered speech. Walter Cook said, "He's going to—he's changing his dissertation subject from the Baroque to the American field." Offner turned on me with his nose in the air, and he said, "Mr. Pierson, is there any American art?" And he turned on his heels and he walked out of the office. I said, "Walter, that decides it." I said, "I'm going to go somewhere else to do my degree." "Oh, Bill, no." I said, "Yes." I said, "I don't stand a chance. With that kind of an attitude, I don't stand a chance." I went right straight downstairs, called up Summy [ph] Crosby at Yale, and I said, "Summy, do you want a graduate student?" They did in those days. It was easy. He said yes. So I went to Yale, and I did my PhD at Yale instead of NYU.

ROBERT BROWN: That kind of a snobbery must have really struck you after your years in the service.

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Well, exactly. Here's this little guy coming and say, "Is there any American art?" [00:52:02]

ROBERT BROWN: It must have seemed like a very supercilious matter.

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Absolutely. Well, he was a supercilious man. He was a great scholar. Let's not tear down Richard Offner. But as a human being, he was—

ROBERT BROWN: The whole attitude—

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: That's right. So I just said, "No, Walter, I'm sorry. This is it." I went down, called up Summy, and off I went to Yale. I did my—

ROBERT BROWN: Did you have an arrangement with Williams? Did you teach here occasionally?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: I taught here, and I commuted to Yale for one year in order to do my resident requirements. I had to have a year of residence. I would go down there for two days a week, and I made this arrangement with Williams. I just did that for a year, and that was when I studied with people like Carroll Meeks and Tubby Sizer, the great—

ROBERT BROWN: What are the courses you could take then at Yale in American art at the graduate level?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: I took a course—

ROBERT BROWN: Were there very many?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: There weren't. As a matter of fact, they were mostly seminar courses with Carroll Meeks that I took. The rest of it was simply working on the dissertation.

ROBERT BROWN: You had known Meeks in the '30s, had you?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: I had known Meeks, yes, as a young person in the '30s there at Yale, but I didn't really get to know him well until I went back after the war to do my graduate work. He was my thesis advisor, and he was marvelous to work with. He was a very demanding person. He set very difficult standards, which were right. He was in close supervision. He was constantly available for consultation. It was a marvelous experience. That's where I did the PhD, and that's why I did the PhD there, frankly, was simply—Tselos was crushed by this, because he had never had anybody who had come with a desire to do work in the American field, and of course he wanted to get into it, too. [00:54:11] But with Richard Offner sitting on my committee, I

felt I just didn't stand a chance, so that was that.

ROBERT BROWN: How soon before you picked the topic you worked on for your dissertation?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Almost immediately. What I did first, of course, was start building a general bibliography on American art and American history. I bought a whole batch of books. I started reading them like mad. I did everything I could to build the background for what was effectively a brand-new field. As a matter of fact, I found out that there weren't a hell of a lot of people in it anyway. Johnny Phillips was teaching his beautiful course in American painting at Yale, and those were the few things that were available in the field, at Yale in particular. Except for Carroll Meeks, even Yale wasn't heavily armed on the American side.

ROBERT BROWN: What was Phillips like as a teacher?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Phillip was a—he was one of the most urbane people I've ever known. Extremely elegant in manner, very warm and friendly, very gentle, very, very bright, and about as informed about the—not only the silver, American silver, which was his major field, and also American painting, but also about the social history of the periods in which he was interested. He had fantastic knowledge of social history, and a course with him was as much a course in social history as it was in the history of silver or furniture or whatever you were involved with at the moment. [00:56:02] Of course, we had that marvelous collection there at Yale to work with. He was one of the great teachers of Yale, and probably impacted on American students as much as anybody who's ever taught there, in terms of their tastes, and extension of himself into the realm of the students. He was one of the greats.

ROBERT BROWN: Did he teach mainly as a connoisseur, as well as a social historian?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Oh, yes. Oh, I mean you got—my God, you got the—he wasn't the same as Charlie Montgomery, who starts with the piece of silver. Have you ever heard Montgomery on this? He starts with the piece of silver, and you come up through the ranks, as it were. Johnny Phillips's approach was very much more abstract than that, and much more concerned—as you say, the connoisseur, the—why is this a beautiful piece? The history of it, and the relationship with the people who bought it and had it made. It became a thing alive, because it was filled with people. It was made for people, and the people became alive along with the object. Charlie Montgomery was very different than that. If you wanted—

ROBERT BROWN: Was he a teacher there then, too?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: No, no, no, no. I'm just comparing him from my later experiences. I never studied with Charlie Montgomery, but I've heard him. I've heard him work with students, and seen him work with students. As I say, he starts with that hunk of silver. You follow it right through, until it becomes reality. The man's knowledge was legion in that—

ROBERT BROWN: In those American art and decorative art courses of that time, was there much reference to European antecedents?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Oh, sure. Oh, sure. Johnny Phillips was filled with that. Oh, yes, absolutely. [00:58:01] Constantly comparing American silver with British silver, and the interchange between them. As a matter of fact, an awful lot of the silver that came over here was English silver, and the furniture, too. Oh, no, it was a course completely interlocked with the English decorative arts.

ROBERT BROWN: With Meeks, what was the concentration there?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: With Meeks—my work with Meeks, quite apart from the courses which I took with him—one was, for example, in gardens, which was a great course, because it ultimately turned out to be extremely important in my own interpretation of American art in the 19th century, when you get into people like Downing. This whole background with Meeks that I had had in the early Italian gardens and the English gardens, it was a very helpful and useful course. But Meeks's method was to let the student—they were all seminars, and we would all take a topic, and then he would work with you in bibliography, in method, in results, evaluating results. It was a very methodological approach, in which you were taken through the paces of a scholar in the most complete sense of the word. You were made to perform for Meeks as a scholar, really almost more than as an interpreter. You were made to perform as a scholar. The footnotes had to be right, and everything that you said had to be documented. It's this kind of approach. He was a methodical man, having seen his files piled high to the ceiling, and all cataloged. He had bursary boys working for him, of course, to do this. [Laughs.] He could afford to do it. That's the way he went at it.

ROBERT BROWN: You learned—it was perhaps, in some ways, more tedious than was the—

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Not nearly as colorful as Johnny Phillips. [01:00:01] Not nearly. Completely different.

But on the other hand, very useful from the point of view of your ultimate performance as a scholar, because Meeks insisted that you do it the right way. His way of approaching a work of architecture would be to catalog it. I found it tiresome at times. There would be A, B, C, D. He would take some aspects and divide them up, and subdivide them, and you'd end up with an outline, and how one thing led to another thing. It became a little bit like library cataloging.

ROBERT BROWN: There was no allowance for intuitive leaps in history, let's say?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Very little of that. Very little of that. When I did my dissertation on industrial architecture in the Berkshires, I had to research all the technical journals. The thing to find out was why the mills were built that way specifically, and technologically, why were they built the way they were? So you dug into everything you could find in the 19th-century journals that would be liable to tell you this, and you read people like William Fairbairn, a great mill engineer of the 19th century in England. That was his approach. He was an architect, you see, trained as an architect, so his approach was technological, in a sense, to architecture. How many buildings have this motif on them, and why? If you found a relationship between them, then you had something tangible to link them together. What structural methods related to one another? This kind of approach. And it's useful. I also—

ROBERT BROWN: Inventorying, in a way.

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: That's right. [01:02:00] Now, the other approach that—I should mention this man, because I think he's one of the greats in American teaching, and someone you never hear about, was A. Philip McMahon. I don't know whether I mentioned him last time or not, but he taught—he was on the faculty at NYU when I was there as a graduate student. I took a course with him that was a mixture of research method and philosophy. He was a philosopher at NYU. That was his—he was in the philosophy department, and he was a philosopher, and he developed this course in the arts. It was, without a doubt, one of the most intriguing courses I ever took. He would give us an assignment, an object in the Metropolitan Museum, and we would go, and we were to look at this as an object. Forget its history. Forget everything else except the object. What was it all about? Why was it unique the way it was? What were the unique things about it? You had to look at that object. You had to talk about line, you had to talk about form, you had to talk about color, you had to talk about texture, and how these things related. It was absolutely the opposite of Meeks, whose whole approach came from structure and technical matters. His was the insight into the object as a visual object, and that was the finest visual training I ever had in my life, because I was made to look. I can remember I did a paper on Homer. We all did papers. Then we would bring these to class, and he would read them, and boy, he would go through these. I still have these papers. He had a very interesting and special way of marking them. Then we would discuss these in class. We would each have to get up and defend our paper and describe what we'd done. [01:04:01] We'd do this with slides and all kinds of things. It was absolutely marvelous training, because it made you see the object as a work of art. Then we read related philosophy. When we were working in the Middle Ages—I said we weren't talking about history. We weren't. We were talking about the object. But we were, at the same time, reading Thomas Aquinas.

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ROBERT BROWN: This is the third tape. How do you compare him with Mr. Phillips, who taught you from a connoisseur's point of view of looking carefully and closely at—

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Johnny Phillips, I would say, was much more superficial. There was not the philosophical strength that McMahon had. McMahon was a philosopher, remember. We would constantly relate this to what he would call the philosophy of beauty. How did any given period—as I say, when we talked about the object, we didn't mention it as a medieval object. We mentioned it as an object, but then we would study Saint Thomas Aquinas, and he would make these connections. That was the way we were brought into the period, from the philosophical point of view. It was a basically philosophical course, and it was much more profound and searching than Johnny Phillips. Johnny Phillips never got to that level of thinking at all. Johnny Phillips lived in utter delight with a piece of silver, and there was this marvelous enthusiasm of his, and his sensitivity to it as an object and a piece of material, and all the people who'd handled it. Johnny was constantly talking about the people who'd had this in their hands and that kind of thing. He wasn't like Montgomery—how is it made?—so much. He did get into that, but that wasn't his approach to it. His approach to it was, that was a beautiful object, and it represented a period, it represented people, and let's talk about all—

ROBERT BROWN: Whereas McMahon would say, "This object relates to the time and the way of thinking that's being done." [00:02:04]

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: That's right. It was absolutely at that rock-bottom level. We were made to read all these philosophers, and Carroll's philosophy of beauty, and then we were frequently sent out to do some little investigating on our own. But it was—

ROBERT BROWN: Back to a little more concrete, what about iconography? Was this brought in by any of your teachers?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: The iconography, of course, was brought in in a big way by Erwin Panofsky. He was the great iconographer, as it were.

ROBERT BROWN: And you had courses with him?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Yes. Yes.

ROBERT BROWN: This was when you were at Yale?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: No, this was when I was at NYU. No. At Yale, I didn't have any courses in iconography, anything of that kind. All of this was at NYU. Philip McMahon was at NYU.

ROBERT BROWN: But you did have this background? By the time you came to Yale, then—

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: By the time I came to Yale, I—

ROBERT BROWN: —[inaudible] philosophical [inaudible] connoisseur?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Sure. As a matter of fact, I had taken Johnny Phillips's course when I was an undergraduate at Yale years before, so I didn't have to take that again. I'd already been through that routine.

ROBERT BROWN: Now, with Meeks, you were learning to be a careful cataloger?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: That's right. With Meeks, I was learning to be a careful cataloger. I was learning to look at architecture as a technical problem of plan. The plan was—you know, to Meeks, the plan was the most expressive thing in the whole building, and you would compare plans until they came out of your ears. Concepts of space. All this was useful, you see. I mean, terribly useful.

ROBERT BROWN: Had you been doing a lot of three-dimensional thinking during the war?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Absolutely, and of course I had been interested in architecture for a long time.

ROBERT BROWN: Now with plans, you're looking at a two-dimensional—

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: The plan tells you something. If you're an experienced observer [ph], the plan tells you something about what's up on top of it. He didn't only work with the plan, but the sense of the plan is the basic schematic of the building, the arrangement of the space and how those spaces relate, and the comparison of plans. [00:04:09] Why did this plan relate to that plan? What were the things that were similar in them, and what was different? It was that kind of basic technical approach, whereas McMahon was making us see it sensuously. I think this is the difference. Meeks was making us see it technically. Philip McMahon was making us see it as an object of beauty, sensuously. We were responding to color, to texture, and to the differences in the way the paint is applied. It never occurred to me to reason why a painting in tempera of the Quattrocento is different than a painting by Rubens. When you start on that, you get into color. You get into the integument of the paint. You get into the way the paint is put on. You get into the way the thing—the whole visual experience of that is different, and why is it different? It's not any different because it's technically different, but it's different because these were different people who had different views of beauty. It's that kind of thing that McMahon took us into, constantly probing as to what our visual response, our eyes—he said, "Your eyes. You see. It all is coming to you through your eyes. That's the instrument that you"—

ROBERT BROWN: You seem to have been more, as you look back at least, excited by that approach of McMahon than you were by your—

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Very much more.

ROBERT BROWN: —working on your dissertation, that approach.

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Well, the dissertation was an individual thing, largely, and I had a great time with that, because I was on my own. But in terms of intellectual stimulus, Philip McMahon was one of the great people in my life. He made me think in ways, and see in ways, that I never would have been—you know, you suddenly become aware. [00:06:02] Why didn't I see this before? Why didn't I think like this before?

ROBERT BROWN: Did you see him again after the war?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: I never saw Philip McMahon again after—he died, as a matter of fact, during the war.

He died very soon in there. I never saw him again. I did see others. I saw Lehmann a lot after the war, and I went down to see old Walter Friedlaender, and occasionally Panofksy, and Krautheimer, and Julius Held, who's now here at the—I took a course in Dutch painting with Julius Held at NYU. He's another one, by the way, that you ought to get to.

ROBERT BROWN: How did you happen to light on your particular thesis topic?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Through Carroll. I can't remember exactly how this came about, but I was working in Rhode Island—I was living in Rhode Island—summers. As part of the training to build my own knowledge of American architecture, I was driving every inch of Rhode Island and looking at every historical building I could get my eyes on, and photographing it, making slides. I ran into, then, Meeks's book on Rhode Island architecture—I mean, Hitchcock's book on Rhode Island architecture, which came out just about that time.

ROBERT BROWN: We're talking about, now, after the war?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: This is after the war. That, of course, had industrial architecture in it. It had a little section on it. That fascinated me, and I went and saw these early industrial sites in Rhode Island, and that sort of stimulated my interest in it. They were still there. They're not there now, most of them. They're gone. But they were there then. In conversation with Meeks, this was the kind of thing he would be interested in. It was 19th-century. It was a subject that no one had done anything with. "Bill, this is it."

ROBERT BROWN: He was interested in pedestrian building, or rather—[00:08:00]

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Sure, and commercial building, because this was part of the guts of America, you see. He said, "This is an open-wide field. No one's done anything with it. Take it, grab it, run with it." And so I did, and then I fixed on the Berkshires, because he said, "You've got to narrow this down. You can't do the whole thing." So I fixed on the industrial architecture up here in Berkshire County, and that's what I did my thesis on. It was—

ROBERT BROWN: Did you touch base with John Coolidge, who had done—

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: —Oh, absolutely, yes. Of course, yes.

ROBERT BROWN: —1940 or so.

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Oh, yes, I touched base with John, and read his book, of course, right away, and saw him and talked with him. He was one of the examiners on my PhD dissertation. He examined me on my dissertation. In those days, you took two exams. You took a general exam, in which you were examined by a committee that was brought together of people in your field and outside of your field and so on. Then you were examined by one person on your dissertation, and John Coolidge is the person who examined me on the dissertation. So he was involved in a very real sense. What's curious is that John hasn't done any more with it than I have since we did our main studies on the subject. He wrote the book, and then I never—well, in the books I've been working on now, there are sections in there on industrial architecture, but I didn't go much beyond that after I did the initial study of it. I got into other things and went in other directions.

ROBERT BROWN: Do you think you—did you lose your interest, to an extent?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Never lost the interest. No, I still have the interest. But it's just that I couldn't concentrate on that and teach American art. I had to learn a lot about American painting. I had to read about all the great men in the American field in order to build a course. I taught the first course ever taught in American art at Williams, and it meant starting from scratch. [00:10:02] First class I ever had, I said, "Look, you and I are going to learn this together." I had a fellow who was sitting in on the course, who was a retired professor of history at Williams—we later got to be very, very good friends—by the name of T.C. Smith. He was a very—he was a meticulous man. High dome, scholarly looking man. He would sit in the back, and he'd be very reflective, and he'd listen intently. He loved this notion that I was learning at the same time the class was. He loved it. He contributed a great deal, because he was an American historian. I remember one time, I was lecturing on Bulfinch, and I had a slide on of that one to four Park Street group, you remember? We have a slide in our collection that showed one of the few surviving houses of that group. I showed it during the class, discussed it, and he came up after class, and he said—he always called me Professor Pierson. I loved that. [They laugh.]

ROBERT BROWN: He was a bit senior to you?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: A bit senior, yes. He came up. "Professor Pierson," he said, "would you mind putting that slide of that number four Park Street on again?" I said sure, so I put it on. He took the pointer and he went up to the screen, and he said—he pointed at a window, which was up on the third floor, I think. He said, "Do you see that window?" I said yes. He said, "I used to sit up in that window on Ralph Waldo Emerson's knee," and he

told me stories. His father worked for Houghton Mifflin, and that was Houghton Mifflin's office, and old T.C. Smith sat on Ralph Waldo Emerson's knee up in that window. Well, you know, it's kind of touching, because it immediately establishes a personal contact between you and Ralph Waldo Emerson, because here's a fellow who had seen the great man, and had known him, even as a child. [00:12:00] It was a marvelous thing. He was filled with things like that, and he was very helpful in the course. Matter of fact, used to come up afterwards and say, "Now, you know, if you did this or that"—he was marvelous. A great help in putting that course together.

ROBERT BROWN: At that point, there hadn't been really a great deal serious written on American art, had there?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Nothing. Nothing. What was there?

ROBERT BROWN: There are a great many light books, popular books, on American painting, or some, weren't there?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: There were some, sure, but there was no serious stuff. Well, that isn't quite true. By the time I was working on that, Lloyd Goodrich had done his great works on Homer and Eakins. Eakins in particular. I don't know whether the Homer one had come out yet. There were little nuggets here and there, but there was no book on American art in general that was worth anything, and you simply had to take it from scratch, which is what I did, and it was fun. As I say, T.C. enjoyed that. He said, "This is marvelous. As long as you're honest with these students," he said, "tell them you're learning at the same time they are, this will work," he said. "This will work." [Laughs.] And it did.

ROBERT BROWN: In your teaching, did you set up—provide for a lot of discussion, or was it mainly—

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Our method of teaching here at Williams in those days—and I suspect it still is in the art department—we had three lectures a week, and we had a conference, which was a breakdown of the class into small discussion groups. The three lectures, there was very little discussion. Occasionally some student would ask a question, and you'd take the time to answer it, but generally speaking, this was a presentation that they listened to, and then they went on and did reading, and then they came to conference. Then you had select problems to discuss with them in conference, and then you let them do it. That was the way we did it here, and it worked pretty well, because the courses were too big, most of them. [00:14:00] Once they gained any popularity at all, I used to have registration of 50, 60, 70, sometimes 80 students in that American course. Well, you can't carry on a discussion with a group like that. But then I would break them down into smaller groups, and I would handle all of them. Toward the end there, I had an assistant who took over some of the conferences with me—for me. But most of it, I did the whole thing.

ROBERT BROWN: You gradually—you were the Americanist in art here?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: I was the Americanist in art, that's right.

ROBERT BROWN: Did you introduce, to any extent, your industrial architecture study?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Oh, yes. Oh, yes, indeed. In fact, we made field trips. I had a big collection of slides on all that material. Oh, indeed. I had two or three lectures on industrial architecture. That was a—

ROBERT BROWN: What had you concluded in your dissertation about industrial buildings of the Berkshires?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Well, that the industrial buildings of the Berkshires were a kind of reflection of the larger development of industrial architecture in general. The Berkshires began as a kind of backwater, and the reason they began was the water power up here. Also the fact that there was very poor land for farming. The climate was bad, and the land, the soil, was bad. The first people who came up in Berkshire County were farmers from Connecticut Valley. They came up through South County, up that way. Then there was a group that came up into this northern part, the Hoosic Valley—Hoosic River Valley—Adams and North Adams. The farming was miserable. They sold out to another group from Rhode Island. Early industrialists from Rhode Island spotted the water power, and they came up here, and that's where it began, in about 1800 to 1810. [00:16:01] The Merino sheep was introduced in the United States in Berkshire County, which is one of the great boons to woolen industry in this country.

ROBERT BROWN: So they would raise the sheep?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: These hills that you see around you here now, in 1840, were stripped bare of forest right to the tops. They were completely pastureland. They were like the hills of New Zealand today. Merino sheep were all over the place, and the woolen industry in America began in Pittsfield. It was this kind of thing that I dealt with, and then related this to the general technological development of the factory and the factory form as it came through the early years in Rhode Island and into Lowell, and the technological changes from

water power, from the high breast wheel to the turbine, and all the things. The changes from wooden power communicating pulleys and belts to metal. All the things that affected the size and character of the mill. I just related these mills here to that development, and then also stylistically, the things that happened stylistically in the treatment of the factory.

ROBERT BROWN: The technological considerations were the first ones you—

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: That's right. I was under the tutelage of Carroll Meeks, and by golly, I had to tell Carroll Meeks exactly why the early mills took the shape they did. So I had to find out about how water power was communicated, and its belts and pulley—

ROBERT BROWN: How the machinery was arranged.

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: How the machinery was arranged. Where the water wheel was placed. How it's related to the size and shape of the building it was going to be put it. How did it affect the growth of the building, the changes in the size and shape as it grew. [00:18:00] All these were questions that I had to answer for Carroll.

ROBERT BROWN: Did questions of aesthetic style come into the picture?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Oh, yes, they did indeed.

ROBERT BROWN: But only secondarily? Or could you discover—

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: I wouldn't say secondarily, no. I worked very hard on this. I have this piece in my first volume here of—the second volume, rather—the early mills in Lowell, which I—Sandy, Ted Sandy, who was working here, who took my course over when I retired, was interested in industrial archeology also, and he had dubbed these mills "the corporate style," which, to me, was rather interesting. Jim O'Gorman jumped all over me for the use of that term, because he said, "All mills are corporate style." Well, he's right. But in those days, it was a very clear distinction. The early corporations were these industrial corporations, and they were the first in America, and therefore the use of the term "corporate style" made a lot of sense in terms of the then-current history. What it really was, was a kind of transformation of Beacon Hill, of Bulfinch, into the pragmatic language of the mill and the boardinghouse. It was a very interesting impact of a cultural image, and a cultural necessity, in the mills, in places like Waltham, beginning in Waltham, and in Lowell, and Lawrence, and Manchester, and Nashua. All those Merrimack Valley towns were exactly the same, so I dubbed them the—I gave Sandy credit for the term, but I used that. In fact, the title of that book, the subtitle, is *The Corporate and Early Gothic Styles*. So I did deal with terms of style, very much. Right now, I'm working on—what later happened was that marvelous Romanesque revival that hit this country in the '40s and '50s and '60s, before Richardson became the style of industrial building, almost entirely, and for very good reasons. [00:20:13] One is you could do it all in brick. You didn't have to have molded ornament or carved ornament or anything else. You could build these wonderful campanile towers in brick. Gee, there are some beauties. There are really some beauties still surviving, and that's what I'm working on right now, is this whole shift from the corporate style, which was Bulfinchian, but brick. The transformation is very easy to the round arch style of the Romanesque.

ROBERT BROWN: Bulfinch's own style was brick, too, wasn't it?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Sure, that's my point. My point—

ROBERT BROWN: Translating on a domestic sort of London row-house style.

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: That's right. Then, ultimately, the great pier construction you see of these great mills, like the big ones down in—that still survive in Lawrence. God, they're marvelous. Go on for blocks, these great walls of brick, with their piers and their great high windows. All of that related to the interior construction. This was another fascinating part of it, was the development of slow-burning construction, which was introduced into this country sometime in the 1930s. No one's been able to nail that down exactly, or who it was. I, at one time, thought it was old Zachariah Allen, but I don't think that's so. There's too much evidence to point now to other—

ROBERT BROWN: This was a British development?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: No, this was a strictly American development. It was a very genius one. Instead of building with beams and joists, conventional joists, 16 inches on center, or 20 inches on center, whatever, the beams were enlarged. The floor was thickened from a one-inch floor, or whatever, to three inches of solid oak, with another inch on top of that, on these great beams. In other words, the floor became supported on these great beams. [00:22:01] What it did was it didn't eliminate fire, but it takes a hell of a long time for a fire to burn through four inches of solid oak. It took very little time to burn through one inch, or to burn through a thin joist.

Now, the beams are 16x18, something like that, so there's time to get water in there and get the fire out before the floors collapse and all that kind of thing. The result was that they didn't cut down the number of fires, but they sure as hell cut down the number of losses by fire. It came to be called slow-burning construction. I've got pamphlets published by the Manufacturers Mutual Fire Insurance Company, describing slow-burning construction. That was the kind of construction that dominated industrial building in this country right down into the 20th century. Everyone says that it's in the industrial building that reinforced concrete and steel and metal all got their start, and bull pippy, it is not. They were against metal, because metal would buckle. The head would buckle it, and down would come the floor. A wooden post would stand right there, you'd burn the whole damn thing through. It's a very interesting, pragmatic discovery that these people made. I've done a lot with that. I'm going to build on that one in this next book. I'm doing a lot with that. I'm comparing early metal construction in this country with this ingenious use of wood, using a native material in a way that solved a problem better than metal could solve it. A lot of these insurance companies—I won't say a lot of them, but the Manufacturers Mutual Fire Insurance Company would not insure a mill that was designed in metal.

ROBERT BROWN: Those companies themselves had a strong effect.

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Now, that, Zachariah Allen did do. He started the Mutual Fire Insurance Company, and that's his—

ROBERT BROWN: In Rhode Island?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: In Rhode Island. He's another one of these great, unsung American heroes who—Jeffersonian in his reach, in his capacity. Jack of every trade he ever touched. [00:24:00] A fascinating man. He's the one who started the Manufacturers Mutual Fire Insurance Company, and out of that came this whole concentration on ways of reducing loss by fire. They realized there's no way you can stop fires. As long as you're dealing with combustible materials and human beings, you're going to have fires. How do you stop the damn mill from being destroyed? That's what you—

ROBERT BROWN: Was this one of the basic, more exciting things about your dissertation, was the fact—

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Yeah, that's right. It was—

ROBERT BROWN: —some of these practical considerations affected the appearance, the eventual appearance?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: I read stuff, Bob, by these early industrialists that's absolutely fascinating. How they went about solving their problems. They came to this—well, you know that wonderful mill—let me tell you this story—that wonderful mill down in Allendale, Rhode Island. That stone mill. Do you know that one at all? It's got—on one end of it, it has what looks like great big Gothic buttresses. On one end of the mill only, on the corners, are these enormous buttresses that build up like a Gothic buttress. So your first reaction is, oh, boy, here we have a Gothic building. Well, those weren't put in there for Gothic buttresses at all. When Zachariah Allen built that building, he had perfectly plain walls, and he was—as they built the building up, and they got the framing in, and the whole roof on, they suddenly discovered that there was a constant vibration in the mill. Now, there wasn't any machinery in it yet at all, yet it vibrated. Why would this mill vibrate? He was standing up there in the window one day, looking out over the dam, and he saw this sheet of water coming over the dam. He was an engineer. He said, "By golly, this building is resonant with that water," and he went out and he stuck a plank in it, and he broke the stream, and the vibration stopped just like that. [00:26:05] They had built these buttresses to try to stop this damn vibration. You read that account in Zachariah Allen's papers, and he writes about this, he describes it.

ROBERT BROWN: It was merely coincidental that they seemed Gothic?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Absolutely. That's right. It was coincidental that they seemed Gothic, but what he was trying to do was stop the vibration. So the first thing they did was to build these great buttresses on that corner of the mill, where the vibration was taking place, until one day, he realized that the problem was right out there, and all he had to do was stick a plank in that sheet of water and break it, and the vibration stopped just like that. That's a marvelous story in resonance.

ROBERT BROWN: Were you being tagged as a functionalist after you had studied with Carroll Meeks?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: I don't remember being tagged as a functionalist. I'm much too much of a romantic ever to be a functionalist, really.

ROBERT BROWN: But in that dissertation, at that time, this—

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: I don't ever remember anybody ever saying that who'd read it. It was perfectly obvious data that you couldn't avoid when you got into the literature.

ROBERT BROWN: But when you got into other American art forms, you didn't continue to—

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: No, not really. Not really. There's another wonderful story about old Zach Allen, when he built his mill up in Georgiaville, the big 1853 mill. He'd been experimenting with metal shafting and the various potential speeds, communication of power, in relation to the speed of the revolution of the shaft. The original shafts were very ponderous. They took the slow turning of the wheel, and they maybe geared that up once or twice, and the shaft was turning twice as fast as the wheel, something like that. That long, ponderous shaft went right through the mill, and then they geared it down from there. He found that the friction of that heavy shaft turning slowly was so great, and the loss of power so great, that what you ought to do—and he discovered this on his own—is take small shafts, and immediately put them up to high speed, and reduce it when it gets to the machine. [00:28:18] So the shafts—he started out with ordinary gas pipe, experiment with this. Built bearings, put these gas pipes in it, stepped it up to high speed. It takes the load off it immediately. Turning at high speed, you don't get this terrible load that those slow ones got. My God, the friction that those belts were exerting on that shaft was enormous. Speed it up, and you immediately reduce that. Now, you do increase the friction at the bearing. You've got to have good bearing. But this is the kind of thing they'd find out, by pure empirical experiment.

ROBERT BROWN: And that, in turn, would gradually affect the shape and size of the building?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: That's right. Exactly. All these things were getting light into the building, and ventilation, sprinkler systems. And it's simply that the most efficient shape of a building was a simple rectangular block, several stories high. The one-story buildings, the later weave sheds and stuff, were much later in the century. They would come after the Civil War, most part. They come from a very interesting reason, mostly because the action of the looms is very destructive. There's a wonderful story that comes from British early technology. They built a mill—where was it? In England. Can't remember the location. Brand-new mill, with metal framing and everything in it, about 1830. The looms were up on a second or third floor, and by sheer coincidence, one day, every loom on that floor suddenly was in unison, and the whole building collapsed. [00:30:04] William Fairbairn was brought in to investigate this accident, and his conclusion was, of course, that this is what happened, and he was right. From there on in, they put governors on the looms, so they never could swing simultaneously. But this is what happened out there in that terrible accident that just happened in that—

ROBERT BROWN: —hotel.

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: —hotel in Kansas City. It was madness to let those people do that. Absolute madness. You'd have thought there'd been somebody in that group that would say, "Hey, fellows, knock this off. We can't do this." That's what brought that, though, is bad engineering, too, I think.

ROBERT BROWN: Did you also study the housing and the—

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Yes. Coolidge had done such a superb job of that. As a matter of fact, they'd written it up themselves. All the things that the girls had written in that—what did they call that paper that they put out down there?

ROBERT BROWN: In Lowell?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: In Lowell. The *Lowell*—something. Not *Lowell Advocate*, but something like that. The documentation is rich and abundant there, and it was simply a matter of ingenuity on the part of the entrepreneurs. They saw, in the unmarried young ladies in the farm, a real asset. So they said, "Look, we'll give you a dowry. You can make a dowry and come on down. We'll supervise you, and you stay here for a few years." Then they go back to the farm and marry. They weren't looking for a perpetual market—source. They were looking for a reliable one, and it worked. Miraculously, it worked. For three or four decades of time, it worked. Then things got more complicated, and foreign labor got in, and men got more greedy, and the whole thing fell apart. That early Lowell experiment was a very, very interesting one, sociologically, as well as architecturally. [00:32:04] What they used down there, in very simple terms, was the great row—the great houses of Beacon Hill as their model. They just extended them, unit by unit. Vertical units, each one a little boardinghouse in its own right, with its own housemother. You know that—what they call the long block down there in Lowell, on—gee, I've forgotten so many of these things I once had—what's the name of that street that goes along by the canal there, and the high school's across the street? They pulled down a whole mess of the earlier houses and put up this long, beautiful, brick block. The detailing on that is right out of Beacon Hill, these great massive chimney stacks on the ends, beautifully proportioned windows, kind of Greek, simple Greek detailing, because they're 1845. But right out of Beacon Hill of Boston. Beautifully built. Those were standing 20 years ago.

ROBERT BROWN: These boardinghouses didn't have the differentiation of function within them, though, did they? Private residence—

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: No, no, no. No, no, no. They just were boarding—

ROBERT BROWN: They were all uniform?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: They were all uniform. Oh, absolutely. Oh, my God, yes. Uniform as the machinery, these girls were—oh, yeah. Absolutely uniform. From that point of view, the girls were brought there and made to operate their machines and live like machines.

ROBERT BROWN: Both in the dwellings and in the factories, did they think of the limit of human tolerance in their design?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: No, I don't think anyone gave any consideration to that at all. I think they made every effort they could, to the degree that their own sense of family living and family responsibility prompted them, to see that these girls were properly taken care of. [00:34:02] They were properly fed, they were chaperoned. They weren't allowed to get out and drink at night and do all the naughty things a girl shouldn't do. They were made to go to church, and to be spiritual in their thoughts. They were encouraged to keep potted plants in their windows. You know, all the things that—the amenities that these people would expect out of their own daughters were expected out of these girls, but no thought was given that, my God, it was dawn to sunset that they worked. They worked like crazy. There wasn't any philanthropic view as to limiting their hours because they'd get tired. On the other hand, there was a concern for their welfare, and they went away with a certain amount of money that formed a dowry, and then they could get married. It was a very ingenious thing.

ROBERT BROWN: Did you find a lot of this operative, or had been, in the Berkshires?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Not much up here. The early—there is early housing here, not unlike that—well, I take that back, as a matter of fact, because there was early housing here very similar to the Lowell housing, the early Lowell housing. The early mills had to provide housing, because most of them were in locations where the water power was efficient and good, and not necessarily where there would be place for these people to live. So the mill owner was forced to build housing of some kind, and it was run pretty much on the lines of the Lowell experiment, except there was, I think, more up here of family and child labor, which came from Rhode Island. See, the early Rhode Island labor policy was families, kids and all. They were put in these little separate houses, housing units, smaller houses. The boardinghouse concept, I don't think, ever really got into the Berkshires. [00:36:03] I don't know of a single instance of it, although there were company houses. They were generally for families.

ROBERT BROWN: The architectural forms of the factories in the Berkshires, were they glimmers from various parts of New England?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Yes, very definitely. The early mills up here were just like the Rhode Island mills, and the Lowell type, with the Lowell monitor and all of that, came in. 1820s mills that were being built were just like those in Lowell. So Lowell was the great model once it got started, but not necessarily sociologically. I think that Lowell experiment was pretty much the Merrimack Valley.

ROBERT BROWN: You finished your dissertation, or your doctorate, in 1949?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Right.

ROBERT BROWN: You continued to teach all along?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Sure. I was teaching all the time.

ROBERT BROWN: By then, were you planning to stay on at Williams?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Yes. There were several temptations to leave Williams. Chairman of the department here, there. In one instance was the presidency of Rhode Island School of Design, which I withdrew from. I found I simply wasn't interested in that at all.

ROBERT BROWN: Did they think of you because of your art school background?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Partly, yes. I had that advantage, in that I had had an art school as well as a regular education, and art historical training, and this was attractive to the Rhode Island School of Design, because they are effectively that. They try to run an educational institution which is more than just an art school. I don't know how they got my name, but they wrote to me and asked—I went down there and was interviewed. At the time, I think I was the only person they were considering. But I withdrew, because it was perfectly—I didn't want to dicker with them, because I knew I didn't want to do it. [00:38:00] I simply didn't want to be a college president, period, under any circumstances, let alone at the Rhode Island School of Design, which had its problems, and still does, I think, as long as that Danforth family is paying the bills and running the roost. The fellow that put me straight on that was that marvelous John Nicholas Brown. The fellow who is now the director of the National

Gallery—his father. I had a long talk with him about it, and he was wonderfully helpful, and gave me complete, candid insight into what the problems would be. They would be that in any college presidency, though, Bob, and I—

ROBERT BROWN: Was this back in the '50s or so?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Yes. It was when—what was the man's name who retired? A fellow by the name of Frazier became president.

ROBERT BROWN: Sure. He'd been a teacher there for a while.

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: He had been a teacher there for a long time. They gave up. When I turned them down—or withdrew. I didn't turn them down, because they didn't make me an offer. I simply said, "Look, it would be unfair to you to keep this negotiation going, because I'm really not interested." I think then they decided that they'd take Frazier. I had an opportunity out in California, at University of California in Los Angeles. Gib Danes was leaving to take over Yale, and that spot was open. I went out there to be interviewed for that. That was another one that I didn't want any part of, and I just withdrew after I had been out there. I would have had a faculty under me out there as chairman of that department as big as the Williams College faculty. Enormous setup. I didn't want to get into that. I never did. [00:40:00] I did my little administrative work during the war, and I did it well, and that got it all out of my system, and I—

ROBERT BROWN: But you still had some slight interest in the '50s, then, did you? But your primary focus was on teaching?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: My focus was on teaching, Bob. I found that I was doing well at teaching, that I was getting along with students, I was getting good reports back from what I was doing, and it was a beautiful life. I didn't want to get involved in running other people's lives. I suppose there's always the temp—there was always that little temptation of the prestige that went with it, but it wasn't hard for me to push that aside.

ROBERT BROWN: What all else—you were teaching American architecture by itself, or were you—

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: I was teaching American art. The great stress of the course was in architecture, but I was also interested in painting in a high degree, because I started life as a painter, and I had a special feel for that, and I did a lot with American painting. I did very little with American sculpture, although I did something with it.

ROBERT BROWN: With painting, what approach did you adopt? Or were there several?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: With painting, I suppose my initial approach has always been that of the painter. I've never been able to get that out of my system.

ROBERT BROWN: A technical approach, informational?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: A sense of the paint itself, and how this particular painter handled paint, and what he was expecting to do with the paint, and the visual effects of what he did with the paint. It was—I think, once a painter, you never can get that out of your blood. Also, the history of painting in terms of a social phenomenon. How it related to—and all of this grew, you see, with the basic growing knowledge of the period, the increasing studies that were made, people like Scully's work on Downing, and George Tatum's work on Downing. [00:42:01] This opened up a whole new area for American history of culture that was absolutely critical to what was going on in architecture. These things came slowly. You grabbed them when they came, and then you went from there. I was changing the course every year. I never gave the same course twice.

ROBERT BROWN: You said your advice from Lehmann was—

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Yeah, was never to give the same course twice, and the same lecture twice, and I never did. In the introductory course, it was harder, because you simply had to teach certain basic things. You come to Raphael, and how many ways are there to teach Raphael? You finally run out of ways, and so you go back to—it's silly to get to a point where you're simply making a technique become the object of the lecture, because that's wrong. You should be teaching Raphael, and if certain things works, then you did that.

ROBERT BROWN: In American art, you had no particular canons, or particular great examples, you repeatedly talked about? Or very few?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Very few. Oh, I would have certain—

ROBERT BROWN: From year to year, you might bring in a whole new area.

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: That's right. From year to year, there would be new areas, and new approaches to the problems, but the great figures would always be there. Thomas Eakins would always get a big hunk of my time, and so would Thomas Jefferson, and so on.

ROBERT BROWN: What about contemporary figures in American art? Like in the '50s, when the painters were becoming so prominent.

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: I brought it down as close to that as I possibly could. There was a big time element there, because my course was only one-term course. It wasn't until Sandy came that they finally agreed to let him teach a two-term course. So I concentrated primarily in the 19th century. This is the way it ended up. It ended up—first, it began as a kind of survey, and then as my own interests began to focus, the course was essentially a 19th-century course. [00:44:03] Although I did, at the end, give them some brief insights into American painting of the 20th century, it was not a very searching part of the course, simply because there wasn't time, and simply because my own interest was in that great formative period when America was becoming a nation.

ROBERT BROWN: You were under no pressure?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: None whatever.

ROBERT BROWN: You had two longtime colleagues, Stoddard and Faison. They had been here just before you came.

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: That's right. When I came—I don't know whether we've said this or not, but when I first came to Williams, my responsibilities were twofold. First, I was to develop courses in the techniques of painting, which would be informative and helpful to kids who were simply studying the history of painting, or of art in general. I went to work on studio work that would, in some way, enhance their understanding of the work of art in general. That was my major, major responsibility. Lane had known my Yale background in the art school, because he was there when I was there, as he was—I think we've gone over this part, haven't we? But anyway, that was my main responsibility, and then, slowly, my interest in art history grew to the point where it became obvious that I either had to have help, or I had to move out and let someone else come in. At that point, we hired someone else, who took over that whole studio.

ROBERT BROWN: Was this in the '50s or so?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: I can't remember when Frank Trapp—

ROBERT BROWN: Not too long after you—

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Not too long after I had been here. [00:46:00] I think I had been here—after the war—yeah, it was probably in the early '50s, sometime, when Frank Trapp came. He was the first person to come in. Then they got Lee Hershey, and Lee was here from there on in. He's still here. About to retire shortly, but he's, otherwise, still here.

ROBERT BROWN: Would you say that, after you've been here a few years after the war, that Williams was becoming one of the better undergraduate art history departments?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: We never thought of it in those terms, but it began to sink in on us, from things that were coming back, that we were doing a job that wasn't being done elsewhere. I think that the main reason for that is that we were specifically dedicating ourselves to undergraduates. We were consciously thinking, all the time, look, we're teaching a group of students for whom this is a brand-new subject. Therefore, we have to devise teaching methods and courses which will enhance their capacity to see and understand a work of art. We're not here to give them the whole history of art from boom to boom. They got that in the introductory course, at least in a general way. Our introductory course started with ancient Egypt and went right through to modern times. Like all introductory courses, it did what it was supposed to do. But our conference theory was one way we got kids to start thinking themselves, and the other one was the course that I was teaching, where anyone who majored was made to do certain things in the studio which got their hands into the process of making a work of art. In other words, it was a pragmatic enlargement of their understanding of the nature of materials and techniques, the things that the artist used to create the work of art. [00:48:00] Now, ultimately, what happened here is that Lee, of course, was a painter of distinction and great talent, and his interest was increasingly on developing what is essentially a pre-art school course. I resisted that when I was here, because I didn't think that was the role of the undergraduate college, but the demands for it were such that I don't think we could have gone any other route. I'm not being critical of Lee in this respect, because he developed a—his courses, basic courses, were about as enlightening and helpful as any could possibly be for the student who was an art history major and wanted to learn about the work of art. He was marvelous at that. But he was ambitious to let this branch of the study grow. Now we have, effectively, what is a sort of minor art school. Courses in

printmaking, and courses in sculpture, and courses in painting, and design. It goes on and on and on. To the extent that it's possible for a college of this size to carry it, we're doing it. In a sense, this is right, because the women, now, here, are even more demanding than the men were for this kind of experience. We're more like Smith now, what Smith used to be. We always used to have Lee—I mean, Whitney, and Lane, and I were always kind of snooty about Smith. They spent so much time building an art school, but this is what ultimately came to be here, too. The demand was such that there's no way around it. Now there are two routes to the degree. One is the studio route, and one is the art history route. That was unthinkable when I first came to Williams.

ROBERT BROWN: It was pretty traditional liberal arts?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: That's right, and there would have been great resistance in the faculty, great resistance to any notion that a student could come to Williams and get a degree by majoring in and practicing art, or music for that matter. [00:50:11] That's all changed.

ROBERT BROWN: They weren't considered suitably intellectual pursuits?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: That's right, not suitably intellectual pursuits, and you did not give a course for somebody learning to paint. They accepted my course, because I was building the background for these young men to understand a work of art as a historical object. We gave it that kind of tone. Whenever it was described in the catalog, it would be described that way.

ROBERT BROWN: But in fact, even in the beginning, you had some people who would go on—

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: That's right. One of the very first students I ever had here was a young man by the name of Ulrich Franzen. He's now one of the most distinguished contemporary American architects. He was obviously head and shoulders above the others in terms of talent. He was a little bit like Eero Saarinen, and I described to you last time. Franzen, there was no question, that here was a man of great artistic talent. We encouraged that. What offering we could give him—we had, for example, a long time, a pre-architectural training here that was very distinguished. It's been played down a little bit lately in favor of the strength of the art school side of it.

ROBERT BROWN: Did you bring in someone to teach that?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Yes, we did. We brought in somebody from Bennington, Bernie—what was his last name?—who came down here, and in their senior year, they could do independent studies in architecture, which was a pretty darn good grounding in architecture. That grew in leaps, and taught that for a while. Then we had another fellow who came over from RPI, over here in Troy, who taught that course. It was one of the strong offerings in the Williams offering, was this pre-architectural course. [00:52:03]

ROBERT BROWN: Did you see, over the years, very many changes in the students, or would you say they were—in terms of—

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: The principal change in the students, as I was a teacher here, was that they got younger every year. [They laugh.] I didn't get any older; they got younger.

ROBERT BROWN: But the quality of them?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: The quality has remained consistently high. There were changes in attitudes, which were created by the mood of the country in general. Every college and university has gone through that. But I would say less so here at Williams than elsewhere. The big changes at Williams have come about, as they have in, I suppose, most liberal arts colleges now, as a broadening of the base of the student body. The enormous increase in the number of blacks, for example. When I was here, we would rarely get a black, and not because Williams wasn't interested in blacks, but there weren't any qualified. We couldn't find any qualified students who could even begin to compete for places in the student body. As a matter of fact, we went through a period there of agonizing discussion about this, where we even contemplated double standards of letting students in and giving them special treatment, just because they were black, in order to strengthen that. Now there's a substantial black community here. Then the introduction of women into the school has made an enormous difference.

ROBERT BROWN: Has it?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Oh, yeah. I was in favor of that from the very beginning.

ROBERT BROWN: Why? Did you feel it was too artificial?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: I felt—yes. One of our biggest problems was stupid, macho behavior. You know, every male college and prep school gets into this. Constant exodus from the campus on the weekends to get to

women. [00:54:02] The wasted time in the great weekends, when the women were imported to the community. I mean, it was stupid. Get them here, and have them here on the campus, so they grow up like boys and girls. It was a big development in the faculty, who was all for that for a long time.

ROBERT BROWN: The faculty in general approved of that?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Oh, yeah.

ROBERT BROWN: It was the alumni that—

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Also, it was the financial problem. How do you convert? What do you do? Here you are, you've been a male college all these years. Phinney Baxter, least of all, was able to cope with this notion.

ROBERT BROWN: Who was this?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Phinney Baxter, who was president when I first came here. He was president for a long, long time. For James Phinney Baxter, that notion was something he just didn't want to take on. The other thing that happened while I was here, which made a tremendous difference in the college, was the elimination of fraternities. Williams was one of the first to do that. Yale, of course, was really the first, I think, in this country to do it in an intelligent way. Williams was certainly one of the first small colleges to take that bull by the horns. It happened mostly through student activity, student agitation for it, curiously enough. Although there was a strong element in the faculty that were violently opposed to fraternities, it was the students, in the end, who brought it to a head and said, this is wrong. In fact, the meeting that led, ultimately, to the appointment of the committee that made the ultimate decision, or made the ultimate report, met right here in my house, on the second floor. They were students that we'd gotten to know through our daughters and through class. One of them in particular, who was the leader of this, came to me one day and he said, "We're dealing"—he told me what they were up to. [00:56:04] He said, "We're dealing in a subject that is very sensitive, and we find it difficult to meet in any one of our houses. Could we come up here in your place and talk?" So they did. They came up here.

ROBERT BROWN: You mean it was sensitive because there—

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Oh, there was such opposition to it, and they didn't want too many people to know that they were up to this until they got something pretty firm put together, so they met up here.

ROBERT BROWN: There was a bit of intimidation and—

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Yeah, sure, right, and fierce resistance to it. The fraternity thing was entrenched, and the resistance from the alumni was monumental. That did not happen until Jack Sawyer became president. Phinney Baxter simply pushed this aside. He said, "As long as I am president of Williams College, there will be fraternities. There's no discussion of this issue." And there never was.

ROBERT BROWN: When did this change come, in the '60s or so?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Let me see. I retired eight years ago. What's this? '81. I retired in '73—'72—'73. It was '63 that Jack Sawyer became president, and he'd only been here a year when, already, he had eliminated daily chapel, and he'd gotten a big start eliminating fraternities. It was the support of the students—I don't know how much communication they had with authorities like Sawyer when they started to work on this. I wasn't really in on the discussions. I simply provided the—

ROBERT BROWN: What was your basic objection to fraternities?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: My basic objection to fraternities was that it was selected in a false set of values. That is to say, students were being selected for membership in fraternities because they were good Joes, and not because they were another human being that wanted the same kind of companionship and friendship that the others were offering. [00:58:09] I saw so many of these kids shattered by being left out. Decent, intelligent, wonderful kids, who would go home and cry their eyes out. You only have to see this a few times, and you realize that something stinks, and it did. We tried all kinds of ways of getting around this. Things we called total opportunity. That is to say, everybody on the campus had to get a bid. But, my God, when you did this, the kids who were left out and got the bids at the end knew who they were. It didn't change one thing. The kids saw it as—bless their pea-picking hearts. They saw it as clearly in heart [ph]. They were the ones that turned the tide. Plus the support of Jack Sawyer, who—I think he's going down in history as one of the great presidents of Williams. The 10 years he was here, made tremendous changes in the school. Coeducation, fraternities gone, daily chapel, compulsory chapel, gone. In some ways, I must confess, I miss the chapel services, because I think they were a very vital part of the community, and made a real contribution. They were a kind of sounding board for moral issues that we don't have anymore. There's no such forum where things of this kind can be talked

about. It also eliminates one of the ceremonial sides of life, which I feel very strongly about. I did a baccalaureate sermon on that very subject. [01:00:00] When I retired, I did the baccalaureate sermon. I came down on this whole notion of the lack of grace in modern life. I see grace as one of the essential attributes of the civilized human being. At that time, there was so little of it. It was when we were going through that terrible period when everyone was being just as ungraceful as they possibly could be, and as resentful as they could be, and as provocative as they could be. So I made myself unpopular by telling them that I thought they were wrong. [Laughs.] But I felt this very strongly.

Jack Sawyer retired the same year I did. That's how I was able to go back to when he came here. He was here exactly 10 years. He said, "I'll stay 10 years when I come, and that's it." He did. He made an enormous difference in the college. The other thing that's made a difference in terms of the art department, of course, is the advent of the Clark Art Institute. They've changed the character of the department in a very real way, not only in that they've added an enormous asset in terms of teaching material.

ROBERT BROWN: In what ways were you involved with its coming into being?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: None. No way whatever. It came through the presidential office, through old Mr. Carl Weston, who was retired then as head of the department, and simply that Robert Sterling Clark, for reasons that have nothing to do with an interest in Williams or anything else, had fixed on Williamstown as one of the logical places to put his museum. [01:02:00] When he got here, he found that Williams College and Williamstown was more cooperative than places he'd been, and therefore he decided to put it here. The property was made available to him, and that's where it went. But what's happened is, of course, the Clark Art Institute is, by its charter, an educational institution, and they, therefore, of necessity, have to be involved in some kind of educational process. The graduate program which came here has done what graduate programs do all over the nation to undergraduate programs: they've preempted certain aspects of it. For example, a graduate program offers courses on the graduate level, which become attractive to undergraduates, and it makes it much more difficult to maintain a nice, tight undergraduate curriculum than when you were only three people teaching, and you only gave six courses, or eight courses, or whatever. Now there are—I don't know what the department is now, but it's about 17 people. All of these people offering specialized courses, and you've got a list of stuff on the plate there that these undergraduates have to choose from, which makes no sense whatever, in terms of trying to introduce these people to the experience of the work of art.

ROBERT BROWN: Instead, what are they like, these specialized courses?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: The specialized courses become fascinating courses in their own right, but more attuned to advance study than to undergraduate study of the kind which we had envisioned when we first started as a department. [01:04:07]

ROBERT BROWN: And which you carried out for—

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: And which we carried out for years, in which we focused purely on the demands of an undergraduate coming to art for the first time in his life, and how can you best arouse his interest in that field? This was the objective. It was not to teach the history of art from ancient Egypt, in detail, right down to modern times. It seems to me that you can get courses of a highly specialized kind—many of them being taught at Williams now—that make no sense in an undergraduate department. They're okay in a graduate department, but they're open to undergraduates, and they proliferate to the point where it takes away that marvelous simplicity of effort, which was possible when you don't have that. There's nothing you can do about that, Bob. If you're going to have a graduate program, it's inevitable.

ROBERT BROWN: So you probably have undergraduates going through here who have fragments, but there's a great gap.

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: That's right, there are great gaps.

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ROBERT BROWN: Side two.

[Audio Break.]

ROBERT BROWN: So the Clark Art Institute, then, is integrated with Williams? Mr. Clark set up the institute with its collection. The educational function was formerly administered through Williams?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: The educational function is administered, I would say, entirely through Williams. The degree is given by Williams College. The courses are listed in the Williams College curriculum. Clark provides, of course, a facility, a marvelous facility, a library, research facility, slide collection, all of the things necessary to

carry out a graduate program. They also have a fund, which pays the salaries of the teachers who are specifically hired to teach in the graduate program. Now, when a member of the regular college art department faculty teaches a course in the graduate program, he's paid for that course out of the graduate funds down at the Clark. Those funds come from foundation, other sources like that.

ROBERT BROWN: So that is meant to alleviate, for Williams, some of the burden?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: That's right, to carry the financial burden. Now, of course, it doesn't, because the minute the college art department grows commensurately with this additional program, the bigger the administrative load becomes, the bigger the department becomes. In a sense, Williams College is bearing a real hunk of this burden. There has always been, in the Williams faculty, a deep concern about Williams getting into any graduate education. We had a graduate program in physics here that we ran with the Sprague Electric Company here. They finally did away with it, because the same problems were beginning to emerge that are now emerging in Williams in terms of the relationship between the Clark Art Institute and the Williams College art department. [00:02:10] They become very tacky at certain points. What do you do with the two slide collections? There's a slide collection down there. There's one at Williams College. Do you integrate these? If so, where is it going to be? Is it going to be at the Clark? Do Williams College teachers have to go to the Clark every time they want to prepare a lecture? Or is it going to be in the art department? The result is, it's two collections. You've got to go both places. It's this kind of what I would regard as nonsense that emerges the minute you try to run, jointly, this kind of a project. Now, it has great assets. Don't misunderstand me. There's no way of getting around that.

ROBERT BROWN: Has there ever been any thought to retrench? To—

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: I don't think so. No.

ROBERT BROWN: —come back to, say, a four or five-person faculty?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: I know there's a strong sentiment in the college faculty against the graduate program. They feel that it's drawing resources and money that should be better spent for specifically undergraduate teaching. This is characteristic of Williams from the time I've been here. There's been a strong resentment against any attempt to introduce graduate study. It's too bad, because it doesn't give the whole-hearted support of the college and the faculty to these efforts. But it's there, and there's not a darn thing you can do about it, because there's the institution, there are its resources, there are its fundings, and all of this is attractive to a college president and administration. I don't blame them at all for letting this thing take its head.

ROBERT BROWN: You mentioned earlier the proliferation of highly specialized courses. [00:04:01] Is there any way that the teachers could be brought back to—

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: I don't see how. When you've got 17 people competing with one another, every one of them a specialist in his own right in some field, he's going to want to teach his own field, isn't he? One of the things that attracts them here is the graduate program, obviously. You employ a new teacher here, and one of the first things he's going to ask himself is, gee, am I going to get a chance to work there? He's going to try, in every way he can, to impress the people here that he's an expert in, and he should be given his chance. It's inevitable. There's nothing you can do about it. You get 17 people competing with one another, they're going to teach their own things, and you're going to get courses in—what?—Byzantine manuscripts, which doesn't belong in an undergraduate—now, the argument is, what a marvelous experience to be able to take Byzantine manuscripts with so-and-so. They can't counter that, you see. You've got some very distinguished international scholar here who's an expert in Byzantine manuscripts, you're going to ask him to teach Byzantine manuscripts.

ROBERT BROWN: But you're thinking of the 18 or 19-year-old who—

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Sure. The kid who's never seen a work of art until he got to Williams College, and sending him out into the world as a more civilized human being. I feel that the training that they got when we were simpler not only did that, but it also prepared them better for graduate study in art history when they decided, and if they decided, to go to graduate school, because we were able to focus on the important core of the history of art, and not let it proliferate into the secondary, tertiary levels, which ultimately you have to come to as a graduate student. [00:06:06] Don't misunderstand me. If you're going to be an expert in any field, you've got to take these courses, but you don't take them as an undergraduate, even though it is with so-and-so. John Pope-Hennessy in Renaissance sculpture. Marvelous course. Maybe what they got out of that in terms of simple, sheer brilliance of performance is more than they would have gotten out of a course by me in an introductory course in painting. I don't know. Maybe so. It's hard to argue that kind of thing. But from my point of view, I think what we had going there, in its simplicity, in its clear focus on the needs and requirements of the undergraduate male, at that time—now we've got male and female alike, and maybe the picture changes a little bit—but I think it was more effective. Now, that's me speaking, and maybe Lane Faison would say something else, and maybe Whitney Stoddard would say something else. It's very interesting. I'm going to—I might as well put this on tape.

When we were first talking about the graduate program—

ROBERT BROWN: This was about in the '50s?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: That's right, it was—well, let me see. Jack was here, so it was in the '60s. We had a meeting up here at Jack's house.

ROBERT BROWN: This is Jack—

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Jack Sawyer, the president. He was then president. I had worked long and hard on a program—Lee Hershey and I worked on a program, graduate program, for high school art teachers, which would enrich their intellectual holdings with respect to the teaching of art in high schools. [00:08:01] I had been involved in the John Hay Fellowship program here in the summers, which was dedicated specifically to high school teachers. It was a marvelous program, and I really got fired up about this. I began to see enormous gaps in the background material that these people were drawing on, who were teaching art from a cultural point of view. Lee Hershey and I worked long and hard on a program that would be directed specifically to high school teachers. This got thrown out completely, in favor of a graduate program in the history of art leading to a master's degree. It was obvious we could not give a Ph.D. We don't have the research facilities or anything else here for that.

ROBERT BROWN: Was the Clark already in place by then?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: The Clark was here. That was here. So we had this big meeting, and George Hamilton was here that year as Clark Professor. That was one of the things that the Clark did to Williams. They gave them a chair, called the Clark Professor. It gave the Clark Professor a salary of $20,000 a year, plus travel. This, in those days, was fabulous. Most of us were getting $5[000] and $6,000 dollars a year, still, as professors.

ROBERT BROWN: Even in the '60s, you were still—

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Well, some of us may—

ROBERT BROWN: Salaries had not crept up very much?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: No. Some of the better ones may have been up to—or older ones—up to [$]10[000] or [$]12,000, but most of us were [$]5[000], [$]6[000], [$]7,000, something like that. Comes the Clark Professor. The first person to hold that professorship was John Pope-Hennessy. We tried to get Panofsky. He wouldn't take it. Pope-Hennessy did. Then it went on to people like Jacob Rosenberg [ph] and Ellis Waterhouse. [00:10:00] People of international reputations were brought to the Williams campus. This had its enthusiasms and its interests, but it upset our little core curriculum, I can tell you right now, because you'd get somebody like Pope-Hennessy. He wants to teach a Renaissance course, and that means the fellow who was teaching the Renaissance course doesn't teach that that year. You'd see the implications of that. Well, George Hamilton came up as Clark Professor the year that this thing was under discussion, and he sat in on that meeting that night. George was—he wasn't director yet out there. Hadn't even thought of being director. Peter Gill was still the director. Discussion got going on the pros and cons of this graduate program, and George sat there, looking very sour. Finally, he said—and George is a very articulate man. He said, "Look, none of this makes any sense at all." I can still hear this. He said, "First of all, who are you going to get to come to Williams College to take a master's degree in history of art? They want to go to the big universities, where the libraries are, where the research facilities are, where the museums are. They're going to go to Yale, and they're going to go to Columbia, they're going to go to Harvard. You're only going to get the cast-offs up here. You're not going to get first-rate students." He said, "Furthermore, what's the objective in giving just a master's degree?" He said, "This doesn't, educationally, make any sense at all." Well, he was right to the point. It went through anyway, and when he got to be director of the Clark, he's been one of the great champions of the graduate program, naturally. He—

ROBERT BROWN: Trying to make the best—

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Yeah, make the best out of it. He's been a brilliant supporter of it, and intelligent supporter. A man who's made this thing develop in the way it should develop. [00:12:02] I'm not trying to cut down George Hamilton in this, because I think he saw there what the major problem was, and this has been the major problem. They'll occasionally get a very bright student here, but most of them are not the top level. Those people have gone on to NYU, Columbia, Yale, Harvard, Penn, Michigan, wherever. UCLA now, University of California-Berkeley. They go there. Williams and Clark program picks up, as George said then, the dregs. Now, they're not the dregs, but they're the cast-offs, the people who didn't make the big program. They're the ones who come up here. Now, there is an argument in favor of the M.A., in that it's specifically directed toward museum curatorship and this kind of thing, and you don't need the Ph.D., because you're not going to be doing teaching. It's an interesting insight into the growth of that thing. The Clark trustees decided they were going to go ahead anyway, and they did.

ROBERT BROWN: Your interest, in the early '60s, maybe focusing something towards secondary school teachers —

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: That got washed down the drain, and that was washed down the drain largely on the basis of George Hamilton's criticism of it. The word he used, and I'm going to use this word, was that it's "dirty." "We don't have to get down to that level. We want to keep this finely honed scholarship," was the way he put it. I can still hear him saying that, "finely honed scholarship." George is an impeccable scholar, and George has very little patience with the kind of legwork and practical work that has to be done in a high school to make things come out even. [00:14:00] I had had this experience with the John Hay Fellows program, and I had been in touch with these teachers. They were marvelous people, dedicated, and God, they needed help like crazy. Here was an opportunity to help them, and George didn't permit himself to feel that need at all. He just saw this as a kind of nuts and bolts thing, and we're not interested in that. We're interested in finely honed scholarship. That's what won the day, so our program went down the drain.

ROBERT BROWN: I sense, throughout your career as a teacher, that there's been, occasionally, a strain on your part, where art history becomes a rather precious cabinet [ph] pursuit.

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Well, I think that's probably true, Bob.

ROBERT BROWN: You're more—you want to extend the message, spread the word.

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: I want to extend the message. I want to get people to see the work of art as the kind of thing that it is. To be able to experience it not just through the written or the spoken word, but simply through their own insights, and to offer them the opportunities to develop those insights. Not in terms of any finely honed scholarship, but of contact with the work of art, through the eyes of people who understand that work of art and are able to communicate their enthusiasm and their interest to that student, and will stir in him a corresponding response. This is what I think our mission as undergraduate teachers should be. It certainly has been what mine has been, and it's been what Lane's has been, and Whitney's. Lane's course in criticism was a marvelous course. It brought these kids right to grips with the object, and they were made to see it through his insights, in a way that you can only do when you're relaxed. You're not going out and taking a course in the history of medieval manuscripts, or more limited, even, Byzantine manuscripts. [00:16:03] Not a thing that inevitably comes when you get that competitive drive toward the graduate program.

ROBERT BROWN: Now, Lane was involved for a number of years with the College Art Association and the like. Have you—

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: I avoided that.

ROBERT BROWN: —done very much—

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: The College Art Association, I was a member of that for a great many years, and at one time, I was approached to have my name put up for the presidency of it, but I refused. I didn't want to get involved in that. I don't like that kind of thing, for one thing, and the time it would take—I just didn't want to get involved in it. I lost patience with the College Art Association when they sent around that—at one point there, they said that all retired people had to pay in relation to what they were getting as income. I thought this was an invasion of people's privacy that was uncalled for. Those people who did have large income could make their own private contributions, and those that didn't have it could become members for a minimal charge. So I wrote in protest of this and resigned, and I've never been a member since. I have now dedicated my whole membership effort to the Society of Architectural Historians, which I find a very different kind of group. Plus the fact that the College Art Association has gotten so political now. There are caucuses for homosexuals, there are caucuses for women. Oh, God, this goes on and on and on. There's no interest at all in art anymore. It's all politics. So I've lost interest in that. I've been active on the board of directors of the Society of Architectural Historians. [00:18:06] I've also been very active in the field of historic preservation. That's another part of the story.

ROBERT BROWN: I wanted to ask—to do really with teaching, and undergraduate teaching, and secondary. You were executive secretary of the Carnegie Study of the Arts of the United States in 1956 to '60.

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Yeah, that's right.

ROBERT BROWN: How did that occur, as sort of a spin-off from your interests at that time? How did that begin?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: I can tell you very clearly how that began. From the very beginning in my career here at Williams, I was interested in the problems of visual presentation. It seemed to me that we had a responsibility to present to the student the best possible image of the work we were talking about that we could. I got this, incidentally, from A. Philip McMahon, by the way. This was one of the things—he insisted that we do

our work directly from the original object, never from a reproduction. When we were working for him, we went to the Metropolitan, we went to the Frick, we went to the Museum of Modern Art. We went to the museum, and did our work directly from the object.

ROBERT BROWN: So failing that, what were you proposing?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Failing that, I was proposing the best possible reproduction that we could get, and I—the minute that color film was invented—Kodachrome came out in the '30s—I got interested in color as a means of presentation, and I made the first color slides that were ever used at Williams College myself. I started a program of this kind, got immense support from Lane. Lane had never taken a picture in his life, but Whitney did. We began to build a big and substantial collection of color material. Now, I got around to see a lot of people on this score, particularly Bartlett Hayes at—[00:20:09]

ROBERT BROWN: —at Andover?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: —Andover. He and I became very close friends, and very much involved in this kind of thing. Somewhere along the line—I can't remember—I could look it up in my files, but somewhere along the line, I think in the early '50s, maybe '51 or '52, Carnegie put together a committee—Carnegie Corporation of New York put together a committee to study the whole problem of slide reproduction and the availability of slides for teaching art in the schools, or in colleges, or wherever.

ROBERT BROWN: This was a common concern of theirs—

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: This was a concern of Carnegie. I was on that committee, along with Bartlett Hayes, and I was on there primarily because of my growing skills as a color photographer, and one who was making slides regularly. It was a fascinating experience. We wrote a report, and that report went to the secretary of Carnegie, which was Florence Anderson. Then, in, I guess it was '55 or '56, Lamar Dodd from the University of Georgia came to Carnegie with a notion that had been given to him by one or two of the staff down there, that Carnegie should put up money for a study which would produce high-quality slides, 2x2 in size, color, made by original photography from the works of art themselves, and then be made available by distribution to educational institutions in this country and abroad. It was a very enlightened project.

ROBERT BROWN: There simply wasn't much of that—[00:22:00]

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: There wasn't anything of this kind.

ROBERT BROWN: There were no commercial entrepreneurs?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Yeah, but the commercials were so bad, you didn't want to use them. They were done by bad duplicating processes. You want to turn that off for a second?

[Audio Break.]

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Carnegie—the objective expressed by Dodd and his colleagues was that we should set up a method of original photography that would produce, mass produce, the slides of the highest possible quality. I was approach by Lamar, and I think probably through Florence Anderson, who had remembered me from the earlier committee and my interest in the technical side of this. I was approached by Lamar and asked if I wanted to be executive secretary of this project. I discussed it with college authorities. I was coming up with sabbatical, and they gave me an additional leave, because we figured it would take at least two years to do this. So I had a sabbatical year, and then a year of leave from Williams, without pay, and I was paid by the University of Georgia, at the same scale that I was being paid here. In fact, a little better. I took that job on, and my responsibility in that was many-fold. I was one of the editors of the catalog that was ultimately published, and a member of the advisory committee that made the selections, the ultimate selections. To make a long story short, we put together 18 special consultants in 18 different fields. You know how that thing was done. Then, beyond that, my responsibility was, first, to find a technical means by which those slides could be made. I went through almost a year of experimental work, working with big labs at Eastman Kodak, and Agfa, and with private labs, to determine what available modern technique of color photography we should use. [00:24:17]

ROBERT BROWN: They really had not thought of this, even for—

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Well, no one had ever saw—no, no one had ever thought of it in terms of art color slides.

ROBERT BROWN: You mean, where fidelity was extremely important?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Fidelity was extremely important. This, to me, was absolutely critical. This was the pitch that I was working on from the very beginning, that I got from A. Philip McMahon. It has to be—you can't

work in black-and-white on an object in color. He made this over and over again. You've got to go see it in color, because we're talking about color. We've got to talk about color. Architecture is full of color. Everything is color. This is why we work from the original objects. Well, now, of course, you can't work from original objects when you're teaching Italian painting. We set the standard very high, and having me in that responsibility meant that maybe it was even a little higher. I had the complete support of Florence Anderson in this issue. As a result of that, about a year of exploration, research, experimentation with actual photographs in different ways, we decided, with the advice of people like Kodak, that the best technique was to work with a 4x5 color negative by reduction printing to the 2x2 slide, and that's what we did. We made, ultimately—we got a selection of about 10,000 objects from our consultants, which we reduced to 4,200.

ROBERT BROWN: These consultants supplied data?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: They supplied the basic data on each object. Those cards that I gave you are the original—[00:26:00]

ROBERT BROWN: And the photograph, in many cases.

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: That's right. Wherever there were photographs, the photograph is attached. Those cards came to us without anything on them except the data.

ROBERT BROWN: These consultants, you determined among yourselves, were the leading people?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Yes. The advisory committee had made the list of consultants. We talked to other people about it, and we tried to get the best people in the field. On that advisory board was Lloyd Goodrich, Lamar Dodd, Martha Davidson, Tremaine McDowell from Michigan, and—oh, from Smith, um—Pete Larkin—Oliver Larkin. That was the advisory committee. Then we selected the individual consultants. I'm not sure I can list them. Do you want them listed?

ROBERT BROWN: No. By then, there were a number of people in the American field? When you started out in the '40s, it was still fairly thinly peopled.

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Yeah. Even then, Lloyd Goodrich and Oliver Larkin [laughs] were the only two, really, that you could draw in there. Now, there were others who did specialized things for us. Vince Scully, Bill Jordy. Barker, the man who wrote the book on American painting. It was that kind of committee that went together, from Winterthur [ph], the fellow we were just talking about.

ROBERT BROWN: Charles Montgomery.

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Charlie Montgomery.

ROBERT BROWN: So you had the specialists of the day, then?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: We had the specialists of the day, that's right. There's no question about that. We had the best we could possibly get in each field. They provided the basic lists, and then we edited these. Our editorial work was done on the basis of availability, condition. You know, the things that determine the ultimate choice of one or the other. [00:28:06] We knuckled this down, and after photography, we ended up with 4,236, or something like that, actual objects. Every one was required to be photographed freshly anew, using this equipment. We ended up with a negative—two negatives, as a matter of fact. One for storage and one for use. That would provide the source of constant reproduction. Any time we wanted to make more slides, we'd get the negative out and we'd make more slides. It worked miraculously, with one terrible, disastrous exception. That is that the film that Kodak recommended for us, easiest to use, was their motion picture film, which they used for printing from negative. So we started this whole project on that motion picture film, and the slides that came back were breathtaking. They were so beautiful. They were really marvelous. There's some really beautiful, original photography, carefully done under the most controlled conditions. We bought special cameras and special strobe equipment. Each team of photographers—we had three teams—was set up with special cameras and everything that they needed.

ROBERT BROWN: You're talking about the original negatives?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: The original negatives, that's right.

ROBERT BROWN: Before they were reduced to slides?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Before they're reduced to slides. Then we put those together, and then the disaster came when we found that this material—and why Kodak didn't sense this is hard to say. It was not stable in the sense that it was permanent. That motion picture film was used for a projection technique in which the film wore out mechanically before it started to fade in color, and they never encountered this. [00:30:02] Well, I want to

tell you, in about eight years, eight or ten years, word came back, these color slides are fading right out of sight, and they did. You know this story, I guess. It was disastrous. Carnegie replaced every one of them.

ROBERT BROWN: With what, a more stable—

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Yeah. We went over to—

ROBERT BROWN: —film?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: —their regular slide material, which is a slide printing material, which is very much more expensive. Ten—oh, more than that. Twenty times more expensive. It would have increased the cost of each of the slides and all that. Anyway, they went over—they haven't had any trouble with that since.

ROBERT BROWN: And it still forms a basic core?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: They're still printing from those negatives, Bob, and getting damn good prints out of them. I got some the other day from Sandak [ph]. I challenged some of them, and they reprinted them, and boy, they came back as beautifully balanced, and clear, and sharp in contrast, and everything else as they were when they were first printed.

ROBERT BROWN: So the film they used for the negative was okay?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: That was no problem at all, because that was all—we went through very special washing techniques and everything else, and that film is kept under special humidity controls. When it's not in the machine, it—and there's a second set that's been—

ROBERT BROWN: It's kept by Kodak?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: This was Kodak material, yes.

ROBERT BROWN: It's kept at Kodak?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: No, no, no, no. It's kept down here in Sandak, in Connecticut, the people who have the concession to print them. They have a special storage space for this material, and the extra set is frozen.

ROBERT BROWN: Is there a guide—or was there to have been a guide or a publication?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: The catalog, which I'm sure you're familiar with, is this thing here.

ROBERT BROWN: Were there ever plans for a definitive or a very ambitious book on American art?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: No, not out of this project. Carnegie limited itself to this, and they put half a million dollars in this all together before they got through. [00:32:06] This was the publication, and there's an article in here by each of the consultants, and then an illustration. A small one to be sure, but an illustration of every slide in the collection, and black-and-white in this case. So at least you've got some kind of a handle on what's in the collection if you're a teacher or a student.

ROBERT BROWN: You were involved with this steadily for two years, and then for two years more, you served as executive—

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: That's right. We ran it right here from Williamstown, as a matter of fact. One of the big problems was getting the slides properly bound. In this, my navy experience came to the fore. I had met, during the war, this very ingenious young inventor, who was the son of Admiral Rickover. He was running this business which made special machines for anything that you wanted. Anything. So we got a hold of him, and he came up, and we told him, we want a machine that will take this great big roll of film, as it comes out of the processing tanks—and they came in thousand-foot rolls, all hooked together. A print run of maybe 100 of each slide. Take this, and put it in a machine, and have a bound slide come out the other end. Human hand never has to touch it, except to load it and start it. [Laughs.] He came up with a real Rube Goldberg, and tragically, it never worked. It never worked. There were all mechanical problems with it. So we finally gave up on that. [00:34:00] I was out visiting my uncle in New Jersey, and I go, "What are we going to do?" Here we had these plastic mounts, all made, by the thousands, and all printed and ready to go. "What are we going to do?" I went out to see my old uncle. He lived to be over 100. I spent the night with him, and during the night, I puzzled this out. Finally, in my sleep, half in my sleep, I designed a jig, a manual jig, which would hold two sides of the slide mount, and would hold the two pieces of glass together, while these two little things were brought together and clipped. I got up in the middle of the night, and I made a drawing of this. I brought it up here to our machinist. Marvelous man who ran the machine shop in our science building here. I said, "Woody, can you make this?" We sat down and we put it to scale, and got all—"Yeah, I can make it. Come back in a week." Went back, and here's this beautiful little jig.

It worked. So we made a whole mess of these, and we took a room in Lawrence Hall. I think we had six of them all together. We got these big reels, everything all set up, and we hired young women to come in and bind these slides by hand. We had to get them out at a certain time, you see. The machine failed us. So we bound these thousands and thousands of slides by hand. You multiply—I think the first run was 200 slides, or 250 slides. You multiply that by 4,000, you can see the number of slides we had to bind. Old Charlie Phelps [ph], who worked as one of our photographers, and then—my assistant. [00:36:01] He was assistant executive secretary. He would run back and forth between the lab down in New York and Williamstown with these rolls of film coming up, and these boxes of slides going back, and we made the deadline. We got them all bound and collated and put together, and that damn jig is still the way they bind the slides. They've never gone back to any attempt to make a machine to do it. That came in the sleep in the middle of the night. [They laugh.] I've got one upstairs. I made one for myself. Whenever I use those Carnegie mounts, I always use it.

ROBERT BROWN: The effect of this production was great, wasn't it?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Yes, the effect was substantial. It seems to me it revolutionized the teaching of American art. The distribution got into the millions of the slides. Carnegie subsidized the purchase of smaller sets, a 1,500 set and a 2,500 set, that they would—through application to educational institutions, for a long time, they paid for those and gave them away. They ran out of money for that, but they supported this. I say, they have at least a half a million dollars in it.

ROBERT BROWN: You mentioned a while earlier, in that earlier study, you were with Bartlett Hayes. Is he someone you worked with several times on various educational projects?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Only as friends and colleagues. No, I've never worked with him, except on that one particular project.

ROBERT BROWN: You've known him for a number of years?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: I've known him for years. He's an old, old friend. He was the one, I'm sure, that got me appointed to that committee, because he knew of my interest in color reproduction, color photography.

ROBERT BROWN: Did his philosophy of teaching and education pretty much accord with yours?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Oh, I think absolutely. As a matter of fact, many, many of our—that has been the most lively, imaginative place for the teaching of art anywhere in this country, I think, Andover. [00:38:03] Their program there is really spectacular, and they had a lot of money to work with. Bart was the one who put it all together. He also has a young—he's still there, as a matter of fact—had a young man by the name of Bensley, Diz Bensley. Do you know him?

ROBERT BROWN: No.

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: He's somebody you ought to talk to. He really is, because that man, I think, has had a tremendous impact on art education in this country. We had constant contact with them, and I think it was Bart's knowledge of my interest that got me on that committee in the first place, and I think it was my activity on that committee, with Florence Anderson in attendance, that got me appointed to the Carnegie project. That's the way it came out. Then Carnegie, when it was all finished, asked me if I would be willing to take this material abroad. They wanted me to go particularly to New Zealand and Australia, to take a set of these slides with me and go out there, and spend six months in travel and lecturing, both public and educational lectures, just to demonstrate this material in the Commonwealth. I said yes, I would, and they paid my expenses, and Peg's expenses, and we took one of our daughters with us, and we went to Australia, and I taught for a term at the University of Melbourne. Then I went on a long lecture tour throughout New Zealand and Australia, using these Carnegie slides. I had a series of different types of lectures that I could offer. Some of these were public lectures. Some of them were given in education institutions. It was a marvelous experience.

ROBERT BROWN: Various aspects of American art.

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Yes, that's right. American culture seen through the arts. [00:40:01] It was that kind of thing, and I tried to generalize it and make it interesting to a foreign audience. It was a great experience, and boy, they were responsive. It was a wonderful, wonderful trip. It was one of the great experiences of my life because of the response.

ROBERT BROWN: Why do you think they were so interested?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: I don't know. They had a kind of curiosity that you don't get often in an American audience. Never once, when I gave a public lecture, was there an empty hall. It was full to the rafters, every single time, every place I went. Not because of me. They didn't know who the hell I was. But simply because they

supported this kind of thing. There was a general curiosity when someone came from the outside world. They wanted to—they feel kind of isolated, I guess, down there, and alone by themselves. They were cordial and warm and responsive. It was really a marvelous experience. That was one of the fringe benefits of the Carnegie project.

ROBERT BROWN: Has this affected other areas of art history at all? I know there are many—

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: I think it's upgraded the quality of material available, surely. Sandak has put the other competitors on the line, and they've had to meet the quality or else.

ROBERT BROWN: Was Sandak a processor you found or—

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Sandak was a processor I found in the—and they were recommended to me by the Kodak engineers, who knew these people. They said, "There's one firm that we will recommend above all others. Go talk to them." I did, and they did it. They're marvelous people, and they took this bull and they ran with it, and they're now in the business of color slides for art color slides. They've enlarged their holdings enormously beyond the Carnegie project. They've gone into—they do all the work for the Museum of Modern Art, for the Metropolitan, big museums like that. [00:42:01] They just are the slide-makers for them, so that they have the holdings of a wide range of art material other than the American field, and they've enlarged the American field wherever they could. Thomas Eakins's show in New York, they photographed that. They've got a marvelous collection of Eakins material. That kind of thing. So that was a—there's no question that that had an impact, not only in the American field, but in upgrading the quality of slides available throughout. That technique is used now by a lot of slide-makers. It's so difficult to make them directly on transparency. You have to go to the original picture every time, to the original work every time, and these negatives make it possible to reproduce them, right on, on, and on, and on, and on. Now, those negatives aren't going to last forever, that's for sure, but hopefully, by that time, they'll have something even more spectacular.

ROBERT BROWN: This was a very important thing to you, to be able to accomplish this, to be involved [ph] with this project?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: It was very rewarding for me because of my own interest in quality, and as I say, it's A. Philip McMahon that turned this into me, that you cannot teach about a work of art unless you can reproduce that work of art as exactly as you possibly can. He was absolutely right. He so resented these black-and-white slides that NYU used. My God. They were opposed to color slides down there when I was there.

ROBERT BROWN: Did they feel slides were such a poor—

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: They felt they were such poor quality that it was better to work with black-and-white, which was a pure abstraction of the object. There's a certain logic in that. I said, "Don't settle for that. Make them good." I gave a lecture on Rembrandt drawings there, and I went over to the Metropolitan, and I made every single one of my slides from both the Metropolitan's originals and from these marvelous collections of reproductions that they have there at the Met of Rembrandt drawings. [00:44:06] Those Rembrandt drawings are reproduced in toto, in color. Beautiful European reproductions. So I took these, and I didn't tell anybody I was doing this. I gave a paper on one drawing in the Metropolitan. Zoganat [ph] Rembrandt. Is it Rembrandt, is it not Rembrandt? I ended up saying this is not Rembrandt. Billy Ivins was then curator of prints there, and he was fascinated by what I was doing. I did this all in color, and I had gotten my own machines, and I set this up. They were flabbergasted by this. Here's a proof. If it's properly done, by God, it works. That, I don't know whether—maybe they still don't have color slides at NYU. I don't know. But Williams, now, is almost entirely 2x2 color. And architecture as well as painting. Architecture is an experience in color.

ROBERT BROWN: It's been slower to change, though, I think.

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Oh, yes, it's been slower to change. But there's no substitute for it. That was one of my life's objectives, and one of my achievements, I think, as a professional in my life, is that project. I look on that with great pride and satisfaction, and it's still going. Plus the friendships that I made in the Sandak brothers, who are among the most beautiful human beings on the face of the earth. They've gotten a reward in life that they never would have gotten in any other way, and it's really been very touching, and it has an important human dimension to it that's quite apart from the educational advances that it stirred. [00:46:01]

ROBERT BROWN: It lifted them into something better than they had been doing?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Absolutely. Absolutely. It changed their lives. They keep saying this to me every—

ROBERT BROWN: Had they been engineers? Is that what their background was?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: No, they were both trained at RPI. Intensely wonderful photographic training that

you get at RPI. One of the few in the country where you can really go and learn to be a professional photographer in the strictest sense of the word. They had both been trained there, and they were running, in New York, a—they were supplying visual materials for advertising concerns on Madison Avenue. They had a hell of a business going. They were determined in high quality. They were dedicated to quality. And imaginative. They were doing all kinds of things for these people. When they took us on, we were a kind of side issue, but slowly, the slide thing became the main issue, and they threw aside all this lucrative Madison Avenue work and concentrated entirely on the slides. It's been a marvelous thing for them, and for the world of art teachers in general, because they made available quality that just isn't available any other way. Now, of course, this is being matched by all kinds of people, but that's one of the consequences of it. Another man who was doing that was that wonderful person—was it George Bevel? Bevel, his name was, at the National Gallery in Washington. You know, the National Gallery offered, for years, beautiful color slides. Absolutely gorgeous. They were made from the original objects, every one. When you bought something from the National Gallery, that was what you were buying. But they weren't the only ones that were doing it, and that's simply because they had Bevel down there. I consulted with him at great length when we were putting this project together. He was very helpful, and encouraging, and interested. [00:48:03] There's a lot of interesting people in the whole process of it, including Florence Anderson, who was the secretary. Boy, what a gal she is. [Laughs.]

ROBERT BROWN: Was she formidable?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Formidable is putting it mildly. She ran the Carnegie Corporation of New York. She literally did. Superb administrator. Tough, intelligent, liberal. Marvelous to work with, because you knew exactly where you stood, every minute. There was never anything equivocal. You knew exactly what you were supposed to do, and now go do it. She was a marine in the Second World War, and there was a certain amount of that intense discipline in her own life, in the way she ran Carnegie, and the way she made you work and respond to her. It was good. She's turned out to be a dear friend. I see her occasionally in New York when I go down. She's retired now. She's putting together all the documents on Carnegie, going through all their files, putting it in a historical—

ROBERT BROWN: They've never done that?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: No. She's someone that might be kind of fun to get an interview with, by the way, especially on that Carnegie project, because she's had great interest in that right from the beginning. I suppose you should also interview Lamar Dodd. I had my problems with him, but nevertheless, he was the director of that project.

ROBERT BROWN: Did he try to interfere, or was he—he had his own ideas—[00:50:01]

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: He was just difficult to work with. He was a supreme egotist, and someone who simply had to be in the limelight every minute, and who really was not terribly well-qualified. He's a painter. He's a rather good painter, as a matter of fact. He ought to be interviewed, surely. That show that he's run down there in Georgia for years is one of the fantastic shows in art education in America, and give him credit for that. He was a driving man, terribly ambitious, and in his drive, sometimes devious. In order to get his objective, he would pull the rug right out from under you. He wouldn't hesitate. If you stood in his way, the rug would come out. But nevertheless, a man of, I think, great importance in the history of art education in this country.

ROBERT BROWN: You mean by his outlook or by the—

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: The production. The simple machine that he ran down there, and still—well, in a way, still does at Georgia.

ROBERT BROWN: The students would come out of there and—

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Yes, the students would come out of there, and the highly oiled machine that he's put together as a department there at University of Georgia, it's one of the best in the country. No question about it. He's gotten the money out of the state legislature, which is even more remarkable. He had some kind of hold over them, I guess. I don't know if it was charisma or what, but when Lamar Dodd spoke, they jumped.

[END OF TRACK pierso81_3of4_reel_SideB_r.]

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: They wanted all outdoors, and they were very arrogant—

[Audio Break.]

ROBERT BROWN: This is January 14, 1982. Continuing interviews with William Pierson in Williamstown, Massachusetts. Bob Brown, the interviewer.

[Audio Break.]

ROBERT BROWN: Your interest in historic preservation stems especially from the subject of your doctoral dissertation and what you increasingly were teaching at Williams. Maybe we can talk about some of your roles in various preservation groups, and perhaps talk with the Berkshire County—begin with the Berkshire County Historical Society. You were a founder, you just said, of it.

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Yes, I was one of the people that Ms. Hall got together to form the original organization.

ROBERT BROWN: This was Margaret Hall?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Margaret Hall. Margaret Hall was a very prominent woman in Pittsfield. Her aunt was the founder of Ms. Hall's School, girls school, in Pittsfield, a very exclusive girls school. The family was the Renfrew family, which was one of the big textile families in Pittsfield. She was not only a prominent woman, but she was, in every way, a marvelous human being. She was actually head mistress at Ms. Hall's school for a number of years.

ROBERT BROWN: Was she very giving, very—

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: She was a very giving woman. She was a warm and compassionate woman, and also a very bright woman, and very dedicated, and very much interested in local history, and concerned that there was no organization in the county that was accountable for historical records, for preservation of historical artifacts.

ROBERT BROWN: Why do you suppose, looking back, there had not been such a group formed, say, in the 19th century, when there was a history of the county written then? [00:02:05]

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: I don't know. There was, of course, a pretty good historical society in Lenox, Stockbridge. I'm not sure about the history of Pittsfield. There may conceivably have been a historical society. But what Margaret Hall wanted to do was to see it in the larger issue of the county, and to have the county society act as a kind of repository for all of the local people who lacked funds and means of handling materials, this stuff, and try to make a centralized place in the county—Pittsfield was as good as any place for that, because it is central—where all of the historical materials could be brought together. And have it a strong enough organization so that it could also publish—maybe undertake the actual publication of books on the county, to encourage historical efforts to work with educational institutions, and to provide lectures and other kinds of activities, informative activities, for the county at large. And in general, to strengthen and encourage the interest in local history. She was marvelous at that. Everyone loved her. Everyone knew her. She became the first president of the society, and acted in that role, and she gave a great deal of her worldly goods to the society. She picked up a lot of the bills and things like that. She's also very skillful at encouraging others among us, who she felt could afford to help, to throw in their worldly goods and pick up the tabs here and there. She was pretty good at fund-raising.

ROBERT BROWN: How did you get involved?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: She called me out and said would I do this? [00:04:01]

ROBERT BROWN: You knew her?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: I knew her. Oh, yes, I had known her for a number of years. In fact, I lectured once for a group down there in Pittsfield, and we had a luncheon in—it was in Dalton. I think the inn there. I don't remember exactly, but Ms. Hall was there. It was that kind of an association over the years. She got in touch with several of us up here. Fred Rudolph, who was head of the American studies program at Williams. Still is, as a matter of fact. He's about to retire. He was one of the group. Then Richard Archer, who was the head of the rare book collection here at the Chapin Library. He was part—I don't think he was in the original group, but he came on the board later on and was—and then from here, who else can I remember that was on that board? Ruthie Coughlin.

ROBERT BROWN: But you were people that brought professional expertise?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: That's right. Fred and I brought professional expertise to—

ROBERT BROWN: How would you mesh with the other sorts of people that she would have?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Oh, it was fine. She had a good board. There were a lot of lively—for example, one of the most interesting people in that board was a policeman from Pittsfield, who was interested in Pittsfield history. Mike—I can't remember his last name. He was Polish. He was on the board for years, and a real lively

and interesting man. Another one that was on it was Tom O'Connell, who was president of the Berkshire Community College when it was first formed up here, and who was responsible for the big college that's down there on the hill now. He was on the board. [00:06:00] It was—she picked the people for professional, and also for civic and local, interests, and it was a good, solid board. Jerry Hatch was on it.

ROBERT BROWN: What was his role at the—

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Well—[laughs]—his role was what Jerry Hatch always made it to be. He was the treasurer for a long time. Those were disastrous years. I shouldn't say this about Jerry, but he wasn't a very good businessman, or a good treasurer. He could produce the most convoluted reports, that, even though you knew the society was losing money hand over first, you were really in pretty good shape. [They laugh.] But anyway, the society thrived, largely because, I think, of Ms. Hall's dedication to it, and the fact that she did have people like Fred and me on the board, that were professionals who were also interested. It was a good experience, and it was worthwhile.

ROBERT BROWN: Your particular interest, probably, was architectural history.

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Yes, I was essentially—yeah, sure. I had written my dissertation on the architecture of Berkshire County. I guess we've gone into this earlier.

ROBERT BROWN: To an extent.

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: I was still interested. We had plans, for example, to do a book on the architecture of Berkshire County. We never could raise the money for it, so we never did it, but we went to very elaborate planning stages for the book. I served on that board from its beginning, until about five years ago, maybe. Margaret Hall was president for, I guess, what, eight years? [00:08:01] Something like that. Then she decided she would retire. She knew she was not very well. The next president was—who was appointed by the nominating committee and elected by the society, the first president other than Margaret Hall—was Fred Rudolph.

ROBERT BROWN: What was his approach? What was his interest?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: He was a historian, and he had lively interest in local history. And he liked to use local history in his American studies courses. He was constantly working with students on local historical problems, making them dig into original archival materials, things of that kind, so that they came to understand history from the basis—from the roots up. He was a very good president. He was a very lively man. He's published widely. Widely respected in his field. So he was a good, strong president. The—

ROBERT BROWN: Society had been acquiring property, too, had it?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: The society, just before Ms. Hall left as president—I won't say just before. Maybe three or four years before, we decided we needed a headquarters. We always met at Ms. Hall's house, and that was always sort of headquarters. She kept all the records there. She knew that, when she retired as president, this would be difficult. We decided we'd search around for a house, and we found a house on North Street in Pittsfield—Goodrich House, it was called, Goodrich family—which was a rather pleasant, early 19th-century, typical, rectangular block with little plasters on the front, and rather modest but elegant detailing, and some rather interesting interior. [00:10:01] We purchased this for $10,000. I think it was—some crazy sum like that. I really can't remember. There was help from the Clark Foundation for it and that kind of thing, and we purchased it and fixed it up. The restoration was an interesting project. It turned out to be pretty small for a headquarters house. As it began to develop, we found that the museum requirements took up the entire house, which left us a little corner way up on the second floor in the back.

ROBERT BROWN: You mean you had, by then, furniture and other objects—

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: That's right, sure. We'd—

ROBERT BROWN: You had plenty of room to display them?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: That's right, we had—yeah. We'd already begun to collect, you see, get things together, stuff that was being given to us from people in the area and so on. Then we decided we'd keep working out of Goodrich House, but then when Ms. Hall talked about retiring, we really had to face up to this problem. Well, the night she retired, which was at the annual meeting, and Fred Rudolph took over, I remember we had dinner together at the country club there in Pittsfield, as we always did in the annual meeting. The board sort of met for dinner. I sat next to Margaret Hall, and she seemed almost childlike in her enthusiasm and animation. She was flushed very red in the face. It was almost as though the one tiny little drink that she'd had had really lifted her, or something was lifting her. It was really quite an extraordinary experience. [00:12:00] She

made her little retirement speech and sat down, and then suddenly she got up and left the room. She went in the other room, and she died. It was just like that. The ambulance came, and I was one of the few—they finally called me and a couple others out. The person who had gone out with her, they had gotten a doctor, and it was too late.

[Audio Break.]

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Now we're off again.

ROBERT BROWN: So this certainly was a dramatic end of the first era.

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Yes, it was a dramatic, and in some ways very appropriate, one. It was a very moving one. Then, of course, we inherited her property. She left all of her worldly goods, with a few minor exceptions, to the society. All the furnishings in her house. She left something to each of us as individuals who had been part of the original effort. Each of us had some little piece that she gave us. But other than that, it all went to the society, including all her stocks and bonds, and her portfolio. It was about, I suppose, somewhere in the neighborhood of a quarter of a million dollars that we came into as an operating fund.

ROBERT BROWN: That could have been a pretty good amount, couldn't it?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Yes, it was, and it was pretty well managed. The financial committee people were bankers in Pittsfield, and that was pretty well handled, so that the society has that as a backlog to its operations. We also inherited the house, and then the decision was made to make that headquarters house, to keep Goodrich as a museum and as an educational center, kind of. [00:14:06] The schoolkids came out there a lot. In the meantime, we had acquired a director, a young man who came to us from over in Albany, by the name of Don Smith. He and his wife were both professionals. They had been to—out of Sturbridge. They trained down there. So they were both pros, in a sense, and they both worked for the society. We made that house, the upper floor of Ms. Hall's house, a home for him. Made it into an apartment. He got that free, as part of his pay. It was a very good arrangement. Then, shortly after that, Jerry Hatch got all enthusiastic about the Citizens Hall in what's called now Interlaken, which used to be Curtisville.

ROBERT BROWN: This was the town hall or something?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: This was the town hall, and the schoolhouse, originally, and town hall. It had a variety of functions. It was an interesting Mansard, Second Empire building, in wood, and a very good example of it, and unspoiled, but in very bad condition. He got—I was actually on the Massachusetts Historical Commission at the time. We can come back to that later on. I represented—the chairman of the commission came up here, or the acting chairman of the commission came up here, and we sat in on a big hassle that they had down there about Citizens Hall. We encouraged the town to do something about it. Well, Jerry thought the historical society should do something about it. [00:16:03] At that point, my term on the board ended. I think we could do two successive terms, and then we had to go off. So I went off, and I think, also, that this is the year—maybe it was '65—that we went to Australia. In that year, when I was off the board, Jerry persuaded the society to take on the responsibility of Citizens Hall, so we ended up with a third property. This really proved disastrous, financially. We simply didn't have the resources to carry on these three properties. There was no income coming in from any of them. Occasionally we would rent Goodrich House for some minor function of some kind, but other than that, nothing. It was all outlay.

ROBERT BROWN: And the bankers didn't have the—

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: I don't really know what happened there, frankly. I never was able to find out how this went through. The man who was president—what was his name? Gee, all this stuff has slipped out of mind. I should have got all my records out on this.

ROBERT BROWN: It wasn't Rudolph, was it?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: No, it wasn't Rudolph. No, he—you could only be president for two terms, and then you had to move on. That's the way it should be. We had an elaborate set of bylaws set up and all of that. It was only after Margaret Hall's death that we even instituted the termination of board membership, because while much longer she was alive, we all just stayed on the board. A few people went off occasionally, and new ones came on, but there was no regulation that said you had to. After that, we did set up that kind of regulation, and I went off.

ROBERT BROWN: So when you returned, you found they were in dire straits? [00:18:01]

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: When I returned, they had—yeah, they had purchased this property, and the financial situation was critical. I was one who said, "Look, we've simply got to get rid of some of this property we

have. We have no business owning three buildings." Then there was a big hassle about which it would be and so on. At that point, Herman Melville's house, Arrowhead, which had been privately owned for years—

ROBERT BROWN: This was a house in which he'd lived for a while?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Herman Melville lived in Pittsfield while he was finishing *Moby Dick*. It was a period of—how many years? I don't know how many. A number of years. The family lived there for quite a while. He had purchased this house, it seems to me, was in the 1850s, somewhere in there, and had lived there. It, therefore, was famous. It was, in fact, a national historic monument, I think, even when we purchased it. I'm almost certain of that.

ROBERT BROWN: How did you manage to purchase it?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: The people who owned it, the family—the man died, and it came on the market. It was called immediately to our attention. There were several people in Pittsfield that were interested in this house, and having somebody with professional authority take it over and really run it. They came to the society and said, "Hey, you're the people to do this." Well, here was an opportunity that, I thought, we simply couldn't miss. I wrote a very elaborate appeal, outlining why the society should purchase this property, and recommending that we divest ourselves of all the other three. [00:20:08] We had enough real estate assets in that, the other three, plus gifts solicited from the board and others, to buy Arrowhead, and that's what happened. We bought it, got rid of the other three. When Jerry Hatch took over the responsibility for Citizens Hall—again, I can't remember the details of the real estate transaction and how that worked, but he did take on the responsibility for it, and he did pretty well. He had concerts there, special events of one kind or another. I really don't know what the status of it is now.

ROBERT BROWN: But it was no longer a part of—

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: It was no longer a part of the historical society. What happened, of course, was that we were—in order to carry these three pieces of property, we were dipping into a little bit at a time, to be sure, but nevertheless dipping into capital, and that could be disastrous Anyway, we took on Arrowhead, and that whole notion developed rapidly. We were able to raise substantial funds locally to restore the place. We had a very good architect, who's still a member of the society, and is still the architect to the house, an English woman, who married an American. Margaret Lewis. She's a very talented and able woman, and she is the architect in charge of the restoration. [00:22:02]

ROBERT BROWN: Was it quite an ample-sized house, so you could put many of your collections—

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: It's a kind of classical rectangle, with its central door. Unfortunately, the last owner had drastically—had literally destroyed big parts of the interior, important parts of it. The whole hallway, for example, which was one of these very charming, small, typical early halls, with the stair winding right up in the hall, he opened all this up and put up this grand, eloquent staircase, where I guess his wife could come down and meet her guests and stuff. The famous fireplace room, which has the Melville inscriptions over it, he had pretty well destroyed the paneling in that, and replaced it with a corny curly—what do you call it? Knotty pine.

ROBERT BROWN: But you did feel the house, for its associations and its location—

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: That's right, and also that it was restorable. Fortunately, Habs [ph] had made elaborate measure drawings of the house before this man had gotten a hold of it, so that the data was there on what the house was like. The society has been slowly restoring that, and the barn. The barn now functions as a big meeting room and lecture hall and shop.

ROBERT BROWN: Was the director the same, Smith—

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: The director was, as I said, Don Smith. He came into the picture after Margaret Hall died. Shortly after, we decided we needed a full-time person, because Ms. Hall did all of these things. She wrote all the letters. She did everything as president. She was also executive director. None of us had the time to put into this effort, and moreover, we'd reached a point where we felt, from a professional point of view, we ought to have a qualified, trained director. [00:24:12] We got Don Smith, and his wife, Bertine. Don had one shortcoming. He had a very short temper, and he did not get along very well with some of our people. He irritated them. I like him very much. I admired him as a professional. He was very, very good. He was not a very good administrator, and problems began to build up, serious problems, some of them, over the years. He did a splendid professional job. He put on interesting shows. He ran a lot of, I think, worthwhile educational programs for the school kids around. He worked hard on building the library and the archives. He had virtually no help. You know what these societies are like. You get volunteer help. They come one day, and they don't come the next. We did have one splendid librarian, a woman who was a trained librarian, who was a member of the society, a dedicated member of the society. In fact, she had been from the very beginning. Margaret Stanley. She worked hard on the library,

and was there all the time, and really put it in shape. It's a good library. But as I say, Don got more and more in trouble, and the society didn't treat him very well, for one thing. The fellow who was president, Ed Sawyer, was himself a kind of—he was an executive at the time from the Berkshire Life Insurance Company, and he ran into trouble there and lost his job. He is now an antiques dealer, and a very charming, nice guy, but again, with problems. [00:26:06] He and Don were kind of—didn't get along very well, and he sort of led the drive to get rid of Don. I continued to support Don. We finally put Don on notice that certain things had to change, and things went very well for a while. Then a new president came in, Cooley Crane, who was the wife of one of the Crane family in Dalton. She was a tough hombre, and very fixed in her views. Gave Don a very rough time. He would put something up in the house—and he was in charge of the house. He ran it. He ran the show. He'd come in the next day, it would be gone, and something else would be there. She just played with the place as a kind of toy. She did a lot of very bad things as president. She let her own personal tastes, her own personal interests, intrude into the larger historical questions. To me, the professional, I was appalled at this. They had an executive committee meeting. Don wrote a letter, saying that it was his intention to resign, but he wanted to discuss this with the society and so on. They had an executive committee meeting, at which they accepted this as a resignation, without any consultation of the board or anybody else, and this was presented to the board at a meeting, and I went right through the roof. I simply said, "We don't do things like this." It got into a terrible hassle, and I ended up resigning from the board. It's tragic that local situations like this can really get so out of hand on personal things. [00:28:03] I was offended, and I was deeply hurt, and I thought that they had treated Don very badly. They did. So I resigned. Anyway, my connections with the society have been largely through the mails.

ROBERT BROWN: Ever since?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Ever since, although I have been back to one or two of their occasions, and I have been continuing as the architectural consultant to Margaret Lewis in her work in the restoration. She feels free to call me anytime she needs help. I have continued my financial support—Peg and I both have, as a matter of fact. We haven't pulled out of the society, but I am not going back on the board, because it's one of those things, now, I think I've done long enough anyway, and other people should run it.

ROBERT BROWN: With the society, you kind of cut your teeth in preservation on the fairly local level?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Yeah, on the local level.

ROBERT BROWN: You also, then, were involved, fairly early, with the SPNEA, Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Yes, that's right.

ROBERT BROWN: How did that come about? Through—

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: I was a member of that for some time. I had known Bert—

ROBERT BROWN: —Little?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: —Little, for many years.

ROBERT BROWN: The director.

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Who was then director. He asked me if I would be willing to serve on the board, and I said I would. Do you want to turn it off?

[Audio Break.]

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: —in the '50s that I went onto the board of SPNEA.

ROBERT BROWN: How was it run? It had been in place for some 40 years by that time.

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Yes, and Bert Little had pretty well run it, you know, Bert Little's style, which was a good style.

ROBERT BROWN: What was his style?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Bert was a man of very elegant taste, and impeccable taste in terms of the things that were to be preserved, the way the houses were to be preserved. [00:30:09] His style was—it was very personal. Things went not so much the way the board wanted them to go as the way Bert Little wanted them to go, and the board always conceded this. He was able to get money from people who could afford to give it. He had charm. His wife, that lovely wife of his, was all part of the picture. It had a kind of relaxed casualness about

it that made it interesting. Perhaps it took some of the professionalism away from it. You didn't feel a hard, tight drive of the professional there. You felt the drive of a civilized, intelligent man of dignity and taste and civilized instincts. I think, probably, he was carrying on with tremendous dedication, pretty much in the spirit of—what was the man's name that founded it?

ROBERT BROWN: Appleton. William Sumner Appleton.

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: William Sumner Appleton, yes.

ROBERT BROWN: At least they didn't abuse the—in the restoration of the house—

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: No, there was none of that.

ROBERT BROWN: They pretty much left things?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: They pretty much left things the way they were. They didn't have money to abuse it. This was one of the—I think maybe this is one of the godsends of the society, at least, in one sense. Money was always a problem when I was on the board. When I was on the board, I, for one—and there were a couple of other members of the board, too, who began to push hard for the inclusion of material beyond the Federal period. The enthusiasm, Appleton's enthusiasm, and the enthusiasm of the society as a whole, pointed, pretty much, toward the Colonial years and toward the early 19th century. [00:32:13] Even the Greek Revival was somehow a notch too—

ROBERT BROWN: A little too infant.

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: A little—yes. I had very quarreling words about this when I was on the board. I was a kind of iconoclast, and in some ways, I think Bert knew this. In fact, he called me that in his introduction to the speech that I made at their 50th annual meeting, which was in 1960. So that gives us a clue as to when they were formed—1910. As a result of that, we did get into more diversified holdings. One of the things that came up while I was on the board was the gift of Chateau Sur Mer in Newport, that wonderful house that was rebuilt by Hunt, on Bellevue Avenue, in a good stone, French Mansard style, with a beautiful staircase in it. That was given to the society, but there was no money going along with it to maintain it. Finally, the society turned it down. I voted to accept it, but they turned it down because of funds. Well, they had a point, of course, because the maintenance of a place like that was very substantial.

ROBERT BROWN: It was the very thing you went through later with the Berkshire County Historical.

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: That's right, exactly. But it was too bad, because it would have been a great property to have. I don't know what's—I was down there not too long ago, and I really don't know what's going on there now. They have a caretaker in there. [00:34:01] There's not much furniture in the house. I think it's now open to the public, and it's run by—it may be the—

ROBERT BROWN: —the Preservation Society of Newport County?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Preservation Society of Newport County probably has it now. Yeah, that's probably—I think you're right.

ROBERT BROWN: They, of course, have run a series of great benefits over the years to keep the—

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Yeah.

ROBERT BROWN: And now tourism does contribute—

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Of course, they get heavily populated. I've just seen, in the paper, that they've closed down Lyndhurst, the National Trust.

ROBERT BROWN: Oh, have they?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Yeah, to the public. They're being stripped to the bone, by the way. But anyway, let's—

ROBERT BROWN: The SPNEA. Then you came into a group that was property-heavy, was it?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Yes, it was property-heavy, and there was a lot of conversation at the time about—and I encouraged this, too—the adaptive use of many of the properties, not just historical museums. I argued that there are too damn many historical museums, and that we ought to get some thought as to making these financially productive in some way, renting them to people to live in, insisting, of course, that they maintain the

quality and character of the house. But simply preserving them by putting people in them at a rental.

ROBERT BROWN: So they began doing that?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: I think they did, and they also divested themselves of a number of their less significant properties.

ROBERT BROWN: That was a work you enjoyed, being on their board?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: It was a work I enjoyed very much, being on their board. I was on it for two sessions, and I think those were two-year sessions, as I remember it. I think I was on it four or six years. I can't—

ROBERT BROWN: You've said it was as representative of SPNEA that you were tapped for the Massachusetts Historical Commission.

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Yes, that's right, and that was after I was off the board.

ROBERT BROWN: How did that come about? Did you know anything of the historical commission?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: I knew nothing of the historical commission. [00:36:00] I knew something, through my work in the National Trust, of the federal law which made possible the establishment of local historical commissions, of state historical commissions. A letter came from Kevin White, asking if I would be willing to serve as one of the commissioners. I agreed, and I discovered that I was serving as the representative of Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities. I was not approached by them on this—I think Abbott Cummings had already taken over as director—but directly through the secretary of state's office was the first hint I had that they were interested in me.

ROBERT BROWN: What were your duties to be, according to the—

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: The way that—I wish I could find that material, because I kept the charter of the thing. I was a charter member. I was on the original commission. Our duties were to identify and catalog the historical assets of the Commonwealth, and to the extent possible, and funds available, even to participate in actual historical preservation activities. We did not get into much of that. There was one house that we got involved in, down in Roxbury. What is the name of that house? It's a—Shirley-Eustis House. Shirley-Eustis House.

ROBERT BROWN: Colonial governor's house?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: That's right. That, through a kind of backdoor way, became our problem. For a while, we were involved in that, in the actual restoration of it. There was a lot of hoopla about what was going to be done with it. [00:38:02] This was after John F.X. Davoren became chairman of the commission, became secretary of state. He was a great one for using every opportunity that he could in the commission for his political gain. He would show up at the meetings. He would insist that the meetings be held in public places, different places all the time, a different town. We'd meet in their town hall or something. Public would be invited. He would come in with state troopers and television cameras and all that jazz, and he'd make one of his cliché speeches about this wonderful commission and all the things we were going to do. Then he'd pack off, and leave us to carry on in front of all these people. We had to carry out our meetings in public.

ROBERT BROWN: What kind of things did you have to deal with?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: We had to deal with—when we got into it, we had to deal specifically with all of the applications for inclusion in the National Register, which had then been set up in Washington and was going full-blast. We were having applications come in from all over the state for this, and we had to screen them. We had to get the data together. I was actually the architectural historian on the staff, as it turned out, on the commission. No one else had that expertise, and it all fell—well, Walter Whitehill can be said to have had that expertise. But it fell on me, and Walter, too, occasionally, on difficult decisions. I had to pretty much read and screen out all of these things. It was a monumental task. It really was. We were trying to get a full-time director, survey director.

ROBERT BROWN: You had no staff?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: We had no staff, except one young woman who acted as an assistant to the acting secretary, who was Dick Hale. [00:40:04] You remember Dick Hale?

ROBERT BROWN: Yes.

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Hale was, of course, archivist for the state, but he was also the representative of the secretary of state in the meetings. He ran the meetings. The secretary of state did not run the meetings. Dick

Hale did all the work as acting director. This young woman, called Anne Wardwell, who was part of Brahmin Boston, a very, very wealthy family who lived in—family lived in Brookline, and she was an unattached young lady, and had volunteered first, and then became part of the paid staff when we finally got money for it. We were trying to get money for a full-time survey director, and it was that activity that brought my career on the Massachusetts Historical Commission to an inglorious end.

ROBERT BROWN: How did that happen?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: It seems to me that I get into hassles about every place I go. This happened in a—maybe we can go back and say more about the commission in a minute, because there's some interesting people on it and so on. This happened when we—the state legislature gave us an appropriation of $8,000 to hire what would turn out to be a part-time survey director. We were debating the nature of this job. We were having trouble defining it. Tried to determine who could do this, what type of person we wanted. All of a sudden, we found the survey director was already appointed by the secretary of state. [00:42:00] He had taken this $8,000 and used it to put another person in his office, as one of his staff, calling him the survey director of the Massachusetts Historical Commission.

ROBERT BROWN: But it was rather obvious that he wouldn't have time to—

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: He wouldn't have a minute to give to this. When this was announced at the meeting—we had the meeting down near Worcester there, that town just south of Worcester, just off the turnpike, at one of the inns in there. When I heard this, I went right through the roof. I just—it made me so mad that this guy would just take this money, while we were still debating what we were going to do with it, and make this appointment. I just said, "You're a crook." I called him a crook. This was my mistake. Boy, he really blew a stack. We had a knock-down-drag-out right there.

ROBERT BROWN: He was at the meeting down there?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Oh, yeah, he was at that meeting, and he was explaining what he'd done. He and I didn't agree at all on this, and so I resigned from the commission. I had been troubled for a long time by the political pressures that were coming into the picture, that he was bringing into the picture. For example, Anne Wardwell's mother was a Republican, registered Republican. Right down the line, has voted Republican, and did to the day she died, and was kind of a free agent. Politically, she didn't have convictions one way or the other, except intelligent mind that made up her own mind about things. But the secretary of state went to her and told her that if her mother didn't support her, she might not have the job. [00:44:04]

ROBERT BROWN: Support him?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Yeah, support him. A mother. Not just Anne; her mother had to support him politically, or Anne might not have her job. It was that kind of—and I got some real insights into the way that Boston state political system works. It was really appalling. I just didn't—I had to commute from here. I had to go down there over and over again. I met Hale in all kinds of places on problems all over the state. As I say, I was the architectural historian. I was the one they called on. It got, really, to be too much. That was part of it. But the other thing is, I simply couldn't take this. I can tell you a wonderful story. Maybe this should go on the tape, and if you don't like it, you can erase it. But after this explosion, I had seen Walter Whitehill. We'd come to another meeting—we were at the Union Club before the meeting, and I was taking off on this. This is before I had actually gotten to the resignation point. I was fuming about it, and he pulled himself to his full height, that wonderful beard of his. He said, "Bill, just remember, the more you stir a turd, the more it stinks." Well, this was—he could take this, you see. He could roll with this political intrigue and involvement, and had never batted an eyelash. I couldn't, so I got out.

ROBERT BROWN: It was some time before they really got decent funding and staffing.

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: That's right. Now, Bob Reddick—after I got out, Anne Wardwell became the director for a while, and then she resigned after I did. She felt pretty much the same—

ROBERT BROWN: What about—you mention other people. Dick Hale. How did he fare in all of this? [00:46:00]

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Dick Hale was a political savvy of the first order, by the way. He knew his way around that political jungle in the statehouse better than anybody down there, and he knew how to get things done for the commission. He really did. He had close contacts with members of the legislature, with committees, with all the people involved in things. If it hadn't been for Dick Hale, I don't think that commission would have ever gotten anywhere. He was a very remarkable man. I had great admiration for him, and great affection, and I was crushed when he died. Because that—he was the commission. Then, after he died and Bob Reddick took over, it became a more professional group then. I went back onto the board for a while—onto the commission for a while—to take the place of a friend of mine here in Williamstown who had taken my place on the board. It was

an interesting six months or so that I did that. Hale was gone, and it was a wholly different setup.

ROBERT BROWN: Do you feel, looking back, that, in your time at least, the commission did accomplish quite a bit?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Yeah, the commission accomplished itself a great deal, because it set a tone, and it was a group of very high professionals. James Otis Brew was on it. Walter Whitehill was on it. A lawyer by the name of Albert Wolfe, Abe Wolfe—you know him?

ROBERT BROWN: Sure. Prominent in the Cambridge Historical Commission.

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: That's right. A tremendous man, and a real scholar of preservation law. A man who was in, in a sense, on the founding of preservation law.

ROBERT BROWN: And it did have effect across the state?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Oh, it had a great effect across the state. We were working with materials from all over the state, long before I got out of the picture. [00:48:05] I was on it, I guess—must have been eight years, before I ran into this hassle with Davoren.

ROBERT BROWN: You always wanted not merely to be a teacher and private scholar, but also to help preserve the very things you're interested in?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Well, of course, yes. This is always—

ROBERT BROWN: See to their future.

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Sure. This has always been one of my enthusiasms. That commission was about as influential a body of that kind that I'd ever served on. It was tragic to me that, during Davoren's administration, it got so deeply involved in political shambles, because it took the bite out of it. It took the fun out of it. I hated all this constant intrigue and having to fight the intrigue. It rolled off Dick Hale's back like water. He couldn't have cared less, because he had his own ways of manipulation, and he was good at it.

ROBERT BROWN: This, or some point around this time, then you moved into a national sphere, upon being made the board advisor at the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: The National Trust for Historic Preservation. I was a member of that for some time, and I can't remember how they got onto me, except possibly through—I think it came after the Massachusetts Historical Commission. It was in—what do we figure?

ROBERT BROWN: 1966.

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: '66. It was after, I think.

ROBERT BROWN: So you were made a Massachusetts representative?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: I was made the advisor for Massachusetts in the first board of advisors that the National Trust had. There weren't very many of us. There were only about—as I remember, about 16, 18 people.

ROBERT BROWN: So not every state had a representative?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Not every state had a representative on that first board. [00:50:00]

ROBERT BROWN: Did that perhaps reflect the East Coast concentration of interests?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Mostly, yeah, from—there was a woman from Carolina, and you can pick the places where they came from.

ROBERT BROWN: Why had they set up a board of advisors?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: This was, I think—I'm not sure whose idea it was, but I think it was Jimmy Biddle's idea. Jimmy was constantly looking for ways to broaden the contacts of the National Trust, to get its influence out into the whole country, to the extent he could. I don't know whose idea this was. Antoinette Downing may have had something to do with that. She's been very prominent in it. She's on the board now of the National Trust, and she's a real firecracker. Have you interviewed her?

ROBERT BROWN: No.

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: She can tell you more about all of that than I can.

ROBERT BROWN: Who did you find in place at the National Trust when you got there?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: The person—Jimmy Biddle was president of the National Trust, and the people who were running the show at that time were Jim Massey, Russ Coiney [ph].

ROBERT BROWN: Was Gordon Gray—

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Gordon Gray was chairman of the board. The people on the board included all of the wealthy antiquarians of the kind that supported that sort of thing. It was a very in group. The board was a very in group. Again, I'd have to check with the—

ROBERT BROWN: What did you think about that?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: I was always unhappy about that aspect of it. Their meetings, for example—Peg and I started going to the meetings—were very elegant affairs, but they were frightfully expensive. They were held at the most elaborate hotels, and at the most elaborate level. [00:52:02] Only people with substantial funds could afford to go to them, and this is one of the things that I started plugging for when I was on the board of advisors, was to enlarge and—the outreach. I think Biddle bought this notion. I think Jimmy Biddle was all for it. I also got involved in the National Trust, of course, through Harrisville. That's another preservation effort of mine, which is a very active and personal one. The man who was then in charge of properties was a fellow by the name of Ralph Schwarz. He is now head, I think, out in New Harmony, Indiana. He is directing there. But he was a real firecracker. He was one of the people that interested me most in this whole association. I met him through Harrisville, primarily. He wanted the National Trust, at the time that they were beginning to develop Lyndhurst, to purchase the Bronfman [ph] property, which was immediately adjacent, and to turn that into high-class, high-quality condominiums, which they would sell [inaudible]. They could have gotten it from Bronfman for a very good price. He wanted them to do this, because it was obvious that this was going to be a new residential area for New York City, this whole Hudson Valley. It was already that, and here was an opportunity, in a beautiful setting, for the trust to make some real money. Really make some money. Well, the board would not go along with this. He was furious, and he finally left the trust because of it. [00:54:01] But he was one of the interesting people on it. And in my own feeble way—actually, the board of advisors, those first two years, had no impact whatsoever on this—face the facts. It hadn't gotten organized. Now, I think, it's a very influential body. I think it's a different story now. They have complete representation, or almost complete representation.

ROBERT BROWN: But in those days, you really weren't consulted, your board, all that much?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: That's right. You had a meeting, at the annual meeting, where you all got together and you spoke your little piece and so on. Bit by bit, correspondence would start to come in from the trust, and certain assignments would be thrown my way. If there was a controversy—there was one over here in Greenfield—I was encouraged to write a letter and get involved, that kind of thing.

ROBERT BROWN: These were general preservation controversies?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: These were general preservation—bank over there that had a lovely Victorian Gothic bank wanted to modernize the first-floor windows in the front. We all said, no, don't do this. They did it anyway.

ROBERT BROWN: This was already under Biddle, the National Trust was reaching out?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Yeah. Under Biddle, the National Trust was reaching out. He still had an extremely conservative board.

ROBERT BROWN: What was Gordon Gray like?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Gordon Gray was a tough hombre. That man was a powerful figure, a man who was in command of himself and everybody that was anywhere near him. He was an extremely bright, aggressive, legal-minded type of man, and he did a marvelous job for the National Trust. I must say that I felt he was more susceptible to ideas than some of the other members of the board. One that I remember in particular, who could not have been stuffier, was Humelsine from—

ROBERT BROWN: —from Williamsburg.

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: —Williamsburg. He wouldn't budge on anything. [00:56:00] Not on anything.

ROBERT BROWN: In particular, what kind of things?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Unless it was our sort, sort of thing. His only interest was 18th-century America. Williamsburg—the whole concept of Williamsburg was the only way he could think.

ROBERT BROWN: And yet he wasn't the type to encourage scientific restudy of Williamsburg itself, was he?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: No.

ROBERT BROWN: He wasn't a scholar or anything.

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: No. I don't know what his background is. Now, of course, he's chairman of the board of the National Trust. I remember that he served on this committee that I was on. As I told you earlier, as a result of being an advisor, I was then asked to serve on the publications committee, which I did. During that period, we did manage to shake loose from the old conventional annual report, that *Preservation* magazine of theirs, which was stuffier than hell for years and years and years, into a new format. It's now a lively—

ROBERT BROWN: Certainly is.

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: That Terry Morton is a firecracker. She's one of the best people down there, who's the editor. She's a vice president of the trust, and is in charge of all their publications. She's a real fireball.

ROBERT BROWN: On a committee like that, you could break the conservative mold?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: That's right, and we did. One of the people who helped a great deal in that, of course, was Philip Johnson. He was on that committee, too, and he and I both battled for a complete revision of the format of historic preservation. Then I was on that—

ROBERT BROWN: There was a long-range planning—

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: The ad hoc long-range planning committee.

ROBERT BROWN: Was that set up at Biddle's request?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: That was set up at Biddle's request, and I think Gordon Gray's, too, but Gordon was about to retire, and it was obvious that a new point of view and a new organizational structure was necessary. [00:58:02] It was growing, for one thing. Getting out of hand, it was getting so big. We spent a number of sessions in Washington on that. Humelsine was on the committee. Oh, that—van Ravenswaay, Charles van Ravenswaay, was on it. One of the most interesting people was a black, and I think he's now on the board, or has been, from Cincinnati. A young man in his mid-30s, maybe early 40s. He was a firecracker.

ROBERT BROWN: Really? What did he do?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: He was involved in Cincinnati, in the rehabilitation of some of the depressed black neighborhoods. Getting the blacks themselves—there's been a lot about this recently, where blacks are making their own neighborhoods, upgrading their own neighborhoods. He was in charge, I guess just simply on the basis of commitment, there in Cincinnati of a rather large project, where they were taking a beat-up old part of the city and rehabilitating it. I think he was a lawyer. I'm never quite able to sort him out. He and I, again—and a couple of other people, too, a couple of the younger people there—were all for the complete reorganization, the inclusion, of young people, making it possible for young people to get into the trust and participate in it. It was impossible.

ROBERT BROWN: These other people didn't care for that?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: They didn't think that was an important issue at all, Humelsine in particular. We were appealing for an interest in other than just the houses of the wealthy, for example. A concern for industrial building. [01:00:01] Well, Humelsine went right through the roof at that. You can't even think of a factory in terms of Carter's Grove. It's this kind of attitude. Anyway, there was a massive—I won't call it shake-up, but reorganization of the trust.

ROBERT BROWN: As a result?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: As a result of that committee.

ROBERT BROWN: Because your recommendations carried weight?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Oh, yes, they did indeed. When Gordon Gray went out, others went out. The board was freshened up. As I say, I think this black fellow was put on the board. There are a number of younger people that I remember being associated with there on the trust who came onto the board. There was one bright young

lawyer.

ROBERT BROWN: What did you see once, particularly, you'd gone through this ad hoc committee's work, as the role, the potential role, of the trust in this country?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: We saw the role of the trust in this country as the main catalyst for historic preservation. It had national stature. It had the stamp of government on it. Although it was supported primarily by private funds, it still had officialdom behind it, and it carried clout. It carried clout in Congress, by the way.

ROBERT BROWN: Partly, I suppose, because of the tie to status of some of the people who—

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: That's right, of course.

ROBERT BROWN: Those very conservatives.

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Well, of course. You see, that was the dilemma, Bob. That was the dilemma. Those people on there were powerful people when it came to raising money, when it came to getting the things done in the court—Jimmy Biddle was a genius at that. My God, he knows everybody—everybody—from the president on down. He's on speaking, friendly, first-name terms. He comes from an old and distinguished family, and fascinating family. I was a great admirer of Jimmy Biddle's. I thought he was a—he could be a terrible snob, but at the same time, I think he did his job with a dispatch that was first-class. [01:02:07] I don't know what he's doing now.

ROBERT BROWN: And he did see the need to open it up?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Oh, yes, he did indeed. He did indeed. He was all in favor of that. A lot of the opening up was a result. A very good friend of mine, who taught here at Williams, Ted Sandy, after Jim Massey left the trust, went down and took on the job as director of properties. I always felt that he was absolutely perfect for that. He was a trained architect, and an extremely methodical man. He taught here at Williams for, oh, I guess, five years. I had known him when he was at Habs. Very interesting, rather elegant, impeccable. Fixed in his attitudes, a little bit stiff. He went down and took on the properties, and his knowledge of structure and that kind of thing was—and his administrative ability—was top-notch. He was there, I guess, about three, four years, and he got into trouble with the board. I don't know what it was over. I've never heard the story, but he's now head of the historical society out at Cleveland, that—

ROBERT BROWN: —Western Reserve, yes.

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: —Western Reserve.

ROBERT BROWN: Do you think the society, or rather the trust, is apt ever to give up its properties and become more a lobbying and educational organization?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: That was one of the things we've recommended: stop getting properties. We didn't say, look, get rid of what you've got, but we said, stop getting properties. For God's sake, get in—that's right. Oh, yeah, that was definitely—and I think so. I think this is the role of the trust. It's not to run historical museums. [01:04:00]

ROBERT BROWN: Of course, they model themselves somewhat on the British Trust.

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Yeah, that's right.

ROBERT BROWN: Or they have modeled.

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: They did, sure. That's right.

ROBERT BROWN: But that trust always insists on endowment, I believe.

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: That's right, insists on endowment, and it insists that that endowment come with the desk duties [ph] as part of the gift, and the desk duties are drastically reduced, as I understand, in England, if the person gives their properties to the National Trust with an endowment to maintain it. I was down in—I was lecturing in Charleston when Jimmy Biddle was down there, fiddling around with that place outside of Charleston—God, these houses slip right out of my mind. It's one of the famous ones. Drayton. Drayton Hall. Drayton Hall, which the trust now owns. We went out there when it was all over. Another very lively person that I admired very much when I was in the trust was Frances—in South Carolina, Charleston. What is her name, her last name?

ROBERT BROWN: Johnson? Was that the—

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: No, no. Frances—

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ROBERT BROWN: —and you mentioned the woman in Charleston was Frances—

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: —Frances Edmunds. She was in charge of that whole restoration project down there, and she had quarters in the Russell House, that beautiful early 19th-century Russell House there.

ROBERT BROWN: Built by a New Englander, right?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Yes. Yeah. As a matter of fact, the strong Federal character of much of that city is New England. Tragically, big hunks of that city were destroyed by fire, and the earlier part of it in particular, but there is some absolutely fascinating 19th-century architecture in Charleston. The most interesting parts of Charleston are 19th-century. Not only Greek Revival, but some wonderful Italianate and Mansard, and things of that kind.

ROBERT BROWN: This was a high point of that time, when you were in Savannah, you said? Just going there.

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Yeah. Savannah, of course, also. One of the wonderful things about the National Trust was that they had their meetings in wonderful places like that. The meeting in Savannah was spectacular. We had lovely weather. It was in the fall. Sunlit. We had one of our lunches out in that beautiful park there, right out in the park. It was very exciting.

ROBERT BROWN: You continued to be involved, then, into the early '70s or so with the National Trust?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Yes. Once I got off the board of advisors, I continued my support of the National Trust, and in fact increased it substantially over the years, but I have never again been brought back into the picture. The only logical place I could go from there was on the board, and I would never consider myself as board material. [00:02:02] That's not my bag.

ROBERT BROWN: Although you've been on a number of boards.

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Well, I've been on a number of boards, but I don't have the clout. I'm not interested in the kind of political clout that you have to have in that kind of organization. So I've never pressed for that sort of thing, and never put myself in the position where I would be asked to do it.

ROBERT BROWN: What about Harrisville, New Hampshire, on the other hand?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Harrisville, New Hampshire was a very special, personal effort.

ROBERT BROWN: You got into that in the '60s sometime?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: I got into Harrisville a long, long time ago. Many years. As a matter of fact, I've been going to Harrisville for a great many years, because one of our dearest friends, a woman who was a childhood friend of my wife's, lived up there, and we went up to see them. So I got to know Harrisville simply from filtering in and out of it for many years. When I did my dissertation on industrial architecture, I discovered Harrisville as a surviving industrial village. My dissertation was on Berkshire County, so Harrisville did not play any role in that, but I discovered it. I discovered it, ultimately, and finally, through another friend, who was the great Karl Lehmann, the classical archeologist at NYU, a man with whom I had studied as a graduate student at NYU. He and his wife used to go up to that area, to Tolman's Pond, in the summer. They had a summer establishment there. It was kind of a farm, with little cottages and stuff on it. They lived in the farm, and would go up there simply to get out of the city and have a pleasant place to relax and read and write. He was the one that pointed out to me the real historical importance of this place. [00:04:03] So I went to the person who owned it, John Colony. I had met him, casually, as a friend of Anita's, and we talked about this. I got a lot of data from him on it, and put it into my files. I photographed it rather carefully, at least in color slides.

ROBERT BROWN: It was still an active mill community?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: It was still an active mill town, sure. I said to John Colony at the time, I said, "If anything should ever happen that you have to divest yourself of this property," I said, "God forbid, but should this ever happen, and you know you can't tell in this world, would you let me know? This is an important historical community, and it cannot be permitted to go down the drain." He agreed to this, so that when, in 1970, they went bankrupt, he did indeed call me up. They also got in touch with Cummings and SPNEA, and with the National Trust, and this is where I first had my full encounters with Ralph Schwarz, because he came running up there in a hurry. The National Trust did put up a modest grant to help the preservation effort there. Harrisville, just to make this clear for the record, is the only early 19th-century industrial community that I know

of in the New England area that is virtually intact. The only things that aren't there are things that natural causes have taken out, like fire. In other words, no deliberate destruction of any building has taken place. There's one exception to that. One of the big wooden boardinghouses was torn down after the—no, just before the bankruptcy, because it was so dilapidated, they condemned it. [00:06:07] But otherwise, the entire community—the history of that community, from its foundings in about 1818—'16, '18—right on up through to the present, was all there. It was a priceless—and is a priceless—document. Schwarz recognized this. SPNEA recognized it. What happened was that after the bankruptcy of the mills, after many meetings among those of us who were trying to do something about this—and there were local people, also, who were interested, by the way, including the Colonys themselves. We formed a group called Historic Harrisville, Incorporated. I was a member of that group. We bought eight of the buildings, of the core industrial buildings, of the early community. John Colony still owned buildings that were not involved in the bankruptcy, particularly housing in the area. A company by the name of Filtrine, from New Jersey, that makes highly specialized water filters for industrial purposes, heard about this bankruptcy and that the town was for sale, and this fellow came up, and they bought the big, main mill complex. Now, that was really what saved the town, was that, immediately, a new economic force had moved in and taken over the main mill. So that, together, the town is not only unchanged, but through the efforts of both Filtrine and the Historic Harrisville, we started on a major rehabilitation effort. [00:08:06] The old mill, which was really in very bad shape, the original, very early mill, is now completely reconstructed, to the tune of $100,000.

ROBERT BROWN: To function as a factory?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: To function as a—it functions now as a part of a new enterprise there, which is run by the young Colony boy, Chick Colony, who is a man now in his middle 30s. He started his own new enterprise, which is related to textiles. He's got an elaborate loom—weaving operation, hand-weaving operation. He's making looms, and he's making the yarns for weaving, hand-weaving, and he's running a school for hand-weaving there. His headquarters is in one of the old buildings. The old mill is now taken over completely by him, and they manufacture the looms. He's built a new mill, on the lower part of the town, where they spin the yarns. So there's another strong little industry coming up in that group. The rest of it is—a big part of it is rented by a solar energy group that produces—they publish solar energy. That's in one of the—

ROBERT BROWN: Was the aim here to find viable industries?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: That's right.

ROBERT BROWN: Not to find cute shops or things that might go under?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: No, no. No, we did not want any tourism in the town. We felt that it was a fragile town, and that tourism would destroy it. One of our main principles was that we were not going to get involved in tourism. We rehabilitated the buildings ourselves. We didn't have the tenants do it. We did it. Then they had to maintain them.

ROBERT BROWN: By rehabilitation, you merely mean bring them back to structural soundness? [00:10:02]

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Bring them back to structural soundness, and also to the appearance, as far as we could determine, of the original building.

ROBERT BROWN: What, by the way, was the reaction of the workers?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: The town responded very favorably. Of course, they were crushed by the defeat of the bankruptcy, when the mills went out of business. But most of them remained, and went to work either for Filtrine, or in some other way in the area at large, so that there was not a disastrous economic failure in the town at all. The town continued.

ROBERT BROWN: Have you learned how they respect the restoration?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Well, they're part of the restoration. We made it a very specific point to get people from the town on the board of Historic Harrisville. They have been on that board from the very beginning. The members of the selectmen and that kind of thing. People who were spokesmen for the town, and who'd lived there all their lives, are on that board. Then we have a group of incorporators, which includes people from all over the area, and a lot of the townspeople. We've persuaded them that it's important to put covenants on their buildings, if they're historical buildings, to accept this notion, to accept the notion of a historic district. It's now even a national landmark. So that it's been one of the most successful restoration efforts in which the ultimate living quality of the town was never really changed. The only thing that changed was the economic base. It was no longer a textile town. Other than that, the town has been upgraded, the buildings have been improved, the grounds have been improved. We spent quite a lot of money on landscaping, cleaning up, and just making it a more attractive little town.

ROBERT BROWN: Did this money come from incorporators or from fund-raisers?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: It came from incorporators, fund-raisers, from grants. [00:12:01] We got a number of grants from a number of different organizations. And the encouragement of the National Trust. The National Trust played a very significant role in the first stages of this. Another interesting thing that happened along with that effort was the failure of a private Catholic boys school, which was also there in Harrisville. They owned a piece of property about 650 acres, and an old estate, and they had built a number of dormitory and other utility buildings there. It was a complex, set way up on this lovely hillside. The Thomas More School. It went bankrupt almost exactly the same time that the mills went bankrupt. Immediately, word of that got out, and the Boston speculators were up there the next day. They were trying to get their hands on that property. Well, we heard about this, and a group of us—I think there were eight in the original group—got together. We scrounged around and got—we each made major contributions to this group, borrowed the money from the bank, and bought the goddam school within 24 hours, so that these people from Boston couldn't buy it. Here we are, we owned a school, see. Well, as it turned out, we sold the school property, with about 50 acres and the buildings and the old estate on the top, to Antioch College, for undergraduate seminar center, and we got part of our money back in that. Then the rest of the property, which was very beautiful property, we had surveyed and divided up into lots of no less than—smaller than eight acres, and offered it for sale at a very handsome price. [00:14:02] We sold a number of those. We paid off all our bank loans, and we each ended up with our own money back—most of it, in any instances, including—I got all of my money—Peg and I both put in together—all of our money back, plus 30 acres of beautiful land. We divided up the land that was left. So we own 30 acres up there in Harrisville as a result of this enterprise. Again, it kept the speculators out of the area, so that this property didn't suddenly fall to a Chinese restaurateur in Boston who wanted to buy out and make an elaborate summer thing out of it, which we wanted like a hole in the head.

ROBERT BROWN: So the Harrisville story is a pretty happy one?

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: The Harrisville story is one of the happy preservation stories in America today. As I say, it preserved the town, literally, exactly as it was. There was hardly a ripple, really. It was touching in the support that came from the working people in the mills, who kind of—they kind of respected old John Colony. He had a quality about him. It was a patriarchal setup. It was not an enlightened setup at all. But they were happy there, and he was good to them, and there was a kind of communal life that they could lead that was pleasant, and no pressures, and that kind of thing. As I say, the majority of them have—some of them moved away, but the majority stayed and got employment either in Filtrine or some other activity that was going on, or got employment elsewhere, and are still living in Harrisville. They're a very important part of this group, especially the young people. [00:16:01] There's a lot of interesting young people in Harrisville. The young architect who did the restoration work is an interesting young man by the name of Rick Monahan. He has an office in Peterborough. He does a lot of work up there. He's very popular. He's devoted hours to Harrisville, and he's—

ROBERT BROWN: He wasn't of the worker—

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: He was not of the—oh, no. No, no, no. He came in later. Another fellow who came in, who turned out to be a real fireball, was a fellow by the name of Bill Hart. He was a floater, in a way. A man of considerable wealth. A young man. He's one of the brightest young men I've ever met. Superbly articulate. He wanted a project, and he just showed up on our doorstep. He said, "Gee, I'd like to help you fellows." He turned out to be the director of this whole she-bang. We had a good, enlightened board. We had some very staunch help from the area. David Putnam, for example, who was the brother-in-law of the Colonys, and married one of the Colony girls—or the wife of one of the Colony wives. He was a very prominent industrialist, and keen, and a civic leader, and a man highly respected. He was chairman of our board, and he was an enormous help. Then there were people of wealth in the area that were—and Abe Wolf was in it for a while. He has a house up there in Harrisville.

ROBERT BROWN: So you really—you could write the manual now on how to do it successfully.

WILLIAM HARVEY PIERSON: Write the manual on how to do it successfully, right. That was a great effort.

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